

Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School

Questions as derived from panel review

NOTE: Due to an equipment malfunction of the digital recorder during the two hour interview, the synopsis for this interview was not supplemented by the audio record.

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

1. How would creating a Horace Mann charter school meet the needs of the community(ies) to be served? Why have you chosen this model versus an Innovation School, Pilot School, or Commonwealth Charter School?

- As the application details, Emerson & Dudley shut down and left a hole in the community. There is no stand alone element; no replacement for the school. This would be a high quality option for the students in the area.
- We explored different options – the autonomy of the Horace Mann model but to be part of the district. We want to change how we use time and people.
- Within Boston Public Schools - Innovation would not allow this type of implementation – it required negotiation with union. We wouldn't get all the conditions we require at the proposed school through other models.
- It is a family neighborhood with not enough quality seats and schools not performing at a high level. There is a gap with the empty building. It generates excitement to fill Emerson with a quality school.
- There are not enough quality seats in the neighborhood even with Orchard Gardens School and Dearborn Middle School doing well.

2. What is the Dudley Village Campus? Who creates the Dudley Village Campus? What do you mean by “creating a seamless learning environment for students and teachers in Grades K1-12”?

- DSNI (Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative) – Promise neighborhood. To create a campus where schools are the hub but a place of learning exists throughout the neighborhood. To add to the opportunities available for kids... It is exciting with Orchard Gardens and Dearborn – exciting to support kids throughout the school day and outside the school buildings.
- BPS currently operates several schools within the neighborhood. We do not want this school to be an island of excellence but part of a network of schools working to create great options for neighborhood students. It doesn't matter which model but working together.

- Through the Orchard Gardens experience, we learned about how to be successful in the community. We are interested in learning from them. To develop a leaders network among the schools. BTR residents could serve in schools. To provide regular opportunities for professional development and support partnerships with external providers.
- Opportunities for students through external providers.
- DSNI does remarkable things around neighborhood revitalization. It is about changing about what is available for students – both organizing and planning. A collaboration of partners for services development. DSNI is a community board elected by community members every two years.
- Staff and board @ DSNI are present focused on holding the vision and to ensure accountability and follow through on the vision. We have a long history with partnerships and to realize the vision it is extremely important to partner with organizations in the community and members of the community.

3. How will BPS schools be your partner in the Dudley area? Are you collaborating with Orchard Gardens? How? How will having a board member who is also the educational leader of a local BPS K-8 school facilitate your vision? Partner organizations? How will having a board member who is also part of DSNI facilitate your vision? What commitments have you received to help you provide wrap-around services?

- It is at the exploratory phase with most folks. BPI (Boston Promise Initiative) - working with those groups such as City Year and City Connects. We haven't secured specific commitments but are working to choose strategic partners and want to avoid Christmas tree approach.
- Difficult decision in the turnaround work for Orchard Gardens but working with DSNI, it was accepted by the community. As a strategic partner working with DSNI will be crucial.
- Orchard Gardens' SIG money, working to phase that use out. NCLB waiver would open up significant funding sources. It is taking what funds are available and putting forward a plan.
- There will be economies of scale with the new school - between Orchard Gardens and the new school. We will use partner organizations to facilitate fundraising proposal. We hope to create a circle of promise.
- City Year in three schools – we do not look to the schools for funding but look for BPS to help support those services as well.
- In terms of student supports beyond the academic piece, we are thinking child by child rather than bringing everything into the school. The City Connects model of working

with the needs for each child as needed that is focused on each child individually. We have already started a conversation with City Connects to have a staff member on the team.

- Through organized communities – we will take their same frame and use their model to develop similar practices elsewhere.

4. How are you communicating with the Dudley Neighborhood about your vision – How will you be “able to provide a seat in a quality school for every child from age three to senior year in high school” How will you “catalyze the success of a network of schools? What would that look like?

- We need to both communicate it to the Dudley neighborhood and communicate to Boston students in general. It is critical to not be myopic to the neighborhood but be thoughtful to inform the entire city. It is striking the balance.
- What will work in the city would be disseminated out to other schools and other schools in the neighborhood will benefit.
- Through DSNI – neighborhood but city wide partners that we collaborate with including city officials and other partners.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

1. How do you define world class education and civic engagement? How will that be evident to stakeholders in your curriculum, instruction, and educational program?

