

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2014-2015

Proposed School Name (Horace Mann):	UP Academy Charter School of Springfield
Grades Served At Full Capacity:	6-8
Number of Students At Full Capacity:	Dependent on school identified; 665 minimum estimated
Proposed School Location:	Springfield
Proposed Opening Year:	2016-2017
Proposed Educational Management Organization (EMO):	UP Education Network

Mission Statement:

UP Academy Charter School of Springfield will ensure that all scholars acquire the knowledge, skills, and strength of character necessary to succeed on the path to college and achieve their full potential.

Proposed Growth Plan for First Five Years of Operation:

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment
First Year	6-8	800 maximum
Second Year	6-8	800 maximum
Third Year	6-8	800 maximum
Fourth Year	6-8	800 maximum
Fifth Year	6-8	800 maximum

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has compiled a summary of the evidence identified through the review of the charter application, the responses provided by the applicant group during the subsequent interview, and the testimony and comment provided at the public hearing and during the public comment period. The summary describes the evidence identified that addresses the application criteria and identifies the areas of the application criteria where limited evidence was provided during the application process.

Public Comment:

The application received testimony, and written comment in support during the public hearing and public comment period; comment was provided primarily by parents; Springfield residents; representatives of two non-profit foundations, the Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation and Stand for Children; and the Springfield superintendent, Daniel Warwick.

This application did not receive testimony, or written comment in opposition during the public hearing and public comment period.

Mission and Key Design Elements (I.A. and I.B.)

Identified Evidence

- The mission defines the purpose of the school, is consistent with high academic standards and student success, and is reflected throughout all sections of the application. (I.A.)
- The key design elements of “rigorous standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessments;” “high academic and behavioral expectations” for the entire school community; clear routines and operating systems; whole-school and individualized supports for students; frequent and effective use of data; and an enthusiastic and joyful school climate are aligned with the mission and reflected throughout the educational program described in the application. (I.B.)
- The key design elements reflect the educational philosophy of the applicant group and management organization. The key design elements are the foundation of the educational program implemented at the current five UP Academies ‘restarted’ and operated by the proposed management organization. (I.B.)
- The application indicates specific academic and non-academic goals for students that are aligned with the proposed mission, and describes the positive impact envisioned for stakeholders. (I.A. and I.B.)
- The application indicated a clear understanding of how to measure progress towards achieving the school’s mission using student and stakeholder data. (I.B.)

Limited Evidence

- Criteria adequately addressed.

Description of the Community to Be Served, and Enrollment and Recruitment (I.C. and I.D.)

Identified Evidence

- Springfield is not served by a Horace Mann charter school, and the proposed educational program has been implemented in schools in Boston and Lawrence serving similar high need populations. The management organization restarted a district middle school and elementary school, and is currently operating the two schools as Horace Mann charter schools in Boston. (I.C.)
- During the interview, members of the proposed board of trustees and the Springfield Superintendent Daniel Warwick demonstrated commitment to serve the Springfield community with a quality middle school option. The applicant group indicated their familiarity with the performance of current UP Academies and their interest in duplicating similar improvements in student outcomes in a Springfield middle school. (I.A., I.B., and I.C.)
- The application provides a limited description of the ways the proposed school would collaborate with schools within the district to disseminate its educational model. The expectation that district leadership would first identify aspects of the model for replication would be essential for successful dissemination. The proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) indicated the intent for the proposed school to coordinate with the district and school committee on the development of plans regarding innovative practices and assessment. During the interview, the applicant group and superintendent clearly articulated the desire for effective dissemination in collaboration with the Empowerment Zone. (I.C.)
- The management organization has developed and implemented successful outreach strategies for five different district schools that underwent transition and re-opened as UP Academies. The strategies have resulted in measurable success at the Horace Mann charter schools in retaining the prior student population representative of the school district. (I.D.)
- The proposed school would open with sufficient enrollment to serve all students currently enrolled at the school selected by the district, and fill to vacancies at all grades, exceeding current requirements. The management organization's experience implementing recruitment and enrollment processes will support the school's ability to effectively implement the necessary systems prior to opening. (I.D.)

