

UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester

Questions as derived from panel and documentation review

1. For the record, please introduce yourself and indicate your position on the board, at the proposed school, or at Unlocking Potential. Please include the number of years you've been involved and a brief description of your history with the organization(s). If a board member, please also describe the areas of expertise you bring to the board and which committees you are involved in as well.

- Lana Ewing, Principal, April, Launch of UP Dorchester – I am currently employed by Unlocking Potential as a principal in residence. That employment began last April and since that time I've been prepared for the launch of UP Academy Dorchester. I am not on the board.
- Karen Daniels, Trustee – I am a member of the board; I serve on the academic excellence committee. I've been involved since the beginning.
- Scott McCue, Vice Chair – I've been involved with the board of UP Academy since the beginning. I serve as Vice Chair of the board.
- Nick Collins, Trustee – I'm a board member of UP Academy, I started in the Fall of 2011. I'm also state representative, representing the district where UP Academy Boston is in. I serve as a community voice on the board.
- Stacy Cowan, Trustee – I'm a founding board member of UP Academy Boston and I practice labor employment law.
- Elizabeth Clymer, Trustee – Treasurer of the board at UP Academy Boston and I serve on the finance committee and I've been involved since just after the charter was approved. For my day job, I work at Bay Capital.
- Jesse Solomon, Trustee – I've been with the UP Boston board since the beginning and I serve on the academic excellence committee.
- Barbara Sullivan, Trustee – I have been on the board since the founding and I chair the governance committee.
- Ann Waterman Roy, Director of Strategic Planning, Boston Public Schools – I'm not on the board or part of the management organization but as Horace Mann charter I am representing the district which is a strong and excited partner with the school. I've been involved since we started talking about UP Academy Boston.
- Kristen Linnenbank, Director of Operations in Residence – I'm employed by Unlocking Potential as the Director of Operations in Residence. I began with the organization in May and I've been preparing for UP Academy Dorchester as well

as supporting other schools in the Network.

- Victoria Criado, Director of School Operations – I also work for Unlocking Potential. I'm the Director of School Operations. I joined the organization in October of 2012. I basically work with the Director of Operations at various schools which in the case of Up Academy Dorchester involves the launch of the school.
- Scott Given, CEO – I'm co-founder and CEO of Unlocking Potential. The idea of which started in 2008 but formally corporate in March of 2010. I appreciate being here. I'll also note that Robert McConaughy Chairperson of UP Academy board and the proposed UP Academy Dorchester board unfortunately cannot join us. He's a very active board member and deeply engaged in this process but is in the midst of business-related travels and sends his apologies.

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

1. Tell us about the John Marshall Elementary School. What connections have you made with members of the Marshall community since the final application was submitted?

- We have begun, with the John Marshall, hosting biweekly information sessions. We've had excellent turnouts so far. Once every two weeks, we meet with parents at the school and provide support for completing applications and an overview of what's coming. Additionally, in the middle of this month, we'll launch family council planning sessions. Also, every two weeks in addition to information sessions, we've invited parents and community members from the Marshall community to join us in giving us feedback and input for planning thus far.
- In terms of the profile of the school, it's an existing preK to 5 elementary school in Bowdoin-Geneva area in Boston. It has about 750 students, although enrollment ebbs and flows. There is a fair amount of mobility at the school. Vast majority of the kids are ELL, vast majority are low income, lots of kids of color, high special education population. There are several special programs there including those for lab kids. Historically, it has been a very low performing school with about 11% proficiency across the board.
- From the district perspective, the info sessions are going very well. Families are very excited to come out and talk to the community. We have a big public forum at the school that had a great turnout with over 100 parents. The community is active and wants to be involved in the development of school. We make sure that there is representation from the district on the board.
- School leadership of the Marshall has been so generous with their time and support with the potential transition. If the charter is approved there is a student and family transition but also a staff transition. We've taken efforts to explain the

proposal to members of the school staff through various office-hours sessions at the school; engaging those individuals at the school and explaining the vision and asking if they'd like to apply for positions at the school.

- There was a parent at one of the charter hearings who was on the fence at first and now she is sold. This speaks to relationship building that's been going on with parents. People are working with parents and helping them understand.
- We're targeting 615 current students at the Marshall who are guaranteed a seat as long as we receive that application and to this point we've received around 400 applications back. We're very pleased with that so far. We're also excited that starting this month a staff member will start employment with us whose full-time efforts will be dedicated to outreach.

2. How will members of the Marshall community be included in the new community of UP Academy?

- One piece of getting folks involved is through board involvement. The BPS and school committee in Boston was very clear about wanting parental participation. The governance committee is in the process of thinking about how we govern and get folks involved in the leadership of the school. The current thinking is that we'll have committees on the board dedicated to each of the schools that we manage and on the committees there will not just board members, but also staff and leadership of the school, parents, and community members.
- Additionally, throughout the year, we will have parent leadership counseling at the school. Through the year we'll engage with families around key leadership decisions. We'll also have an open door policy for families, encouraging families to come in and volunteer and get involved. Also, twice every trimester we'll have formal opportunities for parents to come in and have one-on-ones with classroom teachers and also every trimester we'll have a curriculum or arts night to get the whole community together at the school.

3. Tell us about the Bowdoin-Geneva neighborhood. What connections have you made with community organizations that serve the Bowdoin-Geneva area since the final application was submitted?

- It's a close knit area that struggles economically. Community is optimistic about the potential of school because of what it means for students and families in the area. It's an underserved part of the city and that's why we are excited to get over there.
- The neighborhood has had real challenges that are very serious and on the regular. There is violence close to school and in fact there was violence in the school facility in the last couple of years. Our students have been exposed to it, unfortunately. We need a huge emphasis on safety; building safety for staff and

students. There also needs to be a deep understanding of what trauma students have seen and how it affects them and their ability to develop. We need to focus on what they need to be prepared as they go through school and leave our school.

- We've made a lot of progress with the Family Resource Center down the street on Bowdoin. This resource had already been taking place and has space in the Marshall building. We had meeting with the Executive Director of the Family Nurturing Center who oversees that center and I've met with them several times since and have invited them to the information sessions. We're excited to hear great questions they had for us with regard to building the school and vision. This has given us opportunity to speak with people and make connections with people and groups that work close with families in the community. We've taken this relationship the furthest at this point.

4. For context, explain the transition plan from the Marshall to the proposed UP Academy.

- With regard to attrition and mobility, we looked at the data on the Marshall and looked at student mobility. First of all it's a highly mobile population during the school year right now, but looking at the end of June and the beginning of the Fall next year, on an annual basis for the past five years the school loses approximately one class per grade at every grade level and that's not counting attrition during the school year. When you look at the typical attrition, you lose about 160 kids on average over the past 5 years. The success for this school next year will be related to the commitment to take every kid that is there, if they take application, they are guaranteed a seat. We hope for a better attrition rate. There will be a size reduction because if you reduce size slightly, you can increase complexity and set the school up for success. Also, in the following year we're looking to roll out 6th, 7th and 8th grade. So we start with a small size so that the school can expand without moving any kids out. This is consistent with what the district does when it moves a school out to K-8.
- First year we won't have a 6th grade, so we miss them. Also we applied for 750 seats in order to have buffer, so we can have stronger retention.
- We have a commitment to class size; we can add more classes per grade level rather than add to class size if need be. We are prepared to make budget changes and decisions in response to how many kids enroll.

5. What specific challenges do you expect to encounter with a larger school, different educational programming, and broader grade span than UP Academy Charter School of Boston? What expertise do you have that will help you effectively address these challenges?

- Governance and financial management will be challenging. Also faculty and how to build team around the school. Also recruitment will be a challenge.
- A challenge will be running an elementary school and evaluating our success. The metrics for measuring success are different for elementary kids from middle school kids. We'll draw from other good models like Edward Brooke. We have expertise on this team to deal with challenges.
- The school is so large, so distributed leadership model is key to success which we use at UP Academy Boston and will bring to UP Academy Dorchester. Solid distributed leadership helps students and staff and is effective in running a large school.
- I would add that with distributed leadership, having a small management-to-teacher ratio, we have a cohesive vision for the school and the culture. We'll follow the same process to reach our goal together.
- I'll add one piece on the operations side; clearly there are differences with what we do at UP Academy Boston. We've been very proactive with BPS, especially how it relates to the facility. From a safety perspective, we look at what we need to do and what needs to be improved upon. How do we build school from the inside so that the learning can take place? Unlocking Potential focused on the co-director model, where you have a principal and a director of operations. Having an operations person frees up the principal to focus on their job.
- This is a large school with different social and emotional needs. We have student support, such as nurses, counselors, psychologist etc. This is a challenge, but we are on it.

