

Understanding the new Home-Based School Choice Plan

Starting in January, 2014, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) will begin to use a new school assignment plan for students in kindergarten through grade 8. Developed by an external committee with community input, the new plan eliminates the three large zones and helps students attend quality schools, closer to home. The new plan serves students entering the transition grades. High schools will remain as citywide options for all students.

The Home-Based plan:

- Increases the chances that families will receive one of their top school choices
- Increases equitable access to quality schools overall
- Ensures every incoming kindergarten child has quality schools from which to choose
- Cuts the average distance a child travels to school by 40 percent
- Offers sibling priority to help brothers and sisters attend the same school
- Offers additional, citywide choices for all families and connects elementary schools to middle schools through voluntary pathways.

The Home-Based plan uses a student’s home as the starting point.

- We will offer a **customized list** of school choices for every family based on their home address. It includes every school within a one-mile radius of their home plus, as needed, nearby schools that have the highest levels of MCAS performance and growth. This ensures that every family has access to high quality schools, no matter where they live.
- The list may also grow, as needed, to include schools offering K0, Advanced Work Class (AWC) and more, and to ensure we can offer every child a seat in a school on his or her list. These are called “Option Schools.”
- Every family will have a choice of at least six schools; most will have an average of 8-14 choices.
- Families may also select any citywide school.
- The Home-Based plan is a lottery; therefore we can’t guarantee an applicant will be assigned to one of his or her top choices. Just as in the past, due to limited seating we cannot guarantee an assignment to K0 or K1. Students who apply for kindergarten, grade 6 and 9 in January have the best chance of assignment to their top choice school.

The Home-Based plan is designed to make sure every family has high-quality schools on their customized lists. We have grouped our schools into four **MCAS Tiers**, according to how students performed on MCAS tests for the past two years. Every family has at least two of the highest-scoring schools (Tier I – the top 25%) and at least four schools that are in the top half of MCAS performance (Tier I and Tier II) on their customized lists. We know that families look at many factors beyond MCAS to decide whether to choose a school, and we are working with the community this year to develop a better long-term measure of quality.

For English Language Learners and students with disabilities, the Home-Based plan creates community clusters of school options to ensure that students can enroll in schools that offer quality programs closer to home.

The Home-Based plan offers more predictability and gives parents a better opportunity to get to know their school options in advance. This means families can learn more about schools earlier, which can strengthen connections among schools, students and families. More information about the Home-Based Assignment plan will be available at bostonpublicschools.org in late September. Families will be also able to learn more about their own school options under the new plan beginning in November during our School Choice season.