Limited Evidence

- The district school that would transition to the proposed Horace Mann charter school has not yet been identified. Absent identification, the applicant group has limited ability to establish specific demand from the anticipated students and their families. The application described three events to assess parental support: discussions with the leadership of Stand for Children, meetings with families whose children attend Springfield middle schools, and a tour provided to a group of parents/guardians of the UP Academy Holland in Boston. (I.D.)

Overview of Program Delivery, and Curriculum and Instruction (II.A. and II.B.)

Identified Evidence

- The proposed management organization has quickly established a track record of success improving student outcomes at schools with high need student populations. The educational program developed by the management organization is aligned with practices described in Mass Insight's *The Turnaround Challenge*. (II.A.)
- The proposed school will implement an extended year of 185 days and an extended day of 7:35 a.m. - 3:15 p.m., with a shortened day on Fridays for teacher professional development. The school will provide an additional hour of support programs every day afterschool. Additional support in mathematics will be provided on Saturday mornings based on the needs of students. Summer programming is also proposed for students who fail one or more classes. (II.A.)
- The proposed educational program is based upon the current program implemented at UP Academy Charter School of Boston (UP Boston), including double blocks of mathematics and English language arts (ELA), and academic intervention blocks. The proposed school will offer enrichment, physical education/health, visual arts, and music classes for students once every week. Eighth grade students participate in a high school preparation course. (II.A.)
- The proposed school would use the curriculum, instructional methods, and assessment system currently implemented at UP Boston. The processes and procedures related to the implementation of effective curriculum and instruction will be supported by the proposed management organization. The proposed curriculum evaluation process is driven by student data, integrated into regular teacher practice, and supported by school leadership. (II.B. and II.C.)
- The application provides a clear plan for a responsive general education classroom to support students with a wide range of needs, including the use of intervention blocks with flexible student groupings based on regular assessments. The application also describes the implementation of the Response to Intervention (RtI) system at the proposed school. (II.C. and II.D.)
- The proposed educational model has integrated frequent opportunities into the school day and week for teachers to collaborate within their content area and grade cohort. Teacher collaboration is facilitated by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (DCI) for that content area (ELA and history; science and mathematics; student support). Teachers are supported, coached, and evaluated by the appropriate DCI, and the principal. (II.B.)

Limited Evidence

- Criteria adequately addressed.

Student Performance, Assessment, and Program Evaluation (II.C.)

Identified Evidence

- The application described a variety of assessments that are consistent with the proposed school's mission and educational program, and provide multiple measures to assess academic and non-academic student performance. (II.C.)
- The proposed school will implement standards-based interim assessments, including mathematics and ELA Achievement Network assessments, and internally developed interim assessments for science and social studies. These assessments will be used to facilitate decision-making about adjustments to the educational program and inform a staff development plan to support the goal of improved student learning. (II.C.)
- The application describes the use of student assessment data to develop individualized action plans for whole class and individualized supports. The description includes clear roles for school administrators to support teachers in the effective use of student data to develop and implement action plans. (II.C.)
- The proposed school would implement reporting structures to inform stakeholders of program performance similar to those currently implemented at the two other Horace Mann charter schools operated by the proposed management organization. (II.C.)

Limited Evidence

- Criteria adequately addressed.

Supports for Diverse Learners (II.D.)

Identified Evidence

- The application provides a clear description of the process and procedures to identify, assess, and serve English language learners (ELLs) as well as students with disabilities. The application demonstrates that the applicant group has knowledge of special education and English language development program requirements. (II.D.)
- The applicant group and district submitted a draft MOU which states the proposed school will be responsible for all staff and services required to meet the needs of students who require special education services and students identified as ELLs. This practice provides additional autonomy for the proposed school to manage the funding and staffing necessary to serve all students. (II.D.)
- The Horace Mann charter schools in Boston that are currently operated and supported by the management organization implement their special education and English as a Second language (ESL) programming in a manner similar to what has been proposed within the application and MOU. The management organization employs qualified individuals to support school level special education and ESL administrators, and to support the effective implementation of programming for special student populations at all UP Academies. (II.D. and III.C.)

Limited Evidence

- The application and the draft MOU provided inconsistent explanations of how the expense of related service providers for implementation of the special education programming would be funded. The application narrative states that the district will provide an additional allocation to fund related service providers while the draft MOU indicates that the proposed school may purchase services from the district. (II.D. and III.E.)

