

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEW 2012-2013

Proposed School Name:	UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester (Horace Mann)
Grades Served At Full Capacity:	K1-8
Number of Students At Full Capacity:	750
Proposed School Location:	Boston
Proposed Opening Year:	2013-2014
Proposed Management Organization:	Unlocking Potential

Public Statement:

“UP Academy Dorchester will open its doors to an estimated 546 students in fall 2013. The school’s launch, a collaborative effort between the founding team, Boston Public Schools, and Unlocking Potential, represents the restart of a struggling K1-5 Boston Public School. UP Academy Dorchester will aim to serve all students previously enrolled in the Marshall School and will expand one grade yearly to operate as a fully enrolled K1-8 in 2016-2017. UP Academy Dorchester will ensure that its students acquire the knowledge, skills, and strength of character necessary to succeed on the path to college and achieve their full potential.”

Mission Statement:

“UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester (UP Academy Dorchester) will ensure that its students, who previously attended the Marshall Elementary School (the Marshall), 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	K1-5	530
Second Year	K1-6	592
Third Year	K1-7	558
Fourth Year	K1-8	654
Fifth Year	K1-8	708

Note: Applicant group is the Board of Trustees of the UP Academy Charter School of Boston (UP Academy-Boston), a Horace Mann charter school opened in 2011-2012. The existing UP Academy-Boston serves students in grades 6-8 with a maximum enrollment of 500.

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

Primary Strengths

- The mission and vision describe the broad academic and non-academic goals for students and the positive impact envisioned for stakeholders. The application provides an integrated plan to achieve skill and character development for all students. (Section I.A. and I.B.)
- During the interview, members of the board of trustees and a Boston Public Schools representative described in detail the past performance and challenges of the John Marshall Elementary School and the passionate commitment to serve members of the Marshall and Geneva-Bowdoin community. (Section I.A., I.B., and I.C.)
- This charter application received letters and/or written testimony in support during the public hearing and public comment process, and included support letters within the application, including Superintendent Carol Johnson. See public comment and application. (Section I.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group’s educational philosophy clearly articulates the group’s core beliefs and values. The proposed academic environment embodies their philosophy with a commitment to develop and support exceptional teachers as well as frame student learning through a growth mindset and adherence to rigorous academic and character education standards. (Section II.A.)
- The application describes a clear and

Primary Weaknesses

- While reviewers expressed concerns that the application did not articulate a comprehensive vision of an early childhood and elementary education model nor did it demonstrate in depth knowledge of the needs of the youngest students, during the interview, the applicant group described facets of the school culture and chosen instructional methodologies that would be appropriately tailored to meet all

thoughtful selection and development of curriculum rooted in the successful practices of other high quality elementary schools, including academic and character education curriculum. (Section II.B.)

- The proposed curriculum evaluation process is driven by student data, integrated into regular teacher practice, and supported by school leadership. (Section II.B.)

students where they are and that would best support academic growth. (Section II.B.)

Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

Primary Strengths

- The applicant group proposes to use a standards-based grading system consistent across all grade levels to report on student mastery of the 'power' standards. The system will report on both academic and character education standards. (Section II.C.)
- The application described a variety of assessments that are consistent with the proposed school's mission and educational program. (Section II.D.)
- The assessment system includes tools, such as standards-based interim assessments, used to 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.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the applicant group did not submit adequate performance standards or exit standards in the application, during the interview, the proposed school leader stated that the mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) 'power' standards have been identified and that social studies and science are half-way completed. The completed K-8 Standards Guide will describe the student mastery expectations across grade levels and content areas. The leadership team is also part-way in developing standards rubrics to measure student progress towards power standards. (Section II.C.)

School Characteristics

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clear plan for establishing a school culture and norms consistent with the school's mission, educational philosophy, and educational program. The application describes the implementation of a 'no

Primary Weaknesses

- While the application provides a limited discussion of the unique challenges of the early education and elementary school model, the interview provided additional information about the preparations for

excuses' culture, and the use of the TIGER core values (Teamwork, Integrity, Grit, Engagement, and Respect) to support character development. (Section II.E.)

- The proposed school will implement an extended year of 185 days and an extended day of 7:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., with a shortened day on Wednesdays for teacher professional development. (Section 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. (Section II.E.)

implementing an elementary school program. The management organization has investigated best practices at other high performing elementary schools, put in place a full time curriculum developer, and supported a principal in residence program for the proposed school leader. (Section II.E.)

