

UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester Executive Summary

UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester (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 increase the school size one grade each year starting in year two, until the school operates as a K1-8 in 2016-2017.

In addition to enrolling 54 incoming kindergarten (K1) students in year one, UP Academy Dorchester will aim to serve all students previously enrolled in the Marshall Elementary School (the Marshall), an underperforming district elementary school that BPS intends to close after the 2012-2013 academic year.¹ The restart strategy – closing an underperforming district school and opening it as a Horace Mann Charter School – is consistent with BPS' relentless and innovative efforts to raise student achievement in its lowest-performing schools. Our school's founders believe that a successful restart represents the most effective and efficient means to close the state's achievement gap.

Our Mission. 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 to achieve their full potential.

Our Program. UP Academy Dorchester's program will utilize the practices of the highest-performing urban charter schools, BPS, and school turnaround organizations. Our team believes that any student can rapidly approach grade-level proficiency when exposed to an academic environment defined by the following programmatic components, which will infuse our school:

- **Relentlessly high, consistent academic and behavioral expectations for all stakeholders,** including our students, our families, and our staff. Our expectations will be explicitly taught, meticulously enforced, and consistently supported by school-wide systems of incentives and consequences.
- **Seamless and detailed operating procedures.** Our operating systems will be wide-reaching, encompass every imaginable aspect of school operations, and be implemented with unyielding attention to detail. All routines will be modeled for and practiced by the appropriate constituents at the beginning of each year and regularly reinforced thereafter.
- **Rigorous, standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessments.** Our educational program will be designed to help students build a strong foundation of core content and skills by 8th grade, while simultaneously preparing them for the intellectual demands of rigorous middle school and college preparatory high school programs.
- **A wide-reaching network of supports designed such that no child is left behind.** Our school will employ an extensive network of whole-school and individualized supports to catch struggling students before they fall behind. When faced with a student who is not finding success in our program, we will identify the underlying skill deficiency and then provide systematic supports to address the issue.
- **An obsession with regularly and effectively using data.** We will regularly analyze academic assessment data to understand which concepts students have and have not mastered, using this analysis to build tutoring plans and to make adjustments to our program. Data detailing student performance on non-academic goals will also permeate the school and drive individual and school-wide improvements.
- **An atmosphere of enthusiasm and joy.** Our program will be designed to ensure that teaching and learning become exciting and fun.

Impact on Students. UP Academy Dorchester aims to serve a population of students who, without our program, may have been substantially excluded from the path to college. We intend

¹ Per state regulations, the proposed school will hold a lottery for all of the school's seats.

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to initially enroll any student currently attending the Marshall who wishes to join UP Academy Dorchester, including the school's population of students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Going forward, we intend to enroll students reflective of the demographics and learning needs across the BPS system. Within four years, we intend for at least 75% of these students to be demonstrating grade-level proficiency in math and ELA, thus having secured a place on the path to college.

Community Support. BPS' desire to work with UP Academy Dorchester's founding team on this endeavor signals the district's belief in the school's ability and vision. Further, the office of Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, existing BPS families, existing BPS teachers, and other community stakeholders are enthusiastically advocating for UP Academy Dorchester. Moreover, members of the school's founding team have demonstrated an ability to develop deep relationships and partnerships with local community members and organizations when launching a restart school.

Our Capacity. UP Academy Dorchester has the capacity that is required to achieve its mission. Notably, the school will be governed by the existing board of UP Academy Charter School of Boston (UP Academy Boston).² This board will contribute invaluable knowledge about charter school governance, launching an autonomous school with the BPS system, and preparing to transform a chronically underperforming district school. Other founding team members will contribute insights from having managed and worked in some of the highest-performing urban public schools in the United States. BPS will contribute its vast accumulated knowledge of district-wide best practices, including those prescribed to serve the city's most at-risk elementary learners. And Unlocking Potential, a non-profit school turnaround organization which will provide voluntary in-kind support during UP Academy Dorchester's pre-operational year (the 2012-2013 academic year), will contribute its unique intellectual capital gained through supporting the launch and operation of UP Academy Boston.

Acknowledging that some members of the founding team have expertise that rests in middle school education, Unlocking Potential has hired Lana Ewing to serve as Principal-in-Residence during UP Academy Dorchester's pre-operational year. Lana has extensive elementary school experience, having taught 1st-3rd grades in both a district public school in New York City and a charter school in Boston, as part of the founding team of Edward W. Brooke Elementary School in Roslindale, Massachusetts. We have also hired Whitney Ryan as the Associate Academic Achievement Manager to co-lead UP Academy Dorchester's academic program development during the pre-operational year. Whitney has well-rounded experience with both elementary education, having taught 4th grade at Edward W. Brooke Charter School, and with students with disabilities, having worked most recently as the Special Education Coordinator at Brooke Mattapan. Additionally, we have hired a Director of Operations-in-Residence, Kristen Linnenbank, who most recently worked as Director of Operations & Systems for Jumpstart, overseeing internal communication, systems implementation, technology strategy, and customer service for the organization's national network. The elementary school team will utilize their strong elementary school partnerships to incorporate the instructional, operational, and cultural best practices of high-performing schools nationwide.

Private philanthropic funders are confident in the team's ability to leverage its experiences and expertise and have already pledged more than \$400,000 specifically to support the launch of UP Academy Dorchester.

² UP Academy Boston, which was able to retain 85% of the students formerly enrolled at the Gavin Middle School, and serves a student population that includes 30% ELL, 30% special education, and 91% low-income (as defined by free and reduced lunch), has had very strong initial results. 2012 MCAS scores increased dramatically in each grade and subject in the first year of turnaround. The school's median SGP in math was the highest in the state of all public middle schools.