- One of the components is the ratio of students to staff. We are thoughtful about the ratio. K1-1 (11:1 ratio) 1 teacher/1 BTR resident to 11 students. Through the use of Divisions, there will be a two year relationship established with students. Promoting students, we will be looking at their competencies and whether they are ready to move forward. It is an innovative and contemporary approach.
- Proficiency on MCAS – that is the bare minimum established by the school. What are you doing to help students be successful and ready to graduate from college? What are the needs to be built on? It is about getting kids to take the high level Math courses, AP courses, debating, etc.
- Talking about college does not happen only in middle school and high school. Those conversations start with the babies. We are looking at having higher expectations. There will be service learning opportunities. Students are central as well as a lab for teacher learning. Our goal is to also help additional schools by building a crop of teachers and educators that are learning and teaching differently.
- The knowledge of how your education relates to your community – to where you come from...

- Resonates with me – the notion that you can take a concept and unpack it in so many ways to talk about statistics, sociology. With excellent teachers to push students to high expectations. Students can shine around a concept. Seeing how MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) functions – it brings together excellent teachers and students who are eager and willing to learn. If a student is ready to go 2 or 20 layers deep, it is the flexibility to meet the students where they are.

2. What is “ambitious instruction”? What are your methods, what are your tools for instruction? Are you proposing 3 hours of literacy at every grade level? 70 minutes of mathematics?

- The way that I think about it – rigor is our Y axis and engagement our X axis. Classes are often low in both or high in one and not the other. The notion is to be high in both rigor and engagement. Are the students doing the intellectual heavy lifting? Part of what we think is that elementary schools have gotten off easy. We have to do an amazing job at elementary school to foster excellence at the upper grades. How have we structured a school so that we do not let students fall behind? There is no excuse for students to not be proficient at third grade. We can’t keep doing business as usual there is an expansive notion at the top but how do we ensure that no one falls behind.
- Yes, that is the daily schedule. One of the things – every single child will be proficient in third grade. It is a radical shift in human resources – a radical shift in time to focus on literacy. The actual structure in place will be a workshop model and STEP assessment. We will be applying maximum press to each student where they are – where their needs are to be met – fully meet all students’ needs and also to be challenged.

3. The DSNCS design team members have been working with Dr. Jason Sachs to develop an integrated course of study for science and social studies for K1 and Division 1 (K2 and 1).... what progress have you been making?

- No one on the proposed board is on the design team. We plan to meet on January 18 and 19. The IGS (Instructional Guidance System) design system meeting will be an opportunity to bring together the players. We are considering what the lens will look like in the school – a CTE (Clinical Teacher Educator from BPE-BTR) staff member will join, as well as consultant Sarah Scott. What does the IGS system look like – practices and protocols – what do we require?
- We are still in design phase to developing, improving, and refining curriculum. The idea is to not be gimmicky. We’re not looking for just the elements but a curriculum. The idea is to have a school with all the adults working under the same core practices which is taking what we know about literacy and extending it to math, science, etc. We know how to get there – determine what we know and how to do it – building core knowledge gets us to world class.

4. Describe the system that would be used to identify ‘specific and targeted goals’ for each student and how progress towards the goals will be measured and addressed by teachers throughout the year. (How will teachers have specific and targeted goals for each of their 88 students?)

- There will be three kinds of assessment, in addition to MCAS. History and the progress of these kids tell us that teachers will have a remarkable range of students, a heterogeneous population. The assessment system will take that into account. There will be a good diagnostic at the beginning. We will be using OWL for K1, start STEP with K2. Assessments will be performed in 12 week cycles to identify what the child needs to work on. Some of the students will be reading independently others will be working on the concepts of print, etc. Using the needs of the students and expertise of the teachers, while the teacher team will be responsible, information from the assessments will focus the time in the classroom. Data goes to parents and describes developmentally how students learn to read and the steps that students will need to go through to become proficient readers.
- Teachers will perform the assessments. BPE has a good history of taking information about kids and putting it in a form that will provide the service to the school - that will provide the data to the teachers. It includes constant reports to share amongst the staff at the school. We each have to do our part.

