

## 17 New Charter Schools Selected

*10 are in Boston; state board must approve the plans*

By Travis Andersen  
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The state's education commissioner endorsed 17 of 23 pending charter school applications yesterday, including 10 that would serve students in Boston beginning next fall or in the following academic year.

### Applications that made the cut

*Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

#### **In Boston**

Bridge Boston Charter School  
Dorchester Preparatory Charter School  
Edward W. Brooke Charter School 2  
Edward W. Brooke Charter School 3 (regional school serving Boston and Chelsea)  
Excel Academy Charter School 2  
Grove Hall Preparatory Charter School  
KIPP Academy Boston Charter School  
MATCH Community Day Charter Public School

#### **Elsewhere in state**

Alma del Mar Charter School (New Bedford)  
Community Day Charter Public School — Riverside (Lawrence)  
Community Day Charter Public School — South (Lawrence)  
Excel Academy Charter School — Chelsea  
Lynn Preparatory Charter School  
Veritas Preparatory Charter School (Springfield)

#### **Three in-district, or Horace Mann, charter schools**

Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School  
UP Academy Charter School of Boston (Boston)  
Salem Community Charter School

“I have every expectation that these 17 charter schools . . . are well positioned to succeed academically and become high-performing organizations,” said Mitchell D. Chester, commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. His agency's board is scheduled to vote on the recommendations Feb. 28.

Charter schools, authorized under the 1993 Education Reform Act, are independent public institutions that are supposed to provide innovative alternatives to traditional public schools. A state law passed last year allows significantly more charter-school seats in school districts with the lowest scores on standardized tests.

In addition to schools in Boston, Chester endorsed applications for charter schools in New Bedford, Lawrence, Chelsea, Springfield, and Salem. Fourteen of the endorsed charter schools would operate independently of local school districts, and teachers would not be unionized.

Three of the charter schools, including two in Boston, would be run by the districts. Teachers at those schools would join unions, though they would not have as many rights as union members in other public schools.

Superintendent Carol R. Johnson said in a phone interview that the two new charter schools in Boston, UP Academy for grades 6-8 and Boston Green Academy for grades 9-12, which would both open in South Boston next year, have received more than 1,200 statements of interest from families so far.

Opponents of charter schools, who include union officials and leaders in many school districts, say they worry that an increasing number of such schools will drain vital dollars from traditional public schools. They also argue that charter schools have exaggerated their success rates and do not serve as many English-language learners and students with special needs, assertions that charter school officials deny.

“We’re talking about allowing schools to discriminate in their student bodies, and that’s something no city should tolerate,” said Richard Stutman, president of the Boston Teachers Union.

But Marc Kenen, executive director of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, hailed Chester’s endorsements and said he wished the commissioner had supported more applications.

“Today is another step toward a new era of charter public school expansion in high-need communities across Massachusetts,” Kenen said.

Parents of students in public school districts were also divided yesterday.

Cristina Cora of Jamaica Plain, 36, whose daughter is an eighth-grader at Roxbury Preparatory Charter School, said children deserve more charter schools to give them the chance to reach their full academic potential.

She said that while the staff at Roxbury Prep, an established charter school seeking to expand in Boston, is “super-attentive,” she felt that teachers and administrators at her daughter’s prior school in Jamaica Plain, a traditional public school, ignored her concerns.

“I constantly called the school saying that my daughter’s coming home telling me she isn’t learning anything because the teacher doesn’t have control of the class,” Cora said. “The whole year went by [without a satisfactory response], and I as a parent didn’t have a voice.”

But Pelham resident Michael Hussin, 59, the former School Committee chairman of the Amherst-Pelham district whose son attends Amherst Regional High School, said the current funding formula for charters, in which districts often lose thousands of dollars for each pupil who attends a charter school, is bankrupting public education.

“That’s a lot more money being sucked out of public schools,” Hussin said. “It’s a misguided, mistaken policy for sure.”