*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

### 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906 Telephone: (781) 338-3000

##  TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

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| Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D.*Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:**  | Mitchell D. Chester, Ed.D., Commissioner |
| **Date:**  | January 13, 2017 |
| **Subject:** | Charter Schools – Extension of Probation for Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School |

In October 2014, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (Board) placed Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School (BGA) on probation and imposed eight conditions related to compliance, finance, governance, and academics. At its meeting on February 23, 2016, the Board voted to renew the charter of BGA and to extend probation with four conditions related to governance and academic achievement. This memorandum provides a report on the progress of BGA in meeting these conditions.

BGA has met two of the four conditions imposed; the school has partially met the third condition to demonstrate significant and sustained academic improvement; the deadline for the fourth condition is December 31, 2017. I am recommending that the Board extend probation and impose a new set of conditions on the school’s charter. The rationale for my recommendation follows.

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| **Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School**  |
| **Type of Charter** | Horace Mann III | **Location** | Boston |
| **Regional or Non-Regional** | Non-Regional | **Districts in Region** | N/A |
| **Year Opened** | 2011 | **Year(s) Renewed** | 2016 |
| **Maximum Enrollment** | 595 | **Current Enrollment** | 476 |
| **Chartered Grade Span** | 6-12 | **Current Grade Span** | 6-12 |
| **Students on Waitlist** | 513[[1]](#footnote-1) | **Current Age of school** | 6 years |
| **Mission Statement:** Boston Green Academy welcomes diverse students of all abilities, educates and empowers them to succeed in college and career, and prepares them to lead in the sustainability of our community and world. |

**School History**

BGA is a Horace Mann III[[2]](#footnote-2) charter school in Boston Public School (BPS). In its application to become a Horace Mann III charter school, BGA promised to serve students from a Boston high school that was recommended for closure. In its subsequent memorandum of understanding (MOU) with BPS, BGA agreed to open in 2011 with students in grades 9-12, to absorb the student population from Odyssey High School (Odyssey), and to occupy Odyssey’s facility in South Boston. While BGA was originally proposed as a 6-12 school, the MOU altered the founding group’s original growth plan and delayed the offering of middle school grades.

From 2011 until the end of the 2013-14 school year, BGA served grades 9-12 in the South Boston facility. In the fall of 2014, the school moved to a new location in Brighton and began to serve the 6th grade. For two years, the Brighton facility was co-located with Another Course to College, another BPS school. In the fall of 2015, BGA began to serve the 7th grade. This year, BGA is the sole occupant of its Brighton facility.

Due to persistent concerns, the school received five visits from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) in the school’s first four years of operation. These visits documented concerns about the school’s faithfulness to its charter, the quality of the academic program, the school’s poor academic results, the quality and amount of support for diverse learners, and the school’s lack of compliance with regulatory requirements.[[3]](#footnote-3) In October 2014, the Board voted to put BGA on probation with eight conditions related to finance, governance, and academics.

In February 2016, BGA was granted a renewal of its charter with continued probation. The school had met the conditions related to compliance, but conditions related to academic achievement and governance were extended. During the 2016-17 school year, BGA is serving its full grade span of 6 through 12. The school, however, is currently under-enrolled by 85 students due to constraints imposed by previous facilities.

**Report on Probation**

Below is a summary of the school’s progress toward meeting the four conditions imposed on the school.

**Condition 1:** Until further notice, Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School must submit to the Department, at charterschools@doe.mass.edu, board meeting agendas, materials, and minutes prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school's board members. Additionally, if board materials do not already include this information, the school must also submit monthly financial statements.

**Status: Met/Ongoing**

This condition has been in place since 2014, when the school was first placed on probation. Since that time, the school has regularly submitted the school’s board minutes and related documents, including board agendas and regular headmaster reports, along with the financial statements shared with the board. Submitted board minutes have demonstrated compliance with the Open Meeting Law with the exception of the board’s meeting on August 30, 2016, during which the board voted to go into executive session without a quorum.

**Condition 2:** The school must maintain the established escrow account to pay for any potential closing, legal, and audit expenses associated with closure, should that occur.

**Status: Met**

The school worked with the Department and Boston Public Schools to set up this account on August 12, 2015. The board of the school established an escrow account of $15,000, an amount approved by the Department. The school also obtained a letter of support from the Boston Public Schools concerning the escrow account. The school has maintained this account.

**Condition 3:** By December 31, 2016, the school must demonstrate significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science. Should the school fail to do so, the Commissioner and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will consider revoking the school’s charter based on failure to meet this condition, rather than wait to see improvement by December 31, 2017.

**Status: Partially Met**

In 2016, BGA’s overall performance did not meet state standards, and the school has not demonstrated significant academic improvement in the aggregate from its prior year’s scores. While BGA saw improvement in its 10th grade achievement in 2016, the school’s middle school performance declined. In 2015, BGA administered the PARCC assessment to its grade 6 students and the MCAS to its grade 10 students. In 2016, BGA administered the PARCC assessment in grades 6 and 7 and the MCAS for grade 10. Please see the data charts below and full academic results in the attached site visit report.

Since 2014, when the school first received a level designation, the school has been in Level 3. In 2014, BGA was in Level 3 and the 6th percentile. In 2015, BGA remained in Level 3 and was in the 11th percentile.[[4]](#footnote-4) In 2016, the school did not meet its gap narrowing targets for its progress toward narrowing proficiency gaps for all students or for high needs students. In 2016, the school has a cumulative Progress and Performance Index (PPI) of 64 for all students and of 61 for the high needs subgroup. In 2016, BGA remains in Level 3 for being among the lowest performing 20 percent of middle-high schools statewide. BGA’s percentile relative to other middle-high schools statewide declined in 2016 to the 10th percentile.

BGA, however, has dramatically improved its graduation rates when compared to the graduation rates of the former Odyssey, which were 55.3 percent at 4 years and 58.1 percent at 5 years. The school has not met the state accountability target of 80 percent for 4-year graduation rate, but has met the target of 85 percent for the 5-year graduation rate. BGA’s 4-year graduation rate for the 2015 cohort was 77.3 percent, and the 5-year graduation rate was 85.3 percent for the 2014 cohort. BGA’s dropout rate continues to decline from prior years. In 2015, BGA’s dropout rate was 2.9 percent, which was significantly better than its annual target of 5.5 and its six-year goal of 4.7 percent. Odyssey’s dropout rate was 13.5 percent in 2011, the year before the school was taken over by BGA.

Additionally, when compared to the academic results of Odyssey, BGA has greatly increased the percent of grade 10 students reaching proficiency. In 2011, 53 percent of Odyssey’s students reached proficiency in English language arts (ELA), 38 percent were proficient in mathematics, and 7 percent were proficient in science. By 2016, 80 percent of BGA students reached proficiency in ELA, 58 percent were proficient in mathematics, and 36 percent reached proficiency in science. The school provides other comparative data in its response to the Year Six Site Visit Report (attached).

The school’s Composite Performance Index (CPI) for all students declined in both ELA and mathematics between 2015 and 2016, but increased for science and technology/engineering. Aggregate CPI scores are shown in the three displays that follow. In the charts below, in 2012 through 2014, only grade 10 MCAS scores are represented. For 2015, grade 6 PARCC and 10th grade MCAS are included; and for 2016, grades 6 and 7 PARCC and 10th grade MCAS are represented.

**ELA CPI Chart**



**Mathematics CPI Chart**



**Science CPI Chart**



Student growth percentiles (SGP) for all students and high needs students declined in 2016. The school’s SGP for all students in 2016 was 36.0 in ELA (below target growth) and 25.0 in mathematics (below target growth). In the table below, SGPs for 2013 and 2014 only represent 10th grade results. The 2015 and 2016 SGPs include grade 6 and grade 6 and 7 SGPs as well as grade 10.

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|  | **BGA Median Student Growth Percentile**  |
| **Year** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** |
| **ELA SGP** | All | 60 | 37.5 | 37.5 | 36 |
| High needs | 60.5 | 36 | 34 | 33 |
| **Math SGP** | All  | 31 | 26 | 26 | 25 |
| High needs | 30.5 | 26 | 25 | 25 |

The school’s grade 10 CPIs for 2016 demonstrated improvement from the prior year: 92.2 for ELA, 83.2 for mathematics, and 72.3 for science and technology/engineering. The grade 10 CPIs increased from 2015, with a 1.7 point increase in ELA, a 5.2 point increase in mathematics, and a 6.6 point increase in science and technology/engineering. In 2016, 80 percent of BGA grade 10 students scored in the Proficient and Advanced categories on the ELA assessment. In mathematics, 58 percent scored Proficient and Advanced. In science and technology/engineering, 36 percent scored Proficient and Advanced. The school’s grade 10 MCAS SGPs for 2016 were 37.0 in ELA and 27.5 in mathematics, both below the state median of 50.0.

The school’s historical SGP data for the 10th grade MCAS follow.

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| **BGA Median Student Growth Percentile for 10th graders** |
| **Year** | **2012** | **2013** | **2014** | **2015** | **2016** |
| **English Language Arts** | 27.0 | 60.0 | 37.5 | 43.5 | 37.0 |
| **Mathematics** | 27.0 | 31.0 | 26.0 | 36.5 | 27.5 |

PARCC scores are designated by Levels, with Levels 4 and 5 meeting and exceeding expectations respectively. In 2016, 31 percent of grades 6 and 7 BGA students received a Level 4 or 5 in ELA. Fourteen percent of grades 6 and 7 students received a Level 4 or 5 in mathematics. The transitional CPI was generated using linked PARCC and MCAS scores; the school’s transitional CPI for 2016 was 68.4 in ELA and 48.4 in mathematics. The transitional SGP was generated using current PARCC and prior MCAS scores; the school’s transitional 2016 SGP for grades 6 and 7 were 34.0 in ELA and 24.0 in mathematics. In 2015, for grade 6, the school’s transitional SGP was 35.0 in ELA and 25.0 in mathematics.

**Condition 4:** By December 31, 2017, the school must demonstrate continued significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science. Should the school fail to do so, the Commissioner and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will consider revoking the school’s charter based on failure to meet this condition.

**Status: Not Yet Applicable**

**Additional Evidence**

In addition to reviewing the academic achievement data, the Department conducted a targeted site visit to BGA on November 1, 2016. The site visit included classroom observations and focus groups with the board, school leadership, teachers and students. The school’s ratings and evidence from the site visit follow.

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| **Massachusetts Charter School Performance Criteria** | **Rating** |
| **Faithfulness to Charter** | **Criterion 1: Mission and Key Design Elements**The school is faithful to its mission, implements the key design elements outlined in its charter, and substantially meets its accountability plan goals. | ** Meets** |
| **Academic Program Success** | **Criterion 5: Student Performance**The school provides consistently meets state student performance standards for academic growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness. | **Level: 3****Percentile: 10th** |
| **Criterion 6: Program Delivery**The school delivers a high quality academic program that meets the academic needs of all students.  | 2. Instruction | **Partially Meets** |
| 3. Assessment and Program Evaluation | **Partially Meets** |
| 4. Supports for Diverse Learners | **Meets** |
| **Organizational Viability** | **Criterion 8: Capacity**The school sustains a well-functioning organizational structure and creates a professional working climate for staff. | 1. School Leadership | **Meets** |
| **Criterion 9: Governance**Members of the board of trustees act as public agents authorized by the state and provide competent and appropriate governance to ensure the success and sustainability of the school. | ** Partially Meets** |

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| **Rating Key** |
| ** Exceeds** | The school fully and consistently meets the criterion and is a potential exemplar in this area. |
| ** Meets** | The school generally meets the criterion and/or minor concern(s) are noted. |
| ** Partially Meets** | The school meets some aspects of the criterion but not others and/or moderate concern(s) are noted. |
| ** Falls Far Below** | The school falls far below the criterion and/or significant concerns are noted. |

**Faithfulness to Charter**

* During the visit, stakeholders shared a consistent understanding of two of the three aspects of the mission: serving a diverse student population and a focus on sustainability. Two focus groups did not report on the college and career aspect of the mission.
* In year six, the school is meeting its mission to enroll a diverse population and has structures and programming in place that are faithful to the mission and key design elements outlined in the mission and accountability plan.

**Academic Program Success**

* School staff reported a common understanding of classroom routines and pedagogy, with an instructional focus on increasing rigor/student depth of knowledge and teaching evidence based argumentation. Visitors observed these common practices in a majority of classrooms.
* Observed instructional practices did not reflect high expectations for students in half of the classrooms observed.
* Visitors observed inconsistency in student engagement and classroom environments.
* The school collects quantitative and qualitative data and is in the beginning phases of implementing data cycles following trainings provided by the new director of teaching and learning.
* The school has not conducted self-evaluations for its special education or English language programming.
* The school has a system in place to identify students in need of support. The school provides interventions, supports and resources to diverse learners.

**Organizational Viability**

* School stakeholders reported that they have clear roles and responsibilities, and processes for decision-making and communication appeared to be clear within the school community. The school is increasing its focus on instructional support and supervision this year as a result of student achievement data.
* This year, the school employs a part-time director of teaching and learning responsible for professional development, observation, feedback, and assessment systems.
* Board documentation and the board focus group reflected that the board had one recent instance of non-compliance with the Open Meeting Law and has recently had attendance issues with over a third of its members.
* The board understands its role and provides oversight in the areas of finance and governance but continues to have limited engagement with student assessment data despite the probationary academic condition on the school’s charter.

As noted above, BGA has met two of the four conditions imposed and has partially met the condition to demonstrate significant and sustained academic improvement. The partially met condition explicitly states that the Board and I will consider revoking the school’s charter based on failure to demonstrate significant and sustained academic improvement by December 31, 2016. At this point, I do not recommend revocation. As noted above, BGA’s academic performance as a whole school is not yet acceptable, but the school continues to make progress in its high school achievement as well as college and career readiness indicators. I am concerned about the poor academic achievement at the school’s newly added 6th and 7th grades and the low growth scores in all grade levels. In its 6th year, the school is providing a high school program that is a vast improvement from the Odyssey. In order to continue operating as a Horace Mann Charter School, BGA must improve the quality and outcomes for its middle school students.

Given this evidence, further detailed in the attached Site Visit Report, as well as the school’s response, I recommend that the Board extend probation and establish a new set of conditions. I also recommend that two existing conditions be extended as part of the school’s probation.

1. Until further notice, Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School must submit to the Department, at charterschools@doe.mass.edu, board meeting agendas, materials, and minutes prior to each board meeting at the same time that these items are sent to the school's board members. Additionally, if board materials do not already include this information, the school must also submit monthly financial statements.
2. The school must maintain the established escrow account to pay for any potential closing, legal, and audit expenses associated with closure, should that occur.
3. By June 30, 2017, BGA must submit to the Department a comprehensive evaluation of the school’s mathematics, English language arts, and science programs including, but not limited to, whether and how such programs effectively create an environment conducive to learning, hold students to high expectations, and foster student engagement. Such comprehensive evaluation must be conducted by an external consultant(s) acceptable to and approved in advance by the Department. The external consultant(s) may be employed by Boston Public Schools if they are not also employees of BGA.
4. By July 31, 2017, BGA must submit an action plan to improve academic performance to the Department for approval. Such action plan must specify the strategies to improve mathematics, English language arts, and science performance for all student groups. The action plan must set clear and specific implementation benchmarks, with a clear timetable and deadlines for completion of key tasks, to allow the school's board of trustees and the Department to monitor implementation.
5. By December 31, 2019, the school must demonstrate continued significant and sustained academic improvement in mathematics, English language arts, and science.

Like all public schools in Massachusetts, BGA will administer the Next-Generation MCAS tests for the first time in the spring of 2017. The Department will closely monitor the school’s performance on the Next-Generation MCAS for the 2017, 2018, and 2019 administrations. Additionally, Department staff will visit the school during the next two school years to monitor the effectiveness of the school’s implementation of its action plan to improve academic performance. I will report back to the Board on the school’s progress in these areas.

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If you have any questions regarding these amendments or require additional information, please contact Alison Bagg, Director (781-338-3218); Cliff Chuang, Senior Associate Commissioner (781-338-3222); or me.

Attachment: Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School Year Six Site Visit Report

 School’s Response to the Year Six Site Visit Report

 Motion

1. As reported in the Massachusetts Charter School Waitlist Initial Report for 2016-2017 from March 15, 2016 ([http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/enrollment/fy2017Waitlist.html](https://mail.doe.mass.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=sApmGV8D2Uy2hQzfMmnEKR6LWTKJH9QI7DnD3h6SnxaVZTpB0iPu4v44bq-A2hPVhoybuGpf17A.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.doe.mass.edu%2fcharter%2fenrollment%2ffy2017Waitlist.html)). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The revision of M.G.L. c. 71, § 89, in 2010, created three types of Horace Mann charter schools, each with a particular set of requirements. Requirements for the involvement of the collective bargaining unit vary by type. A Horace Mann III charter school’s application must be submitted with the approval of the school committee. An agreement with the local collective bargaining unit is not required prior to Board approval of a Horace Mann III; however, the charter school’s board of trustees must negotiate with the collective bargaining unit and the school committee in good faith regarding any modifications to collective bargaining agreements following the award of a charter. Pursuant to 603 CMR 1.10, all Horace Mann charter renewals and certain charter amendments must be approved by the local school committee and teachers’ union. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. BGA’s lack of compliance included lack of appropriate licensure for two special education staff, failure to request the Commissioner’s approval of board members prior to service, and failure to submit the 2012 end-of-year financial report or the 2013 financial audit in a timely manner. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. In 2014, BGA served grades 9-12 and was compared to other high schools statewide for its Level and Percentile. In 2015, BGA began serving middle school grades and was then classified as a middle-high school for accountability purposes. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)