5. What are the successful practices of the Boston Teacher Residency? How will these practices be implemented and monitored at the proposed school?

- All teachers must take the assessments themselves to anticipate how the students will work with the questions and what misconceptions they can anticipate. Looking at student work to determine what they will teach. All teachers will get practice at looking at student work carefully. Professional development with mentor teachers demonstrated that teachers weren't looking at their work or listening to what students were saying. We have to dig deeper into what students think and how they are making choices. Teachers must learn how to hear the language that students use.
- BTR in practice – Lead teacher at each team is given responsibility. CTE will work with teams and mentors. The idea is that you want the stuff to happen on a daily basis to raise daily practice up by reflecting on what we do daily and did it work. How do we know and how do we get better at it?
- Look at some of the structures that are built into the school day – five hours to work with my colleagues. To be working with a group of colleagues that is serving the same students - to work on teaching and learning – to work on our content knowledge.
- One of the killers of the conventional elementary school in an urban district is the individual practice. That norm is dispelled – we are responsible for these kids. The expertise of the school will be exposed so that the more novice teachers, resident teachers

and those teachers that just need more help will be exposed to their expertise (mentor teacher). The charter allows us that autonomy in hiring to select excellent teachers.

Assessment, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

1. What will be the proposed school's policies and standards for promoting students to the next division? ("division promotion standards will be generated during the planning year.")

- The starting point is the Common Core – and we have taken a look at those and based on those standards and discussions with existing charter schools that have done a great job on this – we pick out the power standards, the big conceptual ideas, we expect by the end. In the three divisions, with literacy, math, social studies, and science, the chosen assessment will tell us that (still developing assessments for math). The flexibility of our schedule will allow two years for students to meet the benchmarks in 1, 2, 3 division. It allows us to dedicate the time and energy to achieve those standards.
- We are holding ourselves to mastery as the standard for students for promotion. We are going to use our extra time to be able to meet the mastery. We hold ourselves to it and will use the extra time, the flexibility and extra time of the teachers to dedicate our students to meet it. Depending upon the severity of their needs, given time, good instruction, and supportive community, our students will reach mastery.
- If they don't achieve mastery, divisions will allow students time to achieve standards. Student Study Team (SST) will be meeting to consider an individualized learning plan. We do not want to socially promote students or promote students who demonstrate 'emerging' performance.
- There is a tight correlation between attendance and performance.

2. Describe your efforts to engage parents and families in the proposed school.

- Every month since the summer we have done community meetings, café settings to allow small groups and large groups to mingle. It is open to individuals in the neighborhood and outside the neighborhood to join the conversation. High school students have done a spot on a Cape Verdean radio show to chat with Simon. It is a tri-lingual community. There is a planning and information and creative process taking place right now, that we welcome families to participate in.
- Our approach is to be respectfully aggressive. It ties into the whole design of the school - looking at data, for example, why is the family struggling about attendance. It is embedding everything into the data cycle and being open with families as to the problems and communicating with families and discussing solutions. What happens so often in urban settings is that at the end of the year the child is failing and the school says this is why and there is nothing that we can do about it but if we can be aggressive with outreach and changing the traditional framework of parent engagement and taking the

school to the community, to parents and families through staff and through partners... The answer is that families need to be a part of the data cycle – if the school is to be a success.

- At Orchard Gardens, we redoubled our efforts with a focus on attendance, something we had originally overlooked, and our attendance has skyrocketed. We don't do it alone – we have City Year as part of the approach.
- For example, personalized letters that communicate how the attendance equals the amount of structured learning time. Communication with families that don't speak English – translations. Knowing the family prior to problems to know how to best connect.
- We look at student and family engagement. They may have had negative experiences in the past and are afraid to come in. We are reaching out with positive experiences not just when there are challenges. We intend to create spaces that are a deliberate part of the school and using interactions such as Parents' Nights to educate families. We are expecting the school to help educate families – educate inside and outside of school.
- Partnerships need to have a consistent message of the importance of attendance – as a board member we are highly committed to families and community.
- The cafes that are happening, these community meetings with groups of parents, students. They raised the issue of how to get families involved, such as parent night, everyone to come at the beginning of the year. It rose to the top for everyone in the room. We have to make family and community engagement a priority. How do you accommodate parent's schedules to get families involved? We intend to acknowledge the varied schedules of working parents to schedule important events. We have not worked out the details of what the answer is but this is on people's radars.

