

Boston Public Schools: Improving School Choice

Working with you to improve school choice and student assignment

Improving School Choice: EAC Recommendation

Presentation to School Committee
February 27, 2013

Building better options together



The Mayor and Superintendent appointed an External Advisory Committee (EAC) to recommend an improved school choice process

- The 27-member External Advisory Committee on School Choice is composed of parents, students, community members, and educational, business, and nonprofit leaders
- The EAC focused its work around three key factors: Community Engagement; Data-driven Analysis; and Defining Quality and Equitable Access
- The EAC has met 55 times for over 117 hours between March 2012 and February 2013

Dean Hardin Coleman, Co-Chair, Boston University School of Education

Helen Dájer, Co-Chair, Former Boston School Committee member, and BPS parent

Angie Auguste, BPS Student

Kelly Bates, Lawyer, Foundation Representative, and BPS parent

Kathleen Colby, BPS Ambassador and former BPS parent

Ian Deason, Business leader and parent

Rahn Dorsey, Evaluation Director, the Barr Foundation

Paul Francisco, Business leader and BPS parent

Robert Gittens, Vice President of Public Affairs, Northeastern University, and former BPS parent

Carolyn Kain, Chair, Boston SpedPac, and BPS parent

Craig Lankhorst, Former BPS principal

Ruthzee Louijeune, JD and MPP candidate, Harvard University, and 2004 BPS graduate

Brendan McDonough, Business and community leader, and BPS parent

John Nucci, VP for Government and Community Affairs, Suffolk University, and former BPS parent

Imari Paris Jeffries, Partner, Boston Rising

Laura Perille, Exec. Director, EdVestors, and BPS parent

Heaven Reda, BPS Student

Israel Ruiz, BPS parent

Andrea Swain, Exec. Director, Yawkey Club of Roxbury, Boys and Girls Club of Boston

Tammy Tai, Nonprofit Executive Director, and BPS parent

Mary Tamer, Member, Boston School Committee, and BPS parent

Josephine Tavares, BPS Teacher and parent

Miren Uriarte, Prof., College of Public and Community Service, Sr. Research Associate, Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy UMass/Boston, and former BPS parent

William Walczak, former BPS parent

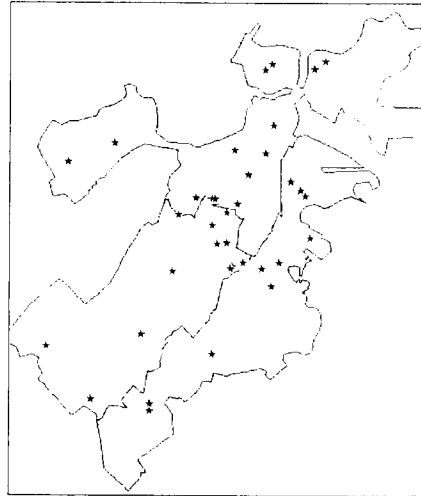
Rev. Liz Walker, Interim Pastor of Roxbury Presbyterian Church

Vernee Wilkerson, Roslindale parent

Bak Fun Wong, Former Headmaster, Quincy Upper School/ BPS Central

We have engaged extensively with the community at every step of this process

- Engaged more than 5,100 community members in-person at more than 70 community meetings or online through surveys
- Held meetings at 36 unique sites across the city (see map)
- A new online tool was created to allow users to type in their address and see their school choices
 - Over 1,400 unique visitors have used this tool



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Why are we proposing to change the current system?

- **Boston has changed significantly since the current system was created in 1988**
 - Quality has improved across the district; named one of the 20 most improved school districts in the world in 2010
 - Funding is more equitable and transparent with weighted student funding
- **Current system is difficult for many parents to use**
 - Large number of choices causes confusion and takes time and effort to understand
 - Lack of predictability in school choices and assignments
- **Long distances to school can be difficult for students and families**
 - May be difficult for families to get to schools for conferences, meetings, and after-school events
 - Many students travel long distances to schools without necessarily attending higher-quality schools

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Why are we proposing to change the current system?

