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UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester
35 Westville St
Boston, MA 02124
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 Dorchester Board of Trustees, I respectfully request your approval of an amendment to change UP Academy Dorchester's charter to allow UP Academy Dorchester 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 Dorchester 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 Dorchester's last day of school for students during SY14-15 would be Friday, June 19th, 2015 (180 days) instead of Friday, June 26th, 2015 (185 days).

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

- UP Academy Dorchester 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 Dorchester 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 Dorchester 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 1st, 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 15+ more days than students. Coupled with the longer school day for both students and staff, the UP Academy Dorchester Leadership Team feels that it would be beneficial for staff morale and sustainability to not extend the school year beyond June 19th, 2015, which is when the school year would have ended if there had been no snow days.



The UP Academy Dorchester 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.

UP Academy Dorchester has demonstrated that it is an academic success, a viable organization, and faithful to the terms of its charter. Among public schools serving more than 50 students, UP Academy Dorchester had the highest one-year increase in math and ELA MCAS proficiency in Massachusetts history (+73%). In math, proficiency increased from 13% to 60%; this 47 point jump is the single largest gain on record of any Massachusetts school. In addition, UP Academy Dorchester ranked #1 among all elementary, middle, and high schools in Massachusetts (1,565 in 2013-14) for academic growth in math. In ELA, proficiency increased from 14% to 40%. At the elementary school level, fifth grade students are also tested in science. The gains UP Academy Dorchester students made are nothing short of inspiring, jumping from just 4% proficient or higher in science to 57% proficient or higher.

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

Please contact Scott Given [sgiven@upeducationnetwork.org, +1 (617) 851-1594] if you have any questions about this request.

Sincerely,

Robert McConnaughey
Chair, UP Academy Dorchester Board of Trustees

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

Enclosures