

MAKING EVERY SCHOOL A QUALITY SCHOOL THROUGH STUDENT ASSIGNMENT REFORM

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS OVERVIEW

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) serve over 56,000 students at 129 schools. Eighty-seven percent of BPS students are children of color, 19% are students with disabilities, 30% are English Language Learners, and at least 78% live in poverty.

Over half of the schools in the district (56%) are rated as Level 3 or 4 schools by the state, indicating a need for significant interventions to improve student growth and outcomes. And although the district's graduation rate has improved, over one third (36.8%) of the students who entered ninth grade in 2006 had not graduated four years later.

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN – OVERVIEW

I. REFORMING STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

1. Grandfather current students
2. Guarantee a K-8 option
3. Guarantee a kindergarten seat for every child at a school close-to-home
4. Offer more choices through 16 Citywide Magnet Schools
5. Allow parents to group together for seats at under-selected schools

II. ESTABLISHING A QUALITY BASELINE FOR THE BPS

1. Mandatory principal evaluation
2. Mandatory teacher evaluation
3. A commitment to eight new fully inclusive schools
4. A commitment to nine new dual-language schools
5. Provide full academic enrichment for every student
6. Provide every student with a K-8 option

III. PROVIDING QUALITY SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS SERVING LARGE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS IN NEED

1. Grant each school Innovation, Pilot, or In-District Charter status
2. Provide fully staffed student support services
3. Provide academic coaches for literacy and math support
4. Guarantee afterschool programming

IV. FUNDING QUALITY

1. Direct all savings from reduced transportation costs to high-need schools
2. Adjust funding formula to provide additional funding to students in need
3. Increase enrollment to increase state funding for BPS

V. QUALITY FACILITIES

1. Build or acquire a facility for a downtown school in the Back Bay, Beacon Hill or West End
2. Realign kindergarten seats
3. Address supply/demand issues

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN

I. REFORMING STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN is the only plan aimed at increasing enrollment in BPS.

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN is the only plan that offers real commitments to upgrading quality at every Boston Public School.

Reforming Student Assignment does not need to be an “Either/Or” proposition. THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN provides a creative approach that offers parents close-to-home options, more citywide options in the mold of the highly successful Hernandez School and formerly, the Mission Hill School, as well as an option for families to group together to help transform under-selected schools.

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN reforms the student assignment system through five steps:

1. GRANDFATHER CURRENT STUDENTS – Every child currently enrolled in a Boston Public School will retain his or her seat at that school.
 - Grandfathering should apply to siblings to give families the ability to have their children at the same school if desired.
2. GUARANTEE A K-8 OPTION – Every child entering BPS in K-2 will be guaranteed a K-8 School or a K-8 Pathway.
 - BPS made this commitment in their presentation to the Advisory Committee on September 24, 2012.
 - K-8 options prevent families from having to enter the student assignment process more than once.
3. GUARANTEE A KINDERGARTEN SEAT FOR EVERY CHILD AT A SCHOOL CLOSE-TO-HOME – Every child entering K-2 will be guaranteed a seat at one of the four schools closest to where the child lives.
 - Parents will be allowed to list those four schools in their preferred order with no walk-zone.
 - Sibling preference will remain as a first priority in assignment.
 - See Section V, "Quality Facilities" to address cases where the demand outweighs supply.
4. OFFER MORE CHOICES THROUGH 16 CITYWIDE MAGNET SCHOOLS – Every child will be able to enter a lottery for seats at a network of citywide magnet schools.
 - There will be 16 schools in the network including the Hernandez, and BPS should restore citywide status to Mission Hill School and Young Achievers. (See Appendix for suggestions.)
 - Sibling preference will be used in assignment to these schools.
 - 50% of seats at dual-language schools will be allocated to English Language Learners, as recommended in the “Two-Way Immersion Toolkit” developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics and the Education Alliance at Brown University.
[\(http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/twi/\)](http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/twi/)

- 30% of seats at full-inclusion schools will be allocated to students with disabilities, as illustrated by the SPED PAC presentation to the Inclusion Forum in February, 2010.
5. ALLOW PARENTS TO GROUP TOGETHER FOR SEATS AT UNDER-SELECTED SCHOOLS – Groups of 2-11 children will be able to apply as a group to under-selected schools anywhere in the city.
- Families who wish to attend school together may choose an under-selected school as a group.
 - Parent compact groups will be limited to 11 seats so that half of the seats in a traditional 22 seat kindergarten classroom remain open to those who live close to the school.