The current system does not provide equitable access to a quality seat

- 37% of students travel more than 1.5 miles each way, but not necessarily to attend a higher-performing school
- Students in the North and West Zones have a far greater chance of accessing a quality seat than students in the East Zone
- Access to seats in higher-performing schools is not evenly distributed by race or income
- According to an October 2012 report, "...current attendance patterns exhibit strong racial disparities even with ostensibly equal access. In fact, Blacks and Hispanics tend to attend lower quality schools overall, while at the same time traveling further from their homes."¹

¹Metropolitan Area Planning Council, "Racial & Ethnic Impact of BPS Assignment Proposals - Supplemental Report", October 26, 2012

Final Assignment Proposals: "The Best of the Best"

For implementation starting in the 2014-2015 school year

- The EAC combined the "**best of the best**" of all of the ideas and asked the BPS technical team to present refined proposals and analysis
- The final four models were:
 - 10-Zone Model
 - Modified 11-Zone Model
 - Home-Based/A
 - Home-Based/B
- Each of these models represents an improvement over the status quo
 - Increased equity of access to quality
 - Increased predictability for families
 - Reduced distance to school by 40%
 - Increased community
 - Protected diversity

The External Advisory Committee recommended one model that it believes best strikes the balance between the many competing factors

The EAC's Recommendation: Home-Based/A

"Home-Based/A" ensures every family has high-quality school options. It adapts to changes in quality over time.

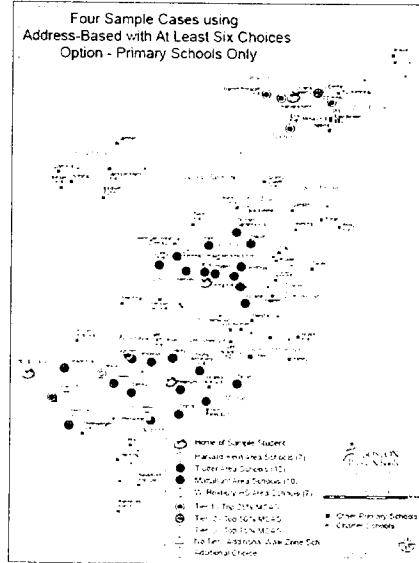
School choice lists contain a **minimum of six schools** and always contain the closest:

- 2 top-tier schools
- 2 top- or second-tier schools
- 2 schools from the first, second or third tier

Students with fewer higher-quality schools closer to home will have more choices to ensure they have access to quality.

Every list will include all schools that are within one mile from home (walk zone), citywide options and other nearby schools to ensure seat availability.

Tiers are based on a combination of a school's MCAS proficiency and academic growth. Families will rank the schools they prefer and students will be assigned based on priorities (walk zone and sibling) and availability.

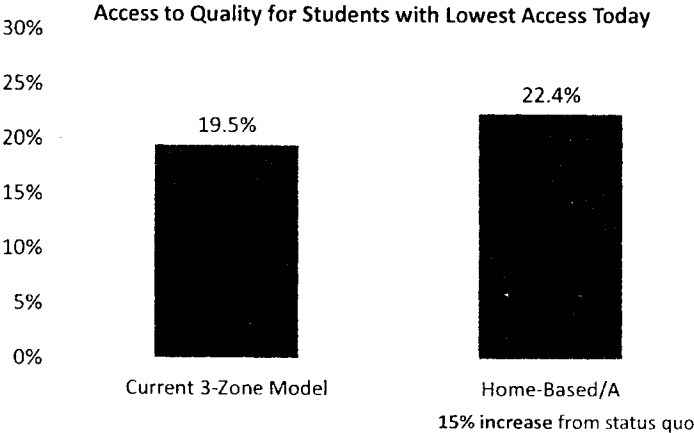


Benefits of a Home-Based Model

- **Home-Based A** is a new and innovative student assignment model based on ground-breaking research
- As a home-based model, it offers a number of benefits, including:
 - **Flexibility** and adaptability over time – as quality improves, students will attend schools closer to home
 - **More equitable access to quality** than the status quo
 - **Eliminates need for students to travel long distances** to attend low-performing schools
 - Home-Based plans ensure that **neighboring children have similar lists of schools** to from which to choose

