

UP Academy Charter School of Boston
215 Boston St
Boston, MA 02127
April 15th, 2015

Mitchell Chester, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Commissioner Chester:

On behalf of the UP Academy Boston Board of Trustees, I respectfully request your approval of an amendment to change UP Academy Boston's charter to allow UP Academy Boston to hold 180 days of school during SY14-15 instead of the 185 days required by the school's charter. This would be a one-time request related to the unprecedented eight days of snow that all Boston Public Schools were required to hold this winter; UP Academy Boston intends to continue to hold at least 185 days of school during SY15-16 and beyond. These changes to our charter will be effective upon the approval of the Commissioner and would be implemented by the end of the 2014-2015 school year. These changes would mean that UP Academy Boston's last day of school for students during SY14-15 would be Monday, June 22nd, 2015 (180 days) instead of Monday, June 29th, 2015 (185 days).

The UP Academy Boston Board of Trustees wishes to make this change for the following reasons:

- UP Academy Boston made every effort to make-up snow days by adding back school days on any available previously scheduled staff professional development days, as well as holding school on Evacuation Day (following suit with Boston Public Schools). UP Academy Boston was already planning to hold school on Bunker Hill Day (the other day that Boston Public Schools is planning to add back), so it could not count on this day as a make-up day. Lastly, UP Academy Dorchester tried to add other days to the calendar, including Good Friday, but due to some operational challenges as well as to achieving parity with Boston Public Schools as an in-district charter, the school was unable to hold school on this day.
- UP Academy Boston started school early on August 20th, 2014, which is prior to the start of Boston Public Schools. Staff orientation started even earlier, with all staff reporting to the school on August 4th, 2014. As a result of hosting all-day staff professional development days prior to the first snow day, school staff have been in school for approximately 15 more days than students. Coupled with the longer school day for both students and staff, the UP Academy Boston Leadership Team feels that it would be beneficial for staff morale and sustainability to not extend the school year beyond June 22nd, 2015. The difference between UP Academy Boston (Monday, June 22nd) and UP Academy Dorchester's last day of



school (Friday, June 19th) is that UP Academy Boston held one additional all-staff professional development day in fall 2014.

The UP Academy Boston Board of Trustees voted to approve this request on April 14, 2015 at a meeting held in compliance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. At that meeting, the Board of Trustees authorized me to submit this request on their behalf. I have also enclosed certification that the Boston Public Schools school committee and Boston Public Schools teachers' union have approved this request.

To date, UP Academy Boston has demonstrated that it is an academic success, is a viable organization, and is faithful to the terms of its charter. During the 2011-12 academic year, students from UP Academy Charter School of Boston demonstrated incredible academic progress, ranking #1 for academic growth in math among all public middle schools in Massachusetts, doubling math proficiency rates from 24% to 48% and improving English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency rates from 32% to 53%. In its second year of operation, students again ranked #1 statewide for math growth on the spring 2013 MCAS, and our 8th grade students had a remarkable median student growth percentile score of 96 in math, the highest for any group of 8th grade students in Massachusetts history. UP Academy Boston, also demonstrated historic progress in the 2013-14 school year, proving that high achievement can be attained and sustained over time. For the third year in a row, UP Academy Boston ranked #1 among all schools serving middle school students in Massachusetts (733 in 2013-14) for academic growth in math.

The UP Academy Boston Board of Trustees requests your approval of this amendment as soon as possible.

Please contact Scott Given (sgiven@upeducationnetwork.org, (617) 851-1594) if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

Robert McConnaughey
Chair, UP Academy Boston Board of Trustees

C: John McDonough, Interim Superintendent, Boston Public Schools
Scott Given, CEO, UP Education Network
Jamie Morrison, Principal, UP Academy Boston
Cliff Chuang, Associate Commissioner for Educational Redesign, Massachusetts
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosures