

PROPOSED UP ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL OF SPRINGFIELD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document was prepared by the UP Academy Charter School of Springfield applicant group.

UP Academy Charter School of Springfield (UP Academy Springfield) will open its doors to up to 800 students in fall 2016. The school's launch, a collaborative effort between the founding team, Springfield Public Schools, and UP Education Network, will represent the restart of a struggling grade 6-8 Springfield Public School.

In addition to enrolling incoming grade 6 students in year one, UP Academy Springfield will aim to serve all students previously enrolled in an underperforming district middle school that SPS intends to close after the 2015-2016 academic year. The school to be restarted will be determined based on district determination of greatest need. The restart strategy – closing an underperforming district school and opening it as a Horace Mann Charter School – is consistent with SPS' 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 Charter School of Springfield will ensure that all scholars acquire the knowledge, skills, and strength of character necessary to succeed on the path to college and achieve their full potential.

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

- **Relentlessly high and 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, will encompass every imaginable aspect of school operations, and will 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 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

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 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 teaching and learning become exciting and fun.

Impact on Students. UP Academy Springfield aims to serve a population of students who, without our program, may have been substantially excluded from the path to college. Initially, we intend to enroll any student currently attending the respective underperforming school who wishes to join UP Academy Springfield, 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 SPS system. Within four years, we intend for at least 75% of these students to be demonstrating grade-level proficiency in math and ELA, having thus secured a place on the path to college.

Community Support. There is strong demand for UP Academy Springfield from within the community. Springfield families have repeatedly spoken with members of the founding team about the need for the city's low-performing middle schools to be transformed. A large number of families and Springfield community members have visited other in-district charter schools operated by UP Education Network and they have expressed a strong desire for a similar school to open in Springfield. Moreover, Springfield Public Schools' desire to work with UP Academy Springfield's founding team on this endeavor signals the district's belief in the school's ability and vision. The district's enthusiastic support of UP Academy Springfield is pivotal in our decision to launch the school. 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 Springfield has the capacity to achieve its mission. The UP Academy Springfield board will be comprised of community leaders, parents, and others with relevant experiences, each of whom will contribute invaluable knowledge about launching an autonomous school within the SPS system. 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. Springfield Public Schools will contribute its vast accumulated knowledge of district-wide best practices, including those prescribed to serve the city's most at-risk middle school learners. UP Education Network, a non-profit school turnaround organization, has a tremendous track record of rapidly transforming low-performing urban district schools into high-performing schools by restarting and managing them as in-district charter schools. UP Education Network will also provide voluntary in-kind support during UP Academy Springfield's pre-operational years (the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 academic years) to continue building a local presence in Springfield while transferring its unique

intellectual capital gained through supporting the launch and operation of other successful turnaround schools in Massachusetts. Private philanthropic funders are confident in the team's ability to leverage its experiences and expertise and have already pledged to support the launch of UP Academy Springfield.