Increase in Access to Quality Schools

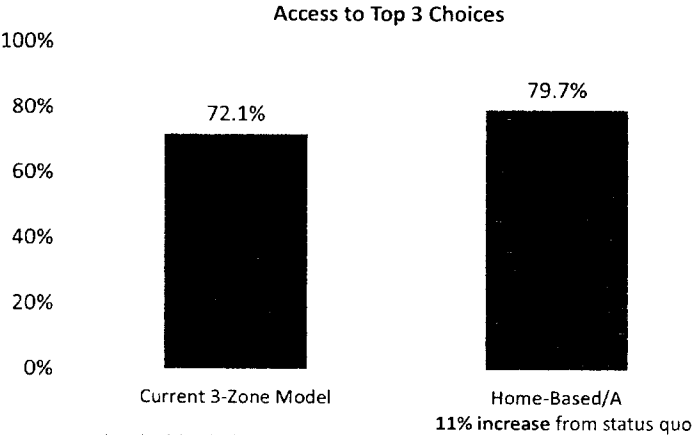
- Equity requires that we increase access to quality for students who currently have the lowest access to quality
- The Home-Based/A model would increase access to quality for these students by 15% compared to the current 3-Zone model



Based on current processing order of algorithm (50% Walk then 50% Open)

Increase in Predictability

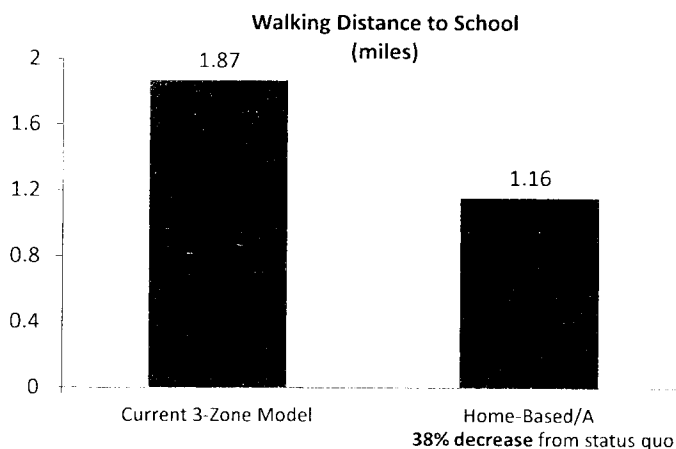
- The Home-Based/A model would increase a student's access to one of his or her top three choices by 11% compared with the current model
- Currently, the median BPS student can access one of his or her top three schools 72.1% of the time; this would increase to nearly 80% under Home-Based/A



Based on current processing order of algorithm (50% Walk then 50% Open)

Closer to Home

- Currently, for the median BPS student, the walking distance to school is 1.87 miles
- The Home-Based/A model would decrease this distance by 0.71 miles, reducing distance traveled by approximately 40%



Based on current processing order of algorithm (50% Walk then 50% Open)

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Strengthen Communities

- Compared to the current 3-Zone model, the Home-Based/A model would increase the opportunity for students to attend the same school as peers from their neighborhood

Model	Increase in Neighborhood Peers in a Student's Class Compared to Today*
Home-Based/A	↑ 26.9%

* Median

Based on current processing order of algorithm (50% Walk then 50% Open)

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Maintain Diversity: The Home-Based/A model has limited impact on socio-economic and racial diversity compared to current system

- We measure diversity by computing the socio-economic and racial characteristics of the typical applicant's peers across the plans from 25 simulations
- Socio-economic diversity

	% Peers Free Lunch	
	Typical	Range (25p-75p)
Current	58%	51-62%
Home-Based/A	57%	46-65%

- Racial/ethnic diversity

	% Peers Asian		% Peers Black		% Peers Hispanic		% Peers White	
	Typical	Range (25p-75p)	Typical	Range (25p-75p)	Typical	Range (25p-75p)	Typical	Range (25p-75p)
Current	4%	2-6%	27%	11-36%	45%	41-55%	10%	6-18%
Home-Based/A	3%	2-6%	25%	9-37%	45%	40-57%	10%	5-19%

Based on current processing order of algorithm (50% Walk then 50% Open)

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English Language Learners (ELLs) Overlay

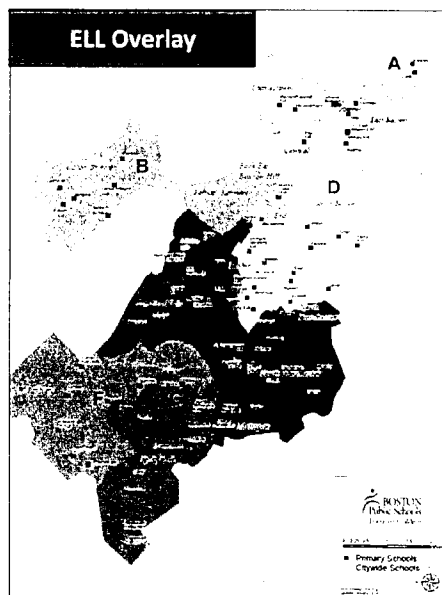
The EAC overwhelmingly recommended the ELL Overlay

Guiding Principles

- ELLs at ELD levels 1-3 have access to any program within their "cluster"
 - ELLs at ELD levels 4-5 will continue to use the general assignment process
- Overlay boundaries are based upon where students live; programs may need some changes to best serve student needs

English Language Learner Overlay

- Boundaries align with linguistic communities, allowing language-specific programs for predominant languages in each cluster
- BPS will add 3 additional dual language programs over time so there is one in each cluster



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Students with Disabilities (SWD) Overlay

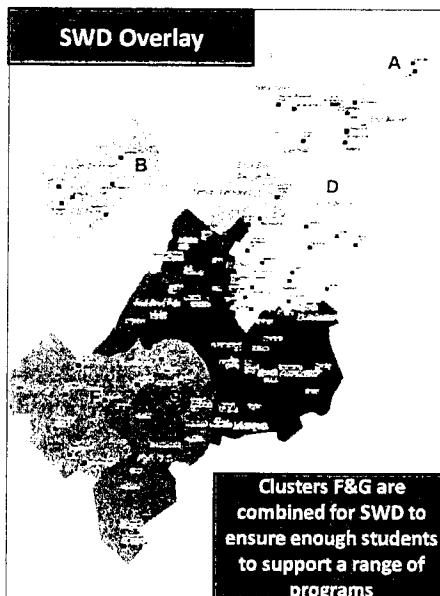
The EAC overwhelmingly recommended the SWD Overlay

Guiding Principles

- SWDs have access to any program within their "cluster"
- Overlay boundaries are based upon where students live; programs may need to change to best serve student needs

Students with Disabilities Overlay

- Offer at least 1 inclusive and 1 sub-separate option per cluster for students with most common disabilities* and moderate/high need
- Programs serving less common disabilities will remain citywide
- Students with resource room services would participate in the general assignment process
- We will convert two schools to full inclusion for fall 2013



*Includes autism, emotional impairment, mild/moderate intellectual impairment, specific learning disabilities. 15