6. What specific advantages and challenges do you expect to encounter in your relationship with BPS as a proposed Horace Mann charter school and in light of your experiences thus far with UP Academy Charter School of Boston?

- With lessons learned and challenges from a finance and operational perspective, we learned a lot with regard to facility investments, transportation, funding, and cash-flow planning. We've learned a lot from these challenges as well as developed strong relationships with relevant sections of BPS. We are confident that we can work through issues.
- Also the relationships that UP academy and Unlocking Potential have developed. An important development is that I'm not the only point of contact with the district now. For example, the team has gone out and met with the head of facilities and visited the Marshall and walked the building and identified what they need to do; I wasn't even at those meetings. Similarly, the same thing with transportation and human resources. There is more autonomy which prevents

bottle necks. This is a nice asset to have.

- Payroll was a huge hurdle in first year, but now it is all set up. This won't be a problem going forward, we've tightened it up.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

1. What do you consider the most prevalent “barriers to learning” for your targeted student population and how will the proposed programming address these obstacles?

- One thing with the population of students, currently with 3rd through 5th grade population at least, the MCAS advance and proficient numbers are 10% and 12% for ELA and Math, respectively. We know going into this school that we have a lot of students who are not at the grade level they should be at. We're working on building model that will serve students with a variety of different needs. A lot of that has been heavily informed by the work of other great schools such as Edward Brooke, who have shared ideas with regard to models. A big part of our model has been identifying, for each grade level, the key non-negotiable standards that kids really need to master to have the best shot of getting caught up quickly. Small class size model with robust adult-to-student ratio and workshop models will allow time for groups to meet kids where they are and achieve academic growth.
- A similarity with UP Academy Boston and UP Academy Dorchester is that it is a highly inclusive program, in terms of how we serve students with disabilities and ELL students, so there will be significant investment in highly trained and certified staff.

2. How are you going to address the needs of the youngest students?

- The experience of members has been very helpful. We have members with great elementary experience and we draw upon that knowledge and built programs given that experience. Character education is critical. We'll focus on what is more appropriate for younger students. We'll also focus on how to be more flexible with adults in the building so that there can be small groups with students throughout the day.
- Our behavioral management program is built on our core values at UP Boston: teamwork, integrity, grants, engagement, and respect. Our standards flow from our values. Character educational lessons are daily for each grade. We also do morning motivation every day for the younger grades. Students are graded both characteristically and academically. There is a consequence/reward system, where students could lose choices if they aren't making good choices and could have more freedom with better choices. We're using an achievement chart that is color scaled. For middle school, we'll probably use a merit/demerit system.

3. In the application, the inherent programmatic differences amongst the grades were unclear. Please describe how the program would be experienced differently for a preschooler, a third grader, and a seventh grader.

- For K through 4 the model with regard to time will look similar. In those elementary grades there will be one classroom teacher per grade level and one residence teacher per grade level. Throughout the day teachers will have a little more flexibility, for example about when they want to teach math. Their deans and leadership teams will help them make those decisions but it might have to do with when other support staffs are available. Starting at 5th grade we become more departmentalized with separate teachers for each subject. Time dedication is the same for each subject.