II. ESTABLISHING A QUALITY BASELINE FOR THE BPS

While many in Boston may disagree on what makes a high quality school, there is a quality baseline that every family should expect and every school must deliver – a good principal, good teachers, and programming that enriches, challenges, and meets the needs of every child. Given the large gap in quality across the district, skeptics are right to fear that BPS will not be able to elevate the quality of schools across the board.

Therefore, the External Advisory Committee must demand that the school department provide a detailed plan on how to make a quality baseline a reality by September 2014.

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN requires BPS to meet six quality baseline factors to benefit every student by September 2014:

1. MANDATORY PRINCIPAL EVALUATION– BPS must now provide annual evaluations for all principals.
 - BPS has begun to implement an annual rigorous evaluation program for school-based administrators.
 - BPS should include parent and student feedback as part of principal evaluation.
 - For details, see: *M.G.L., c71, 38; M.G.L. c150E; the Educator Evaluation regulations, 603 CMR 35.00 et seq.; and the Model System for Educator Evaluation developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.*

2. MANDATORY TEACHER EVALUATION - BPS must now provide annual evaluations for all teachers.
 - All teachers will be evaluated regularly during the 2012-13 school year.
 - All teachers will be evaluated on a regular basis going forward.
 - New teachers will be evaluated at least three times each school year.
 - Tenured teachers will be evaluated at least five times each school year if they have an unsatisfactory rating.
 - Beginning in September 2016, a new state law will require that personnel decisions be based on a teacher’s performance and evaluation, not just seniority. (*Chapter 131 of the Acts*)

of 2012, An Act Providing for the Implementation of Education Evaluation Systems in School District)

- Teachers will be provided training, resource materials, and additional supports for teacher leaders to facilitate professional learning sessions on teacher effectiveness. (*BPS Office of Educator Effectiveness, "Supporting Effective Teaching, 2012-2013: Training for Educators"*)
- For details, see: (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/eeval/model/PartIV.pdf>)

3. A COMMITMENT TO EIGHT NEW FULLY INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS – BPS must commit to make eight current BPS schools fully inclusive by September 2014.

- BPS must provide the External Advisory Committee with a list of eight new fully inclusive schools as well as a projected timeline and budget for staffing and programming the fully inclusive models at each school.
- BPS currently has two fully inclusive elementary schools and 24 schools in its inclusive schools network, indicating that the schools offer some level of inclusive programming.
- In making eight additional fully inclusive schools, BPS must commit to:
 - At least four schools modeled after the Mary Lyon School in Brighton, one of the best schools for providing small class-size and specialized instruction by a SPED-Certified teacher and paraprofessional.
 - At least four schools modeled after the William Henderson Inclusion School in Dorchester, which is known for its team-teaching model of two certified SPED teachers and allows for moderately larger class sizes.
 - At least two of BPS's new fully inclusive schools must be part of the proposed network of citywide magnet schools.
- In creating eight additional fully inclusive schools, BPS must commit to implementing the recommendations of the BPS Inclusive Schools Network partners (<https://sites.google.com/site/academicachievementframework/boston-public-schools-inclusive-schools-network>), including:
 - A consistent district-wide model;
 - Expert-level training for teachers and paraprofessionals;
 - Specific instructional strategy instruction; and
 - Support in staffing inclusive schools to implement the model.

4. A COMMITMENT TO NINE NEW DUAL-LANGUAGE SCHOOLS – BPS must commit to make nine current BPS schools dual-language by September 2014.

- BPS must provide the External Advisory Committee with a list of nine new dual-language schools, as recommended by the ELL Task Force in March 2011, as well as a projected timeline and budget for staffing and programming at each school.
- BPS currently has five dual-language elementary or K-8 schools.
- In creating nine new dual-language schools, BPS must commit to:
 - Four dual-language schools in neighborhoods where there are high concentrations of families speaking those languages;
 - Five new dual language schools in the proposed network of citywide schools, in addition to the Hernandez School; and

- Reserve 50% of seats at dual-language schools for children with LED Levels 1-3 in the designated language of the school, as recommended in the “Two-Way Immersion Toolkit” developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics and the Education Alliance at Brown University. (<http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/twi/>)

5. PROVIDE FULL ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT FOR EVERY STUDENT – BPS must commit to a comprehensive academic experience for every student by September 2014.

- BPS must provide the External Advisory Committee with a list of courses offered at every school, including the amount of instruction time in each course that demonstrates that every child at every school will have access to full academic enrichment.
- BPS must provide the External Advisory Committee with a plan to give every school the option to have an “Advanced Work” or “Honors Program” by September 2018 (the first year kindergarten students under the new assignment plan would be eligible for advanced work classes).
 - Offering every school an Advanced Work or Honors Program option should prevent the annual loss of students who qualify for Advanced Work at non-Advanced Work schools.
 - The loss of these students between third and fourth grade has a devastating effect on school culture at too many Boston Public Schools.
 - If a school community does not believe that an Advanced Work or Honors Program is consistent with its school philosophy, it does not have to accept the program at its school, but must provide differentiated instruction that meets those students’ needs.

6. PROVIDE EVERY STUDENT WITH A K-8 OPTION – BPS has already committed to offer every child a K-8 School or K-8 Pathway for every child.

- Research has shown that students who attend a K-8 school demonstrate higher test scores than their peers in middle schools and that this disparity persists into high school. (HGSE Assistant Professor Martin West, “The Middle School Plunge,” <http://educationnext.org/the-middle-school-plunge/>)

III. PROVIDING QUALITY SUPPORTS FOR SCHOOLS SERVING LARGE NUMBERS OF STUDENTS IN NEED

BPS has made strides in improving quality at a number of formerly underperforming schools across the city such as Orchard Gardens, the Trotter, and UP Academy. These interventions and new interventions taken two weeks ago to bolster the performance at 21 of the lowest performing schools currently provide needed help, but miss the overall point in terms of a long-term strategy aimed at addressing equitable access.

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN focuses on the School Quality Baseline in Section II above to provide quality instruction and quality programs for every child.

BPS also needs a cohesive and clear strategy to support schools whose students overwhelmingly face the greatest challenges to success. Social factors, such as poverty and trauma, have an

alarming impact on students' academic outcomes and need to be addressed as part of any comprehensive school quality plan.

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN requires BPS to provide comprehensive quality supports for schools whose student bodies are above the district average poverty rate (78%). Currently, 59 schools would qualify for these supports, based on poverty level. (*BPS FY2013 Average Per Pupil Funding by School, 03.28.12*)

1. GRANT EACH SCHOOL INNOVATION, PILOT, OR IN-DISTRICT CHARTER STATUS – Innovation, Pilot, and In-District Charter Schools are given increased flexibility to meet the needs of students facing great challenges.

- Innovation, Pilot, or In-District Charter status gives a school community autonomy in terms of extended learning time, staffing, site-based budgetary decision-making, and curricular flexibility to best meet the needs of the students.
 - UP Academy utilized its flexibility as an In-District Charter to establish a longer school year and school day and to hire the right teaching team to implement its academic program. Eighty-five percent of its students qualify for Free and Reduced Price lunch and 32% are English Language Learners. According to the Boston Globe, “Math scores grew more at UP Academy than at any other school in the state last year, with proficiency rates doubling to 48 percent. English proficiency grew more than at any school in the city, jumping from 32 to 54 percent.” (http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/failing_south_boston_school_turns_it_around_-_metro_-_the_boston_globe.pdf)
 - Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School utilized its flexibility to lengthen its school day, hire many new staff members, and establish high-quality partnerships to enrich students' academic experiences. Eighty-six percent of its students qualify for Free and Reduced Price lunch and 53% are designated ELL. In 2012, the Student Growth Percentile (SGP) in ELA was 70 (versus 45 as the district average) and in Math was 74 (versus 52 as the district average). (*BPS Accountability and Preliminary 2012 MCAS Results, Presentation to School Committee, 09.19.12*)

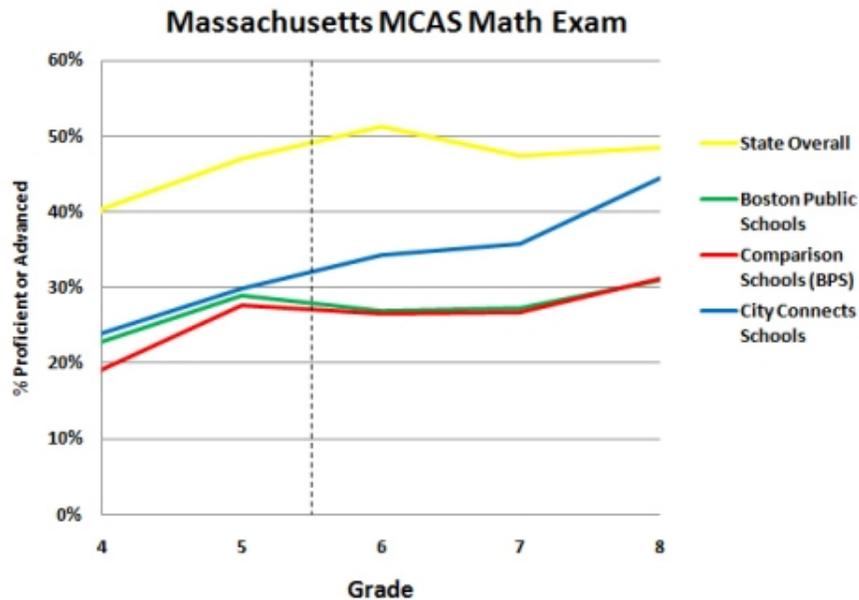
2. PROVIDE FULLY STAFFED STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES – According to the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, 16 percent of fourth-graders eligible for free lunch score at proficient levels in reading, compared with 44 percent of fourth graders whose family incomes are above the eligibility cutoff. The disparity in math scores between those above and below the eligibility threshold is even larger. (*“Improving educational outcomes for poor children,” Brian A. Jacob and Jens Ludwig, <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc262j.pdf>*)

- BPS must provide the External Advisory Committee with a plan that includes a projected timeline and budget along with a staffing and programming model to equip each school with fully staffed social, emotional, behavioral, and health support services for students.
- BPS should develop the full support models in conjunction with their principals.
- BPS should staff full support services through a combination of both BPS staff and staff provided through partnerships with community based organizations, as well as colleges, universities, health centers, and hospitals. City Connects, a project of the Center for

Optimized Student Support at Boston College's Lynch School of Education, may serve as a model for this initiative:

- City Connects currently works in 16 Boston Public Schools to provide school-based student support services that link each child to a tailored set of intervention, prevention, and enrichment services in the school or community.
- City Connects students outperform their Boston peers in middle school and achieve close to state proficiency levels in both English and Math on the Massachusetts statewide test (MCAS). After leaving a City Connects school at the end of grade 5, significant long-term effects continue through eighth grade. This figure shows the percentage of students achieving in the Proficient or Advanced categories on the MCAS Math exam for one cohort of students who started first grade in 2001.

(http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/lsoe/cityconnects/results/students/higher_statewidetestscoresoverall.html)



Data source: Boston Public Schools data, 2001-2009.

3. PROVIDE ACADEMIC COACHES FOR LITERACY AND MATH SUPPORT – Individualized coaching and support can improve instructional practices at schools serving our highest-need students.
 - Teachers will have access to additional professional development, common planning time, data analysis, and individualized coaching to strengthen their teaching practice and meet the specific needs of their students.
 - Robert C. Pianta, PhD. Dean, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, studied a high-engagement coaching program, “My Teaching Partner,” and found:
 - “The MTP course produces significant changes in teachers’ knowledge of skill targets for children’s learning outcomes, knowledge of teacher-child interactions, skills in identifying interactive cues and behaviors, and improvements in instructional practices.” (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/74144194/Teaching-Children-Well>)

- The Boston Teacher Residency’s ongoing support for its graduates who become BPS teachers may serve as a model for replication across high-need schools.
(http://www.bostonteacherresidency.org/docs/Ongoing_Support11.pdf)

4. GUARANTEE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING – BPS should utilize partnerships with non-profits, community based organizations, and health centers as well as other city departments, including the Boston Public Library and Boston Community Centers, to guarantee afterschool programming.

- High-quality afterschool programming can make a significant impact on students’ academic outcomes and can effectively serve to lengthen BPS’s school day.
- Citizen Schools presents a model that is already working in our middle schools and can be replicated:
 - Last school year, more than 20 percent of BPS sixth graders participated in Citizen Schools. The sixth grade math proficiency rate at partner schools increased by 13 percentage points, outpacing the gains for all sixth graders district-wide by five percentage points. (<http://www.citizenschools.org/blog/press-release-impressive-results-for-citizen-schools-boston-school-partners/>)
- Seventy-five percent of BPS schools already offer afterschool programming on-site or via community-based partnerships. Therefore, resources are in place and can be aligned and strengthened through a strategic plan that improves the quality of these programs and ensures access for children with the highest needs.

IV. FUNDING QUALITY

The Boston Public Schools have an annual budget that exceeds \$1 billion for approximately 56,000 students. While we believe that better budgeting could accomplish substantial savings for reinvestment at the school site level, we also believe there are three concrete steps to provide funding for quality upgrades across the BPS.

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN believes the following three steps will contribute substantially to funding quality upgrades:

1. DIRECT ALL SAVINGS FROM REDUCED TRANSPORTATION COSTS TO HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS– Direct all savings from reduced transportation costs to the schools falling under the quality baseline in Section II and the schools receiving the quality supports covered in Section III.
 - BPS projects transportation savings for its five proposals to range between 7%-27% of the total transportation budget (approximately \$83 million).
 - This plan falls somewhere in between that range, projecting savings between \$6 and \$20 million annually.
2. ADJUST FUNDING FORMULA TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO STUDENTS IN NEED – Institute a reallocation of the money available to provide an additional lump sum to the schools receiving the quality supports covered in Section III.

- This reallocation could be accomplished via a lump sum amount for each qualifying school regardless of size or by adding extra weight under the current funding formula for schools whose student bodies are made up of 78% or more students living in poverty.
3. INCREASE ENROLLMENT TO INCREASE STATE FUNDING FOR BPS – The State funds BPS based on the number of students enrolled on an annual basis.
- BPS should be able to increase enrollment, and therefore funding, by reforming student assignment to give families guaranteed seats with options close to home.

V. QUALITY FACILITIES

BPS needs to have a facilities strategy premised on growing enrollment through THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN.

In October 2011, The Council on Great City Schools reported that Boston had \$500 million in deferred maintenance costs, along with \$640 million in modernization and repairs, and \$1.8 billion in new construction needs. BPS MUST develop a long-term strategic capital plan to address these needs while managing enrollment demands in the short-term in a cost-effective way.

(http://www.cgcs.org/cms/lib/DC00001581/Centricity/Domain/4/Facilities_Report.pdf)

THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN believes the following three steps will contribute substantially to improving facilities:

1. BUILD OR ACQUIRE A FACILITY FOR A DOWNTOWN SCHOOL IN THE BACK BAY, BEACON HILL, OR WEST END - THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN aims to increase BPS enrollment.
 - BPS needs to locate and build a school that serves the hundreds of families in downtown neighborhoods who have no close-to-home option currently.
2. REALIGN KINDERGARTEN SEATS - THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN aims to increase BPS enrollment.
 - BPS should explore converting current K1 seats in highly-chosen schools to K2 seats to meet capacity demands in those communities.
 - BPS should explore a strategy to expand K0 and K1 seats at high-need schools to provide more seats to the children who can benefit most from early-childhood access. (*“Improving educational outcomes for poor children,” Brian A. Jacob and Jens Ludwig, <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc262j.pdf>*)
3. ADDRESS SUPPLY/DEMAND ISSUES - THE QUALITY CHOICE PLAN aims to increase BPS enrollment.
 - If demand exceeds supply, seats must still be guaranteed under the close-to-home option.
 - BPS must provide the guaranteed seats via temporary modular classrooms in the short term and use enrollment projection data to develop a facilities plan to build or acquire new schools as necessary in the long term.

APPENDIX: SUGGESTED CITYWIDE SCHOOLS NETWORK (16 SCHOOLS):

SCHOOL	COMMUNITY	PROGRAM
Jackson-Mann	Allston/Brighton	CHINESE DUAL-LANGUAGE
Blackstone	South End	SPANISH DUAL-LANGUAGE
Hernandez (Currently Citywide)	Jamaica Plain/Roxbury	SPANISH DUAL-LANGUAGE
Dever-McCormack	Dorchester	SPANISH DUAL-LANGUAGE
Rogers	Hyde Park	FRENCH & HAITIAN CREOLE MULTI-LANGUAGE
King	Dorchester	PORTUGUESE & CAPE VERDEAN CREOLE MULTI-LANGUAGE
Mission Hill Pilot (Restore Citywide Status)	Jamaica Plain	PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION MODEL
Beethoven-Ohrenberger	West Roxbury	FULL INCLUSION
Lyon	Allston/Brighton	FULL INCLUSION
Tobin	Mission Hill	ARTS
Young Achievers Pilot (Restore Citywide Status)	Mattapan	MATHEMATICS & SCIENCE
Timilty	Roxbury	SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, & MATH (STEM)
Condon	South Boston	OCEANOGRAPHY AND MARITIME STUDIES
Mattahunt	Mattapan	MONTESSORI
Marshall	Dorchester	MONTESSORI
The Mather-Everett K-8 Pathway	Dorchester	INTERNATIONAL