Middle School Overlay

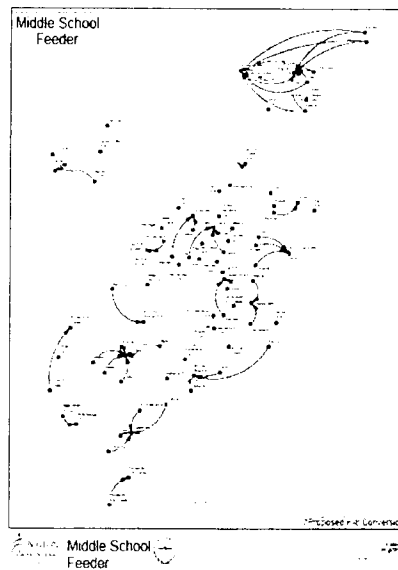
The EAC overwhelmingly recommended the Middle School Overlay

Guiding Principles

- Predictability and clear pathways for all students from Kindergarten through 8th grade

The Proposal

- Guaranteed K-8 pathway through 8th grade, consisting of K-8 school or elementary to middle school pathway
- Families can also choose a different middle school if they are not comfortable with the pathway
- Exploring feasibility of potential K-8 conversions: Blackstone, Condon, Hennigan, Marshall, Mattahunt, Perkins/Tynan, and Trotter
 - Academic performance
 - Enrollment patterns
 - Need for more K0-K2 seats as enrollment increases in early grades
- K-8 conversions begin in fall 2014 and will be phased in over time



Additional EAC Recommendations

In addition to its recommendation on Home-Based/A and Overlay maps, the EAC also made a number of additional recommendations to the district:

1. **Focus on quality improvements** by issuing an annual accountability report on improving school performance
2. **Continue a transparent and data-driven approach** to student assignment reform
3. **Create a task force** focused on monitoring and evaluating efforts to increase equitable access to a quality education for all students in Boston
4. **Analyze increases in quality seats** with a focus on enhancing equitable access
5. **Create a comprehensive school quality measure**
6. **Specify an absolute (rather than relative) threshold for school performance**
7. **Explore parent compacting** for under-chosen schools on a pilot basis
8. **Focus on family and community communication and outreach** for successful implementation
9. **Complete review of transportation policies and costs** with eye towards improving efficiency and reducing costs
10. **Determine the frequency with which school choice lists will be updated** based on changes in school quality

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Significant quality improvements are already underway

- FY14 weighted student funding plan will direct more resources to all schools with greater than 60 percent of students living in poverty (current is approximately 74%, district average)
- Mayor's legislative proposal would offer Turnaround powers, flexibility, resources, longer day to Level 3 schools, including High Support schools
 - There are 6,366 students in Level 4 schools (11.2%)
 - There are 23,763 students in Level 3 schools (41.8%)
- Using new teacher contract to:
 - Target support for teacher and school leader performance evaluations
 - Add more nurses and social workers to schools to support students' non-academic needs

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Yet we must do more: academic intervention plan

How will these schools be different?

- Extended day
- Staffing flexibilities to ensure strong leadership and effective teams of teachers
- Strategic collaboration with non-profit partners and families
- Targeted resource investments

The Plan

- The district will identify 6 - 8 schools to become in-district charters or innovation schools over the next year to continue to increase quality across the city
- Schools selected will be among the lowest performing Level 3 schools and Level 4 schools, with low performance and low academic growth
- We will focus the interventions in areas where there is greatest need and access to quality is uneven: Mattapan, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mission Hill, and South Boston
- In-district charters may be run by the district or by proven providers

Timeline

- Spring 2013: identify schools; communicate with families and community
- Summer 2013: recruit partners, seek resources, and plan with stakeholders
- Fall 2013: incorporate new design into school choice process for 2014-2015 school year
- Winter 2014: recruit specific staff
- Fall 2014: begin implementation

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Implementation Planning

Area of Work	Description*	Timing
Quality improvements	Target interventions in neighborhoods with greatest need for quality	Ongoing
	6-8 more in-district charter or Innovation schools with extended days, partnerships, and staffing flexibilities	Identify schools Spring 2013; begin implementation Fall 2014
	3 new dual language programs	Issue RFP Spring 2013; phase in implementation starting Fall 2014
	2 more full inclusion schools	Fall 2013
	Annual targets for increasing inclusion, and plan to meet targets	June 2013
Implementing assignment & algorithm changes	Change way families register and way students are assigned (Home-Based A)	Begin implementation if School Committee approves a new plan, with full implementation for Fall 2014
Communication & family outreach	Create family-friendly materials in multiple languages to help families understand their school choices and encourage family participation in conversations about quality	Begin ongoing implementation Spring 2013
Facilities plan	Work within new school choice plan to upgrade facility quality and ensure adequate capacity	Short-term: FY14 capital budget Long-term: Align with new assignment plan and enrollment projections

* Many steps require School Committee approval; for full list of BPS commitments, please see the Appendix

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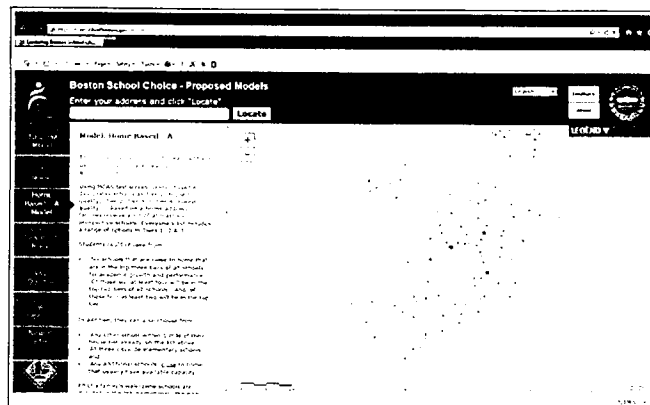
Timeline

- **Wednesday, February 27:** Introduce at School Committee meeting
- **Thursday, March 7:** School Committee hearing (6 p.m.)
- **Wednesday, March 13:** School Committee hearing (5 – 6 p.m.)
School Committee meeting and vote (6 p.m.)

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For more information:

- Please see our website at www.bostonschoolchoice.org
- **Interactive tool:** To explore what schools each of these models might provide as options for a new elementary school student, use our interactive mapping tool, available through the Boston School Choice website or at maps.cityofboston.gov/models/



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Appendix: BPS Commitments to Improving Quality and Capacity

1. **More K-8 pathways**, so all students have access to a K-8 pathway school(s) in their menu of options
2. **More school options**, including in-district charters, Innovation schools, and dual language and inclusion programs
3. **Create new in-district charter and Innovation schools** to address quality concerns in Mattapan, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mission Hill, and South Boston
 - a. Identify 6-8 schools over the next year from among the lowest-performing Level 3 and Level 4 schools to convert to either in-district charter or Innovation schools (to open Fall 2014)
 - b. Focus interventions in areas where there is greatest need (capacity) and quality is uneven
 - c. Include extended day, staffing flexibilities, strategic collaboration with nonprofit partners and families, and targeted resource investments to support these schools
4. **Convert an Allston-Brighton school to a regional option** (given excess seats and capacity shortages elsewhere)
5. **Commit to finding a space to serve downtown families** where current walk-zone access is limited
6. **Activate the hotline earlier** to move students off the waiting list and into schools faster
7. **Offer option for incoming K2 families** to be assigned to their closest available school in Round 1 if they don't receive one of their choices through the student assignment lottery
8. **Add three additional dual language programs** over time so there is one in each cluster on the ELL Overlay Map
9. **Offer at least 1 inclusive and 1 sub-separate option per cluster** on the Special Education Overlay Map for students with the most common disabilities and moderate/high need
10. **Convert two schools to full inclusion** for Fall 2013