4. Tell us about the progress in developing power standards (both academic and character education).

- We've completed identifying all the standards. "We" is myself, and Whitney Schultz at Unlocking Potential and we have been the primary authors of the curriculum. We haven't been creating it from scratch. We've looked at what Edward Brooke has done, a lot of what Uncommon has done, as well as MATCH elementary school. The math and ELA standards are complete; the power standards have been identified. The social studies and science are halfway there. The next step in standards development is creating 0-4 rubrics for those power standards; what mastery really looks like. We have models of those done for about half of the grades. That'll be a chunk of work for the rest of this year. K-5 is what we are focusing on this year.
- Currently at the UP Academy we are using the MA framework, we've gone a step beyond that, to breaking them down slightly to smaller standards, based on the work of Brooke. I imagine we'll get to a place where it looks very similar across campuses.
- We're building an elementary school where we're anticipating our 6th graders at UP Dorchester will be significantly ahead of incoming 6th graders at UP Boston. We're sharing but the programming is likely to look different.
- For K through 5th grade, the character standards are completed as well. For the next step, they are developing the lessons. The deans of students will be developing the lessons. Right now, we are putting frameworks in place of what we'd like those lessons to look like.

5. Tell us about the curriculum development preparations for the first year of operation. You have made the commitment to provide teachers with scopes and sequences, unit plans, and suggested pacing guides. Describe the progress of this effort and the action plan is to complete prior to staff orientation.

- Unlocking Potential knew that if we wanted to manage elementary schools down the line that we needed to be prepared to do so. We have invested a somewhat unprecedented amount of resources this year in preparing to be great at operating elementary schools, especially in the area of curriculum. We have a full-time employee dedicated to curriculum. We look to which programs are out there that are researched-based that are working in practice as well that we can utilize at different grade levels to have success.
- With math, we've been researching heavily as it's harder to get a feel on what is working.
- For literacy, we are employing a reading and writing workshop model. We've put models in place for teachers to follow. For literacy it is optional for teachers; they have an option to tweak program to fit their students. To support the workshop model we will most likely be purchasing a phonics program. Wilson is a company that has a suite of excellent products that spans grades from K to 5 and beyond into middle school that we'll be purchasing. For math we have taken Brooke's curriculum, but we'll have to take some content out so that our students can catch up in first few years. For science and social studies we're still exploring our options, but there is a program called Sangari Science, which is aligned to the common core and very lab based and technology based. We are going to have a learning lab in our schools. We're look at Social Studies live and History Live as resources.

6. Will the teacher focus during the summer be on developing literacy curriculum?

- We think we'll get the most bang for our buck if teachers are planning literacy from the assessment results. A lot of our time this summer will be teachers tweaking those literacy programs as well as really diving into the standards and unpacking the most important standards.
- With a successful middle school in mind we are thinking about it from both sides. Building a curriculum with 8th grade in mind. We know what 8th looks like, so we can figure out how to get there the best way.

Assessment, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

1. How will the promotion policy impact children who are far below grade level?

- What we've learned from our experience with UP Academy Boston is that it shifts over time. Our current thinking is that we'll probably give ourselves more flexibility with earlier years because we have those kids for longer and we'll have a better gauge of where they are developmentally; to have more flexibility with younger students and to be more true to the data the first year to the different bench marks laid out in the application for the older kids. With regard to the first

year transition from the Marshall to UP Dorchester, we'll honor the principal's recommendations on who is retained and not retained.

- We need to come in with the mindset to see how much progress is made and not let the policy overwhelm what the right decision is, given that we'll be with these students in our program for some long period of time. At UP Boston the principles of the policy stood but there were student-by-student decisions made. In this first year it'll probably be made less and less frequently at times. Roughly speaking, depending on grade level, between 15% and 20% were retained in their grade level for 7th and 8th grade this past year. That seems high but if you look at the little data that we have, students were dropping out of high school left and right.
- I wanted to stress the importance of creating differentiated abilities in each classroom. That model will enable us to appropriately educate every student regardless of how the promotion decisions are made. So you don't have to retain students of the exact same skill set at each level for the educational model to work.

2. Is there flexibility in your retention policy for English language learners or students with disabilities?

- There are some clear principles in terms of growth. There is some of element of discretion in terms of how we look at promotional decisions. We want to ensure the all students are getting great college preparation, regardless of disability or ELL status.

3. Is proficiency on the MCAS the academic goal for all students? What other academic and non-academic goals are students being assessed for?