3. How would the BPE/BTR data analyst work with the proposed school? Do all teachers participate in the data team and how do they work with the data analyst? How will teachers be supported to effectively use what the data analyst would provide?

- Teachers are already structured in teams within the school. One of the data folks is plugged in the data cycle – six week data cycles – capturing data such as attendance and assessment. Professional development occurs at the end of each 6 week cycle. The information is presented in a useable form for teachers. Our experience has shown that the system doesn't work if the data person is driving the system.
- BPE has gotten Americorp grants – ideally we would develop someone on the teacher team to play this data role. Andrew (Bott) has someone in the school (Orchard Gardens) to play this role. Thinking about how this crucial role can be built in to a sustainable role and our present system may be the answer but the best idea is a combination of someone at the school and someone at their computer.

- If you want attendance, grades, assessments, a teacher can't do it - you need the help of someone else to do it – a teacher could not do it with their normal responsibility load.
- This school will have a substantial resource in this proposed relationship with BPE-BTR.
- The teacher teams – a teacher leader drives the instructional work for the team. The leader can ask for particular reference points in analyzing data. They can look for variables to compare and the data analyst can facilitate this analysis – to establish trends with student populations and correlations between student behaviors and performance. This is what we need in order to do this work so you don't burn out the teaching staff. It is a huge benefit to the school and truly incredible.

4. Who ensures that the practice in the classroom changes in response to student data?

- The instructional leaders – Principal, Director of Special Populations - will lead teachers to ensure that the data is used effectively in the classroom.
- The criteria for hiring will be how a potential candidate uses data. We set the expectations from the get go of the use of data. BPE-BTR provides an incredible level of support for the resident teachers that also benefit the master teachers. You can see the results in the work of students that have BTR residents at Orchard Gardens. It works so well that other teachers are seeking out BTR resources as well (specific example described of ELL students' academic growth as evidenced by assessments when placed in classrooms with teacher residents). In my re-staffing at Orchard Gardens, I asked candidates to bring in data from their class/previous teaching experience and the materials that they brought were very informative on whether they truly capture and use student data. Now you still have to do professional development and that is where the partnership with BPE –BTR comes in – a whole level of professional support for the resident teachers that also benefit the master teachers.
- I have seen the difference in student performance of students that are placed with BTR residents. Other teachers at the school now seek out the experts from BTR for professional support.

School Characteristics

1. How would the day be organized for instruction? What is the full day for students and teachers? 7:30 to 3:30?

- The sample student schedule in the application shows an arrival time of 7:30 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. which is the time to organize and start the day. 8:00 a.m. is the start of the day with morning meeting then literacy.
- During the lunch hour, we plan to partner with an organization like Playworks to run a structured time for kids that is paired with the lunch. Teachers are free from obligations with kids to meet for planning.

- During the afternoon, math, science, and social studies will take place. The end of day is by 3:30 p.m.
- The after school programming from 3:30 p.m. through 5:30 p.m. will be enrichment and to extend academic learning. There is flexibility with residents being on staggered time. We are thinking about two residents per teacher rather than 1 resident as stated in the application to add additional flexibility. The extended day is working with aligned partners to provide enrichment. It will be free programming before and after school for families.
- We are still in the process to identify partners to provide and closer to identifying who those partners will be.
- There are 20 days during the summer which is mandatory for all students. We want to break the habit of setting kids loose for 2.5 to 3 months and losing academic ground.
- The school year is 180 days - three trimesters of 60 days with a 2-3 week break then 20 days of summer school. Summer school will include intervention and enrichment with more of a fun factor involved. With staffing, we are looking to get really creative. The expectation is that our teachers will teach 200 days. We are still determining how we can build-in flexibility. We are still working on how to build-in staggered schedules among the staff. It is a school of choice and you are choosing a school that has a 200 day calendar. We think families will choose us because of it. It appears on our intent to enroll and once we hold a lottery, we will begin formal parent meetings and be crystal clear about the expectations of the school.