Culture and Family Engagement (II.E.)

Identified Evidence

- The application provides a clear plan for establishing a school culture and norms consistent with the school's mission, educational philosophy, and educational program, including the use of orientations for different stakeholder groups within the school community, championing the value of college in day to day interactions, and recognizing student progress towards academic and non-academic goals regularly. The application describes the implementation of a 'high expectations' culture with a college focus, and the use of the ASPIRE core values (Achievement, Scholarship, Perseverance, Integrity, Respect, and Enthusiasm) to support character development. (II.E.)
- The application describes a variety of meaningful strategies to involve parents/guardians as partners in the education of their children, and the building and maintaining of family-school partnerships. Strategies include home visits, weekly reports on student academic and non-academic progress, a weekly phone call from a member of the school staff, and nightly reviews of student homework. (II.E.)
- Upon the identification of the school and its location in fall of 2015, the applicant group will develop relationships with relevant community partners for support in implementing components of its program, such as enrichment and Saturday Academy, and supporting the anticipated high need student population. (II.E.)
- The governance model of the proposed board of trustees includes board membership earmarked for a parent/guardian of student(s) enrolled at the proposed charter school. (II.E.)

Limited Evidence

- Criteria adequately addressed.

Capacity and Governance (III.A. and III.B.)

Identified Evidence

- The proposed board members have a range of experience and qualifications, including K-12 education, charter school operations and governance, finance, technology, community organizing, non-profit and business management, real estate, and governance of non-profit organizations. Members include a current school leader of a Commonwealth charter school in Springfield, a Springfield organizer for Stand for Children, the executive director of the Achievement Network Western Massachusetts office, the managing director of the Teach for America Western Massachusetts region, and a local entrepreneur. (III.A.)
- The proposed board of trustees have tangible ties to the Springfield community and Springfield district and charter public schools. The applicant group provides a broad and diverse representation of professionals committed to improving public education in Springfield. The board is reflective of the proposed school's mission and educational program. (III.A.)
- The application provides sufficient information to establish understanding regarding the role of the board in oversight of the proposed school, including the responsibilities of board officers, the role of board committees, and the processes for decision-making and policy development. (III.B.)
- The proposed board of trustees plans to use multiple strategies to support strong governance practices, including the performance of an annual self-evaluation process, the performance of an annual skills analysis by the governance committee to identify membership needs and succession planning, the enlistment of members of other strong boards to observe meetings and provide feedback, a focus on board development through a contract with a support organization immediately upon chartering, and instituting board training on an as needed basis. (III.B.)
- The proposed board of trustees will receive recommendations from the management organization on the selection and hiring of the principal, subject to final approval of the board. The proposed board will also review the recommendations of the management organization regarding the performance evaluations of the principal. The application states that the basis of the evaluations are to be consistent with the policies of the proposed board of trustees. (III.B. and III.C.)

Limited Evidence

- A previous Horace Mann charter school operated in Springfield, New Leadership Charter School, which did not apply for renewal in 2013 and was subsequently closed. At the time of closure, the school had not had an executed MOU with the district for a number of years, and required Department intervention regarding the adequacy of funding it was receiving from the district. During the interview, the superintendent indicated that the number of challenges that had faced the school over the years were a result of leadership at the school rather than district neglect. (III.A.)

Management (III.C.)

Identified Evidence

- The application provides a clear description of the reporting structure amongst school leadership, administrators, and faculty which is consistent with supporting instructional goals, student achievement, and the current practices of other UP Academies. (III.C.)
- The application provides a clear plan for making school level decisions about curriculum and instruction, and supporting the continued assessment of the educational content and pedagogical approach. (II.B., II.C., and III.C.)
- The application clearly describes how the proposed school will determine the professional development needs of the faculty, and provide frequent opportunities for professional development to take place. The proposed calendar includes up to twenty days of professional development. (III.C.)
- The application describes clear components of a teacher evaluation system to support effective feedback and coaching with the focus of improved teacher practice. (III.C.)
- The proposed staffing model is based on current practices at UP Academies. The application proposes to open the school with a minimum of eight heterogeneous sections per grade, with sections serving approximately 27 students. (I.D.)
- The proposed management organization has demonstrated success in opening and operating two Horace Mann charter schools in Boston, and two district schools in Lawrence under the receivership. The management organization also opened a district school in Boston during the current school year as the school's identified receiver. (III.C.)
- During the interview, the proposed board of trustees, district superintendent, and representatives of the management organization provided a clear understanding of the necessity for an effective relationship between the proposed school and the district in order to be successful as a Horace Mann charter school. (III.C.)