- Each trimester there's literacy assessments, formal and informal assessments and regular communications with parents and board. We'll know on a regular basis what progress is being made and where targeted efforts may need to switch throughout the year.
- MCAS is a goal internally, but it's only a marker of how we're doing. We go to 8th grade and our mission is college.
- We're preparing kids for high school. It's not all about MCAS. It's about a broader exposure for kids. We're thinking about kids for the long run.
- I ran the Boston Prep Charter School for 8 years and I think we had some success in character education; however character preparation is very hard to measure even if you are doing a great job. There's value in creating a school culture.

- One of the things that Unlocking Potential is to decide is what resources we're going to be putting behind tracking the progress after they leave the doors of our existing schools. The decision that we're moving towards is that we would that decide; whether that's provided on a contractual basis or just a service that we provide, is still up in the air. It's highly likely that we'll provide a lot of resources towards doing this so we can continue reflect on the progress we're making as a management organization. The schools have a decision as to what resources they devote towards families and parents as they get closer to high school.

School Characteristics

1. As a proposed school turnaround, you are intending a dramatic shift in school organization and culture. How will this transformation in the school culture occur for students and families?

- There are various points along the way. The planning is already happening. There are planned parent info sessions and these will be very regular meetings, bi-monthly. They'll include updates, meaningful info on dramatic change; not just academic, but also the culture stuff, as well as helping parents understand how this will feel different. We'll have staff communication with parents; one-on-ones with parents regularly. We have student and teacher orientations. UP Boston is focused on culture and routines for both families and staff. Once that's built, the second year we can focus more on academics.
- A lot of the pre-opening is focused on student achievement and opportunity. We're going to have uniforms because it drives cultural focus and will help students be high school and college-ready. We'll help parents understand why the culture will help their kids be college-ready.
- This spring we will meet one-on-one with every family at the school to answer any questions that they have. Additionally in summer, early, teachers will meet every family, see classrooms and get to know students more. Also there is a family orientation night.

2. How does the board respond to allegations that the existing UP Academy is not serving the same students, in particular, those who cannot comply with stricter behavioral expectations? What oversight practices have been implemented to ensure open and equitable access to the program?

- I think it's extraordinarily important to board that we are continually looking at good data. It's very hard to tell the story through antidotes, either in favor of the school or against the school. The data which we've looked at every month of UP Boston's existence indicates that we are doing significantly better than the district average at keeping students. Our attrition rates for ELL are below the district average and our attrition rate for students with disabilities is about the same as the

district average. If you look at reasons why students leave UP Boston, they are similar to other district schools. Part of the story relied on misleading information based on the BES program. I think constant rigorous scrutiny of the data is key.

- This is the non-negotiable. If we are on board for a school that isn't serving all students, than we aren't doing our jobs. This isn't an ideal system. We talk about general data, than we talk about specific kids. As a board we can hope for a leadership structure that is doing their best to makes these decisions. With the Boston Globe article, I think it's a good article because I think it is a real issue to discuss, that kids aren't doing well in Boston public schools.

[Follow up: "Has board dealt with a complaint that you had to formally resolve?"]

- No formal complaints to deal with, just a hearing regarding a particular discipline incident, not a formal complaint. There have been no complaints.
- We make a great effort to reach every student and every family and explain how we think our school can help the students and really help students with special needs.
- The Boston Globe article is good because the data tells the truth. I'd rather have data out there, than have it lurking in people's minds.
- With regard to this question of transfers, we've been looking at BPS expansion policies and expulsion policies. It's very tricky. As a charter, a student can dis-enroll and choose to come back to the district. We don't want it to be that if a student is at a school and they see a threat of consequence coming, so they leave school and enroll elsewhere.
- We have limits on transfers within the district. You can only transfer once. You can only transfer during certain times of year and at a certain point you can't transfer anymore. A student can't leave McCormick to avoid discipline, but if at a charter school they can dis-enroll and choose to go to another school. Based on our interpretation of the law, UP Academy can't say "no, you can't leave" and the district can't say "no, we won't take you."
- We do backfill seats, including kids from the McCormick but that family would have had to apply early so they are in the right place on the waitlist.
- The ideal management is what is happening in Lawrence. They've only lost one student. Students can't just transfer and we love it because when there is a tough situation with a student, the school has to figure out how to work it out, the family has to work it out, and the student has to work it out. The students win in that situation. That's not how it is in Boston and not how it is with charters, but that is the ultimate goal.

- Where we have had the least attrition is in our self-contained classrooms.
- The Marshall has some really emotionally challenged and disabled students. If we are privileged with managing this school, whatever policies we put in place, there is nothing there in any way propelling or accelerating the rate at which those students are leaving the building. It's a critical part of our mission that those students, the toughest students, stay in the building.

Special Student Populations and Services

1. Does Marshall presently provide a full continuum of special education services? What discussions have occurred with BPS regarding these programs within the school? Will the building be solely for UP Academy's use or will other programs reside in the facility?

- The classes for students with disabilities and ELLs at beginning of year were not full at the Marshall. That's not because the district was avoiding enrolling. We leave space in those classrooms so that students can come into them during the year. We leave them open because kids are identified as emotionally impaired or ELLs and they come to us throughout the year.
- There's no BEST-like program at the Marshall that the district would need to make a decision on like there was at the Gavin. BEST program is an affiliate of the Murphy.
- UP Academy Dorchester would be the only program within the facility. If there's space that we don't need, BPS may consider, but there would be clear communication with board, management, and school leadership. We don't want to endanger the mission of school.

2. Tell us about the intended changes to the relationship with the district regarding services for special student populations as described in the draft MOU. How will the staffing model be impacted?

- With the MOU in place for UP Boston, there are lessons learned about things we need, services and how things progress throughout the year. With the MOU at UP Dorchester, there is a focus on more autonomy with hiring staff and teachers, so that we can best service the students at the school. Also the facility, with UP Dorchester, we are guaranteed to be in the facility for the duration of the time that we will be there. So we won't be moved out of the building. We can build out the facility in the future. Also transportation; so in year one there were bumps along the way with UP Boston, so we had a lot of discussion with BPS. BPS has agreed to provide transportation during school day to accommodate UP's schedule. We

feel we've developed a strong relationship with BPS.

- From BPS' perspective, we know with something new there are challenges. We learned how to make systems to deal with challenges. The district has collaborated on a number of different levels to craft the changes to the MOU. There is a set system to be successful operating with autonomy.
- Regarding special education flexibilities, at UP Boston there was an issue getting services that we needed in timely manner in order to be compliant with the kids IEPs. We have flexibility with the dollars which allows us to contract with outside providers, to serve students' best interest.
- We intend to make changes to MOU in place with UP Academy Boston as well.

3. Please describe the proposed staffing to implement both ESL and special education programming. Please explain the rationale to maintain the same staffing for special education and English language learner programming during the school's growth from 530 students to over 700 students.

- We're in a period now of optimism but uncertainty with respect to how this MOU is actually going to play out and how large the dollar amount released to the school will be. With those dollars we will employ speech therapists, psychologist and individuals focused on compliance. Over time if students' needs increase, and we have funding, we will increase staff. We are set up to be flexible. Surplus shows we have flexibility to meet any needs that pop up.
- The additional funding from the district that comes out of the MOU is not included in the budget. Also, the profile of the special education and ELL students in year one will be very different than the profile in year four because many of those students will have been with us for several years. The needs of students will change, so our staffing needs may change over time.
- Much more likely that the staffing plan will adjust over time and added resources will shift depending on student needs. It's more of a placeholder at this point than anything else.
- We've learned so much about the budget from the experience at UP Boston, so we're confident that we'll have proportional flexibility.
- The application does not accurately reflect in this section the changes made to the MOU quite close to the application submission date. A counselor would be separate from BPS services under the MOU and be part of our budget.
- It's important to differentiate between students with disabilities and English language learners, because if you look at ELLs, the way it works in Boston is

that they come to us in kindergarten and we get a very small number of them in high grades as you go along.

Capacity

1. As a relatively new board, how will you build board capacity to oversee two separate charter schools serving over 1200 students?