Special Student Populations and Services

1. How will the proposed school identify, assess, and provide specialized instruction to each student in need of special education services? What if the inclusion model is not an appropriate fit? Please clarify the process for students referred for special education services.

- Full inclusion, unless we get an usually large number of students with severe disabilities. Given the history of the old Emerson school and the neighborhood, it is unlikely but you never know the case. One thing starting out if a kid has an IEP, we intend to sit down with the families and communicate the structure of the school and how the kids' needs will be met. Each team will likely have a teacher with a special education license – making sure that kids with IEPs are identified. The process that will be used to identify a student that does not have an IEP is to identify students that are not making progress. Is it emotional problems at home or are they not making progress? We are really going to try that each kid gets a look – to match what the student needs before giving a student an IEP. The City Connect process is great.

- We will use RTI. It may come to light at the end of the six week assessment cycle. The SST will design a series of interventions and at the end of the six weeks if they have not made progress then IEP.

2. How will the proposed school identify, assess, and provide specialized instruction to students with limited English proficiency?

- The process will be the same. When first graders already have that identification, we will still sit down with the families and communicate the structure of the school and how the student's needs will be met. Survey will be provided for all students to complete and interviews with families to complete. We will be using diagnostics as well as assessments that will be used to track their development.
- We don't know who will show up. There is at least one dual licensed person on each team (ESL). At BTR, we currently license people and have identified people. We believe that teachers should be dual licensed and hold triple licenses. It may be that we will have half a division with ELL and that would impact staffing decisions.
- Teachers and residents will have category training.

3. What services do you anticipate receiving from BPS to best serve the needs of students identified as requiring special education services or students with limited English proficiency?

- Meetings already with BPS' Special Education Unit and Office of English Language Learners. We benefit from the structures in place from the Horace Mann schools recently opened. The special education network of inclusion schools was created to share best practices and we plan to make the proposed school a part of the network.
- BPS provides professional development that a school can opt in to purchase, which we intend to use.

Capacity, Governance, and Management

1. Have you gone to the State Ethics Commission about potential conflicts of interest? Have you received a written State Ethics Commission opinion?

- I received a phone call during this meeting from the commission that went to voicemail. We are in the process of reviewing that. We will submit the letter once it is received.

2. What commitments has the board of BPE-BTR made to the proposed school? Is an agreement through BPS or with the proposed school's board of trustees? Is there an informal agreement? How can services and support be guaranteed? (MOU with district does not contain any reference to BPE-BTR support or services)

- We would not have started down this path without the approval and excitement of the board of BPE-BTR which it sees as the future of the work. Services are promised to the school. There will be an MOU. Currently, we have schools from BPS that we support and we have agreements with the schools. The agreement would be slightly different, more intense and built into the school. There is no cost to the school. It would not be part of the MOU with BPS. The MOU with BPS would not contain language related to BPE-BTR commitments unless the Department was to request such language.
- We have been in conversations with the district from day one with our intents on the relationship between the school and BPE-BTR.

3. What are the proposed board members' expectations about the work required during the first years of operation?

- My expertise is in the area of business and financing. One of the things that is important to me is to maintain a high level professionalism, to ensure a high class education for these kids, and to hold each other accountable for the charter. I take it very seriously. It is our assignment to ensure that in five years we can have the charter renewed. That is our ultimate goal. I can ensure that with the finances and funding of the school we are not short and are able to pay for the things that we need to do. How we can best allocate resources and how we can best support what we want to be able to do. To set aside 2% for rainy day funds, to be sure we don't run this organization into the red and protect for unanticipated costs. To play an important role in financial management.
- I am not an educator; I am a lawyer familiar with Chapter 71. How do we work with teachers that maybe underperforming – certain performance issues... I can be a conduit when talking about collective bargaining issues. I can provide insight and expertise to those areas. We will hire independent legal counsel as well.
- My expertise is in the area of non-profit management. This group represents a lot of people who hold leadership positions in many different sectors – non-profit, finance, etc. I have served as a local elected official in Chelsea and sat on the other side of the aisle from the charter school movement but I am also a parent. I have children in public and private school. I have seen a colossal failure of the society to provide children what they need. This is an opportunity to put in place the practice and solution we need to effect change.