Limited Evidence

- The draft management contract proposed between the proposed board of trustees and UP Education Network provides a limited sense of the plans to evaluate the management organization beyond the progress made towards the goals and objectives identified for the required accountability plan. The Department would require additional information regarding the performance evaluation of the management organization by the proposed board of trustees. (III.C.)

Identified Evidence of Management (cont.):

- The application included a draft contract which delineates the roles and responsibilities of UP Education Network, and a description of how the board will monitor the academic performance and fiscal activity of the school via reports during regular board and committee meetings. The contract is similar to the agreement in place with the board of trustees of the two UP Horace Mann charter schools and UP Education Network. If chartered, the proposed management contract is subject to the review and approval of the Commissioner prior to execution. (III.B. and III.C.)
- UP Education Network intends to provide services to support implementation of the proposed educational program, the systems and structures related to successful school operations, and the recruitment and professional development of staff. The management organization has developed a leadership team that supports school operations and school level employees directly in the areas of academics, operations, human resources, financial management, special education programming, and ESL programming. The proposed management fee is 14 percent of the school's allocation by the district or \$650,000, whichever amount is less. (III.C.)
- UP Education Network operates a principal-in-residency program to support the development of qualified and effective school leaders for UP Academy schools. (III.C.)
- The applicant group has not yet identified a school leader or other administrators. The management organization provided clear strategies for leadership and faculty recruitment in the application and during the interview. The process of leadership recruitment involves close coordination with the proposed board of trustees regarding the qualifications and skill set required. (III.C.)
- The management organization has systems and personnel in place to support the proposed school, including capacity for the recruitment of school staff and the professional development of school leaders. (III.C.)
- Administrators at the proposed school will be able to access support from administrators at the five current district and Horace Mann charter schools managed by UP Education Network. The roles of the principal, director of operations, and DCIs receive direct support from members of the leadership team of the management organization with relevant expertise. The principal and director of operations are supervised by the management organization. (II.C.)

Facilities, Student Transportation, and Finances (III.D. and III.E.)

Identified Evidence

- The district and applicant group will identify the targeted middle school within the Springfield Public Schools in November 2015. The identified middle school will provide the proposed facility upon the school's closing. (III.D.)
- The district will provide transportation to students of the proposed charter school in adherence with district policies. (III.D.)
- The draft MOU contains a clear financial arrangement, and describes the basis for calculating the district's payments to the proposed school. The proposed Horace Mann charter school will be subject to the same tuition formula used for district schools based on the needs of the student population. The application clearly indicates how the various total costs associated with services from the district will be calculated for the school using a per pupil tuition rate based on the total student population of Springfield Public Schools. Services to be accessed by the school include central administrative services, central finance and human resources services, health insurance costs for retired faculty, facilities operating costs, and internet/phone services. (III.E.)
- The application describes a clear system of financial management which includes procedures to ensure frequent and routine monitoring by school level administrators, the management organization, and the board of trustees. (III.E.)
- During the interview, representatives of the management organization clarified the potential for the proposed school to receive both in-kind contributions, and a short term loan from the management organization during the first year of operation. The short term loan is estimated to be repaid by the end of the first year of operation. (III.E.)
- Overall, the budget reflected appropriate expenditures related to implementation of the educational program described in the charter application, and during the interview. (III.E.)

Limited Evidence

- The applicant group submitted a cash flow projection that did not align with the three year budget. (III.E.)
- The financial narrative and annual budget indicated anticipated access to significant additional funding via federal grants and fundraising. The contingency plan for the absence of some or all of the funds required accessing fundraising from other sources that were not disclosed. (III.E.)
- The application contained inconsistent references to the expense of anticipated renovations to the school facility, and whether the school district or the charter school would be responsible for funding renovations that may be required by the proposed board of trustees and management organization. (III.E.)