- We're looking to do two separate committees on the board that will be cross representational; so board members, parents, staff and administration of each school. Whatever is best practice for the Marshall is best practice for Boston. We bring people on via committee. We can start day one. We want Marshall and Boston parent representation on the board, but we understand there is a lot of complexity that comes along with that; we have a limited board size and we want to expand in Boston.
- With regard to meetings, rotating locations is something we haven't discussed as board yet. This is agenda item No. 1. The concept is a cycle of three locations: UP Dorchester, UP Boston and the Unlocking Potential offices.
- General understanding that there is going to be more work.
- We have standing bi-monthly meetings, but we've been meeting every month and likely will going forward.

2. Please describe a specific obstacle that the board encountered in the past two years and how the board successfully addressed the issue.

- We had a principal transition. Unlocking Potential nominated a new principal. We had robust conversation at the school leadership level. This forced us to prioritize and also helped develop relationship between Unlocking Potential and the board.
- The five-year budget conversation was also a robust and strategic conversation. UP Boston faces a different forward-thinking financial picture than UP Dorchester. The initial budget of the school was heavily dependent on private funds. We as a board has to very quickly decide what the long-term sustainability model was for the school and how the organization would transition. We talked about this a lot as a board and formed a sub-committee that met weekly over two to three months talking about finances, operations and academics. That group came to the board multiple times with proposals, options, and recommendations. There were many healthy debates and we ultimately came to decision which is, as the school matures we will be changing the staffing model somewhat for social studies and science to reduce the teacher-to-student ratio and the time in the classroom for those subjects to reduce that staffing cost of the school without sacrificing the other core elements such as ELA math and culture.

3. Unlocking Potential: Please tell us about the lessons learned from the experiences in opening and operating the UP Academy Charter School of Boston and the UP Academy Lawrence Middle School.

- It's very likely we will have a fourth school as well next fall. There are 1,600 students in our Network. We don't take lightly. It requires financial resources and capital to ensure we can have financial stability and provide the resources to our schools that they need. It requires talent and talent development and recruiting. We need to execute on hiring more than 150 educators for our different campuses and ensure that every campus gets dedicated time and resources to find great people. We do two things, we start new schools and we support them once they are running. The Marshall in particular, it will probably be the most complex given its size, its history, and needs of students. We're not naive about the challenge of UP Dorchester. We know that there is work to be done. We would never agree to manage a school if we didn't think we could provide excellent quality.

4. What capacity has Unlocking Potential developed in order to continue to support the development and operation of a third school?

- As we move forward, the future schools that we'll operate will be more dependent on the public dollar. Our organization right now, this current fiscal year which ends in June, has a budget of about \$3 mil and about half of that needed to be privately raised. Once we as an organization get to about six schools, the revenues that we take in from district grants, anticipated state or federal grants, and management fees we believe will roughly approximate the expenses we have to start new schools and support schools so that we won't have a large external need.

Governance

1. How has the board assessed its performance?

- We haven't done a formal evaluation. We need to build a mechanism.
- We did have our first annual board retreat in late summer. We got together for a half a day to tackle issues and collectively reflected on big strategic issues we were facing.

2. Describe the process used by the board to evaluate the performance of Unlocking Potential.

- We have a very detailed contract between the school and the management organization. We lay out every role and responsibility of each party. Annually, we look to evaluate Unlocking Potential. We haven't done a formal evaluation

yet. I do think this is a big part of the work for the Spring. We were very pleased with first year results at UP Boston; not just MCAS but also the data and the more anecdotal stuff as well hiring staff and delivering on promises.

- With regard to the principal transition and the budget plan, that was an opportunity for the board to give feedback to Unlocking Potential. We've done that formally.
- This has been a work in progress. We've been learning as we go. We've done a lot to improve the communication between the two organizations. It's an on-going process. Robert takes his job very seriously and is very communicative and keeps board informed. We've created better communication channels.

Management

1. Lana Ewing: Please describe the Unlocking Potential Principal Residency program. How has the program and your professional experience prepared you for the role of administrator?