Special Student Populations and Student Services

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clear plan for a responsive general education classroom to support students with a wide range of needs, including time during the school day for teachers to work individually or in small groups with students. The application also describes the implementation of the Response to Intervention (RTI) system at the proposed school. (Section II.E. and II.F.)
- The application provides a clear description of the process and procedures to identify, assess, and serve English language learners as well as students with disabilities. The application demonstrates that the applicant group has knowledge of special education and English language development program requirements. (Section II.F.)
- The applicant group and district submitted a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which states the proposed school will be

Primary Weaknesses

- The application proposes a static staffing model for special education that maintains the same number of special education teachers as the school grows from 530 students to over 700 students. During the interview, the applicant group and management organization stated that the new relationship proposed under the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was not reflected in the proposed staffing. (Section II.F.)
- The application does not provide adequate information regarding ancillary and support services and the anticipated needs of the targeted student population, including the Marshall students being heavily recruited by the group and the district to enroll at the proposed school. At the interview, the applicant group acknowledged the strong need for socio-emotional supports at the proposed school for the anticipated

responsible for all staff and services required to meet the needs of students who require special education services and students identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). This is an innovation for a Horace Mann in Boston and provides additional autonomy for the proposed school to manage the funding and staffing necessary to serve all students. (Section II.F.)

student population. (Section II.F.)

Enrollment and Recruitment

Primary Strengths

- During the interview, the applicant group described targeted outreach to the families of present Marshall students as well as present Marshall faculty, including biweekly information sessions and family council planning sessions. These strategies are aimed to recruit students for the proposed school as well as involve families in the planning for the school. (Section III.A.)
- The board of trustees' governance committee is developing a plan to involve community members through multiple strategies, including parent involvement on board committees for each school, and regular meetings with school leadership for input. The Boston School Committee required additional seats to be added to the present board, with a preference for parents of students, which the board is still determining how to implement. (Section III.A.)

Primary Weaknesses

- The proposed enrollment plan in the application introduces unclear assumptions not explained in the narrative, including the addition of students at first and third grade in later years of operation. It is unclear how the school will operate with the number of sections at each grade level fluctuating over time. This complexity is also reflected in the staffing chart and the change in the number of faculty at different grade levels over time. (Section III.A.)

Capacity and School Governance

Primary Strengths

- The board of trustees and the management organization have the experience and qualifications to implement the proposal and have demonstrated the capacity, thus far, to found and sustain a high quality Horace Mann charter middle school in Boston. (Section III.B.)
- The present board of trustees has tangible ties to Boston and provides a broad and diverse representation of professionals committed to improving public education in Boston. The board is reflective of the proposed school's mission and educational program. (Section III.B.)
- The applicant group previously applied for a K-8 charter in 2011-2012 and chose to withdraw prior to submitting a final application. The applicant group and management organization has added early education and elementary education expertise in the interim and vetted best practices from high performing elementary schools in Boston, such as the network of Edward W. Brooke Charter Schools. The group has expanded to include the proposed school leader, an individual with elementary school experience, and an elementary curriculum developer hired by the management organization. (Section II.A., II.B., and 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. The contract is not altered in any significant manner from the

Primary Weaknesses

- During the interview, the board of trustees stated that it has not yet formally evaluated its own performance or the performance of the management organization. The board indicated it still needed to develop a mechanism to perform the self-evaluation. The board stated it anticipates evaluating Unlocking Potential this spring and that they are very pleased with the work of the management organization thus far. (Section III.B.)

present management agreement in place between the board and Unlocking Potential for their existing middle school. If chartered, the contract would need review and approval by the Department. (Section III.C.)

Capacity for Network of Schools

Primary Strengths

- The management organization and board demonstrated success in opening and operating the UP Academy -Boston through its first year of operation. With approximately 85% of the original Gavin Middle School students enrolled, the school demonstrated in the MCAS test a median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) in ELA of 71 and 86 in Mathematics in 2012. (Section 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. (Section III.C.)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the proposed school and potential network will continue to be supported through a management agreement with Unlocking Potential, the board and management organization are still in the early stages of development and have a limited track record of success. The existing UP Academy- Boston is in its second year of operation and the management organization is in the first year of managing another middle school under the Lawrence receivership, the UP Academy Lawrence Middle School. During the interview, the management organization stated the intent to manage a fourth school next fall and to continue to grow the network over time. (Section III.C.)

Management

Primary Strengths

- The application provides a clear description of the reporting structure amongst school leadership, administrators, and faculty which is consistent with supporting instructional goals and student achievement. (Section III.D.)
- 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

Primary Weaknesses

- Prior to the principal residency, the proposed school leader has not held a formal leadership role at a school. (Section III.D.)

pedagogical approach. (Section III.D.)

- The application clearly describes how the proposed school will determine the professional development needs of the faculty and provides frequent opportunities for professional development to take place, including weekly three hour sessions. (Section II.B. and III.D.)
- Unlocking Potential has implemented a principal-in-residency program which the proposed school leader has participated in during the planning for the proposed school. The program has involved weekly professional development with other residents and present principals in the Unlocking Potential network as well as placement in a leadership role developing and evaluating teachers. (Section III.D.)

Facilities, Transportation, and Finances

Primary Strengths

- The district and applicant group have targeted the John Marshall Elementary School in the Geneva-Bowdoin neighborhood for the proposed school's facility to provide access to a high quality educational option upon the school's closing. (Section III.E.)

Primary Weaknesses

- None identified.