4. Do you have a candidate in mind for the Principal? What role will the principal have in developing the school and BPE-BTR's relationship with the proposed school?

- When I think about who I would see as the right person, Charlie Sposato (MATCH Charter Public School). That man was amazing. Just the humanity that he brought to his position and his excellence and commitment. When I think about who comes before us – that is my vision of who it would be.

- When I think about exceptional leaders – Andrew Bott. He is committed to community, takes risks, is aggressive but also keeps the end in mind. I expect to see those attributes and have had success in turning a school around. Hopefully, we have many options.
- That person will have a very difficult role to respond to the board expectations.

5. Have you looked at other charter school models where the board chair serves as a coach and mentor for the school leader? (weekly meetings?)

- I think that there is a tension between accountability and support. We expect full access to the school leader for the board chair/board to ensure alignment of visions and action during the beginning of the school. We put forward that there will be a close partnership and full access to the Principal to be supported by the board.
- It is tricky around the accountability piece – but we will ensure a high level accountability with the board.....

6. What specific advantages and challenges do you expect to encounter in your relationship with BPS as a proposed Horace Mann charter school?

- As part of the founding board of a Horace Mann charter school last year, we were all surprised with the logistics, such as getting the board together and the opening procedures documentation done in the right timely manner.
- The hurdle of finding the right leader and the right staff...
- The beauty of the relationship with BPE-BTR...
- The challenges with the logistics of the building... The building needs work and getting that building into shape for school.
- BPS representative – I do think that this group is in better shape – there are things that we are doing with this group now from our learning experience with last year's groups.

7. Why open right away? (Opening date 2012-2013)

- Because of the vacancy of the Emerson building... Orchard Gardens has swelled in enrollment... The relationship with BPE-BTR provides the luxury of many resources...
- The idea of missing out on these three classes of kids that would have to be dispersed among schools in BPS ...
- The moment of opportunity that exists right now with the Boston Promise Initiative and the grant from DSNI – this is a moment in time that if you wait too long people will get distracted by other things.

- This is a great time to capitalize on what has been learned from the turnaround process and the district as a whole has learned a tremendous amount about learning. We wish to put into practice what has been learned and there is a tremendous sense of urgency on the BPE board to get this going. We've gained in the knowledge that the elementary school structure is broken for poor kids and kids of color and now is the time to grab the opportunity and throw everything we have at it. The board (of BPE-BTR) would not have wanted to wait. The board of BPE was brought this vision from Jesse (Solomon).

8. What advantages are there for BPE?

- We hope to develop a different kind of school that is rooted in the community. Bussing has created islands within the community. We saw this as an opportunity to take all the things that we know and break the mold that would create a different kind of elementary school and serve students.

Facilities and Transportation

1. Why did you agree to the Emerson school as the proposed site? How will you plan for facility demands both financially and organizationally as the proposed school grows?

- We really felt that it was important to start with 4 year olds. We have space if we knock down a wall and that would serve all of the basic classroom needs. We are not sure what the needs of the student population will be. There is no common space. It is a challenging building but we are working with BPS' facilities unit and Suffolk Construction. Our greatest dream would be to expand the footprint because the piece of property is ideal. The support we have been able to garner is incredible.

Finances

1. Why does BPE-BTR's Executive Director and CPO provide oversight and assistance in developing the proposed school budget as well as having direct access to the proposed school's financial records?

- It is not what you would normally see in a non-profit organization but it will apply the same to the way we run a board. There will be transparency and interdependency. There will be fundraising resources. We need all the help that we can get to achieve these ambitious goals.
- In the MOU with BPE-BTR, the relationship will be clear. For example, our Development Team will work with the school to fundraise.
- There will be checks and balances along the way to maintain that nothing untoward could happen.
- Publicly accountable to everyone is higher in our case....

2. Please clarify financial expenditures associated with the proposed school's facility. \$200K for building renovations is indicated in the budget narrative on page 57 but it is not included in the budget.

- The \$200K is included in the costs of the planning year (\$350K) and is not for later renovations.