- The residency program has been multifaceted this year. Unlocking Potential, in a very structured and formal manner, provides professional development every Wednesday for three to five hours on different topics throughout the year for principals and residents. Those span a variety of topics from issues with special education, scheduling, fiscal management, and culture. Unlocking Potential brings in external folks, folks from the school, with expertise. They've been great and very helpful as the topics are crucial in things you need to know to run a school. Additionally, before coming into Unlocking Potential, I hadn't had a formal school leadership role, so for the last three months I had a fulltime job at Excel Academy at Orient Heights where I took over the position of Dean of Curriculum Instruction (she was on maternity leave) and did all the things she would have done; supporting the teachers, managing the teachers, providing feedback, inclusion work and working really closely with the principal and the rest of the leadership team. Additionally, another part of my residency this year has been providing teachers with coaching as part of MTR program weekly. A big part of residency program is planning the school. I've had a lot of opportunity to travel to high performing charter schools across the country and learned what they are doing well and planned based off that.

2. How were Ms. Ewing and Ms. Linnenbank selected for their roles at the proposed school?

- Part of our relationship with Unlocking Potential, is that they identify and train potential leadership. The decision on who would be leader of school would be something that would happen after we were granted a charter. We've worked with Lana a bit on the development of UP Academy of Dorchester, but there will be a formal process if we are granted a charter.

3. How will Unlocking Potential and the board support Ms. Ewing in her role at the school? Has Superintendent Johnson provided final approval of Ms. Ewing?

- We're waiting for charter approval for the board to formally assess Lana's candidacy and for us to go through the BPS process.
- The district procedure is that once the board identifies a candidate and recommended that candidate, Dr. Johnson would then have right to meet with candidate and approve the candidate.
- We see our role of supporting the school leader as pushing back, asking hard questions, focusing on strategic priorities, looking really hard at the data, and when necessary putting it on Unlocking Potential to ensure that the school is being managed in alignment with our priorities. We (the board) are not the managers of the school, we are the oversight.
- From Unlocking Potential standpoint, our most important responsibility is ensuring that our leaders are prepared and that they have genuine experience in that specific school setting. We also ensure that our leaders get the necessary coaching that they need to be successful.

4. Describe how Unlocking Potential operates as a network. What personnel and structures are dedicated to individual schools vs. shared over the multiple schools?

- We'll always hire a leader in residence prior to the launch of the school; two leaders in residence, Lana and Kristen. Those are school specific positions. Generally, there are economies of scale, spreading experts across schools. The one exception in our portfolio could be this school. I'm strongly considering having an individual at the home office be dedicated to making sure this school has all the support it needs from Unlocking Potential, but typically we'd be leveraging individuals across school networks.

5. How are teachers supported to create a sustainable work culture?

- At UP Boston the administration sees their jobs as coaching. They're focused on being in teacher's classrooms and working with teachers probably more than I've ever seen at any other school. That is how people are spending their time, and they are good at it according to the teachers.
- An individual at UP Boston that has been identified as a great Dean of Students. Others are being considered within network, but it will likely be a good mix of great leaders.

6. Describe the experience at UP Academy Boston with staff satisfaction and retention. What lessons will you take with you to the proposed school?

- We survey our teams twice a year. Our results from last year showed that we have a very satisfied team. People really enjoyed being part of this system. We had about 85% staff retention within our network. Our goal was over 75%. We accomplished that goal. We hire younger, more driven people, so it's our job to make sure that we develop them and eventually have a veteran staff.

Finances/Facilities

1. Tell us about the past success in fundraising for UP Academy Boston. How will a similar model of fundraising be sustained for the proposed school? Are there concerns about donor burnout?

- In the early years of UP Boston, we were dependent on private fundraising. All of that was done by Unlocking Potential. We talked about whether or not the school going forward needs to be dependent on private funding, and the proposal that is on the table says that we do not. We do not expect much private fundraising need for UP Dorchester. The only private fundraising in the plan would be a small amount of support from Unlocking Potential in year one only. By year four we expect school to be sustainable on the public dollar and would require building any private fundraising capability.

2. To what extent did the board consider the fee paid to Unlocking Potential is the appropriate fee going forward? How did you evaluate this?

- We did and we will continue to do that evaluation. Right now, as part of the sustainability taskforce, we've really considered all the services that Unlocking Potential provides and whether a management fee was an adequate fee for that, and I think we would all say that it is a pretty good deal for us right now. However, that may change over time. As the network evolves and as the school evolves, that is a process that is part of our evaluation of Unlocking Potential. We'll continue to revisit and review what the right approach is.