



UPDATE ON DORCHESTER ACADEMY

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Presentation to Boston School Committee
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Background on Dorchester Academy

- In the Fall of 2014, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education placed Dorchester Academy, a low-performing Level 3 school, into Level 4. At the time, the school was a standard open-enrollment high school in BPS.
- The turnaround plan created by BPS included a partnership with local agency, ABCD, to provide alternative education programming beginning in the 2015-2016 academic year, to grow the program over time, and to increase the number of off-track students successfully graduating.

Background on Dorchester Academy

- Over the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, enrollment remained low. One effect of the enrollment size was that DA never had enough students taking MCAS assessments to provide sufficient evidence of academic progress to be considered for exit of level 4 under the state accountability system.
- Additionally, several metrics such as attendance and graduation rate showed a need for improvement in the school's program.
- Last summer, after two years of ABCD operating the school, the school returned to full operation by BPS.
- Many of the school's approximately 70 students were moved to more appropriate placements for the start of the 2017-2018 academic year.

This Year at Dorchester Academy (2017-2018)

- A small team of teachers and support staff remained at Dorchester Academy. They made adjustments to the program and have worked this year to serve the fewer than 30 remaining students at the school, all of whom are relatively close to graduation.
- The DA team refined a competency-based program that gave students an individualized path towards graduation.
- In addition to their coursework, students have been exploring college and career opportunities and engaging in community service.

This Year at Dorchester Academy (2017-2018)

- In January, several students completed their studies and graduated from Dorchester Academy. Several of the students have begun their college studies.
- Currently, fewer than 20 students remain in the school. Most are expected to graduate by the conclusion of the 17-18 school year.
- At the same time, BPS is currently examining alternative education programming across the district to ensure the right array of options is available for students in the system.

Program Future

Two main factors govern planning for next year:

- The teaching, learning, and student support at DA this year have enabled significant progress and yielded vastly improved outcomes for students, which is promising work that we wish to sustain.
- DA faces structural challenges that will impede any future growth:
 - It has very few students remaining and in its current format the program is not sustainable
 - Because it has not had a sufficient cohort since its level 4 designation to demonstrate progress on targets, the school will be eligible for a level 5 designation as early as the coming year.
 - At best, DA would not be able to exit level 4 until it enrolled enough students for at least three years running to demonstrate evidence of strong academic achievement (circumstances which are especially difficult for an alternative program intended to remain relatively small)

Proposal

- It is our recommendation that Dorchester Academy close as a school at the end of the current academic year.
- In order to sustain and grow the program currently at DA, our intention is to keep the team intact as a group and move them together as a stand-alone program to be housed at Excel High School.
- We would aim to expand the redesigned alternative education program to serve up to 40 student for SY18-19 with adequate space to accommodate the teacher team and their model to serve off-track students.
- The few remaining students who do not graduate will have the option to remain with the teachers they know or to work with BPS staff to identify the best placement for them.

Family Engagement

We have reached out last week to all students and families still enrolled at DA

- Phone calls home to all families, reaching two thirds, notifying them of the BPS proposal to close the school and move the program
- Letter sent to all students families, confirming again those details

Staff meeting with Dr. Chang earlier this year to discuss how the work of the program could evolve and transform

Timeline

- April: Outreach to families
- April 25: Proposal presented to school committee
- May 9: Proposed school committee vote
- May 10: Implementation planning ramps up to prepare for the move and student support, as well as program expansion at the new site

Vote Statement

Dorchester Academy will close on June 30, 2018.

APPENDICES

DA Students SY 2017-2018

Number of students enrolled at DA, end of September, 2017	28
Number of students who have graduated since the year began	10
Number of students who since transferred to other programs	4
Number of additional students expected to have graduated by the end of this year	13
Number of students not expected to have yet graduated by the end of this year	1

Dorchester Academy Past Performance

- 2014 ELA CPI / SGP: **83.3 / 24.5**
- 2014 Math CPI / SGP: **72.3 / 31**
- 2014 Science CPI: **62.7**

- 2014 grad rate: (designation year) **65.6%**
- 2015 grad rate (planning year): **74.2%**
- 2016 grad rate: (first year of implemented plan) **33.3%**
- 2017 grad rate: (second year of implemented plan) **27.3%**

Historical Enrollment by Grade

Grade	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Total	387	372	69	99
9th	99	99	15	29
10th	77	90	14	12
11th	114	94	9	18
12th	97	89	31	40