

# Boston Public Schools: Improving School Choice

*Working with you to improve school choice and student assignment*

## Improving School Choice: Building Better Options Together

Meeting with Boston City Council  
January 22, 2013

**Building better options together**

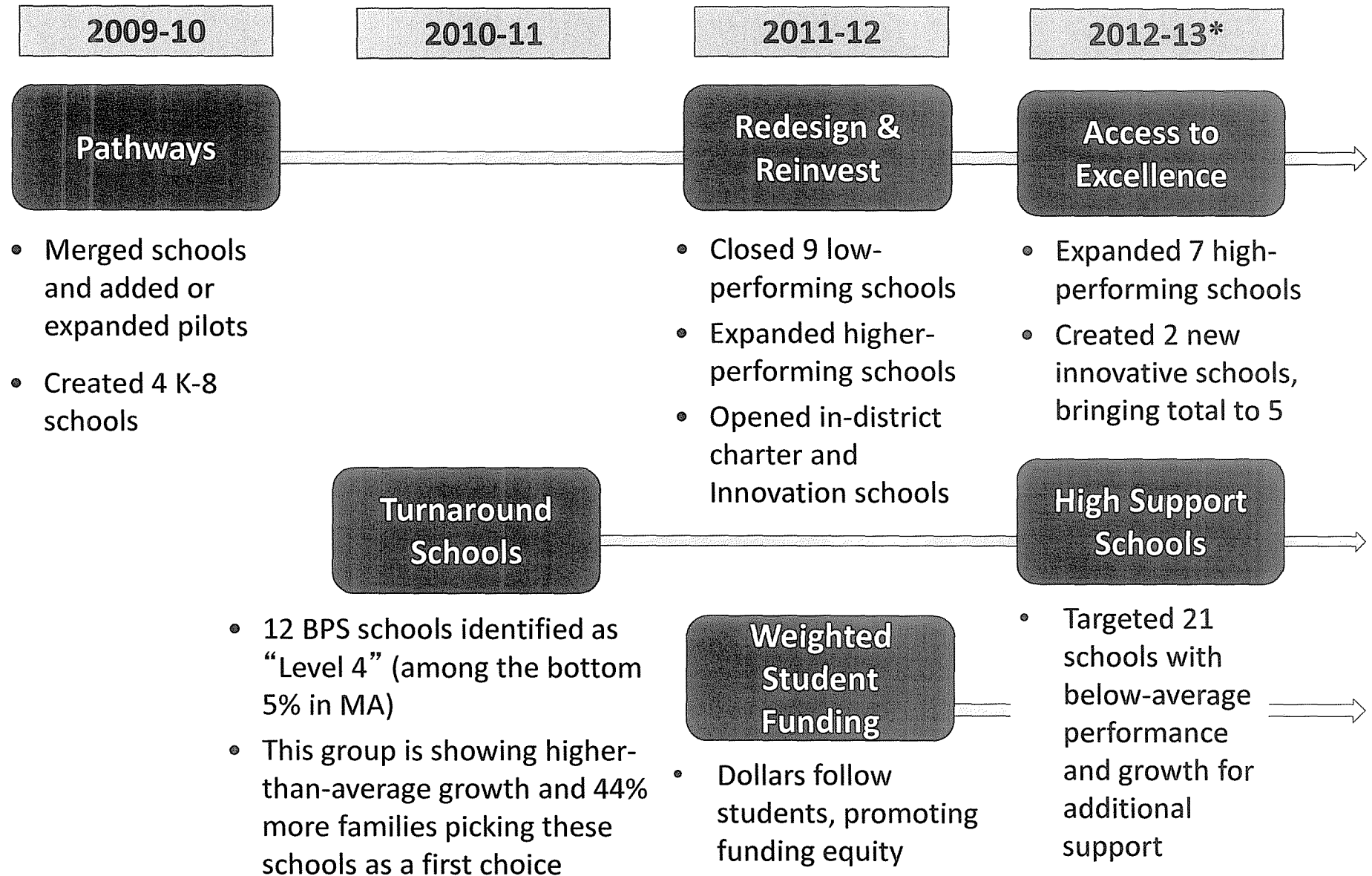


**BOSTON**  
Public Schools  
Focus on Children

# Agenda

- I. Improving school choice: Quality comes first
- II. Improving school choice: The process so far
- III. Proposed models
- IV. Proposed overlays
- V. Comparing the proposed models
- VI. Academic interventions

# BPS has taken major steps to improve school quality...



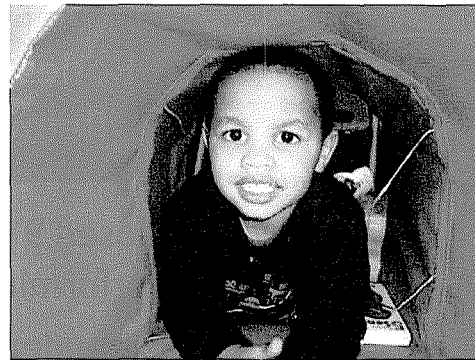
\* Marshall becomes UP Academy of Dorchester; Mattahunt becomes Turnaround School

## ...and offer more options that families want



### **K-8 Schools**

14 in 2004 to 25 today



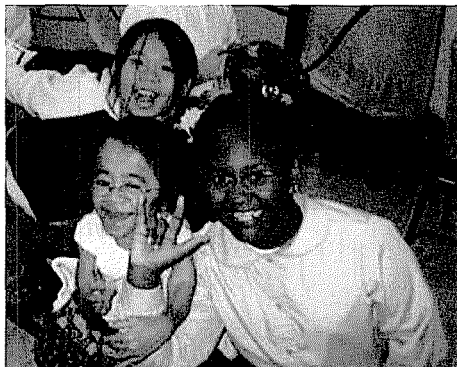
### **K1 for Four-Year-Olds**

350 seats in 2004 to 2,200 today



### **Arts**

14,000 more students with weekly arts



### **Inclusion Opportunities**

Increased inclusive schools network from 5 to 24



### **Two-Way Bilingual Programs**

First bilingual HS



### **Culturally Responsive Curricula**

Heritage Academies

## **The Mayor's call: Quality schools, closer to home**

“Pick any street. A dozen children probably attend a dozen different schools. Parents might not know each other; children might not play together. They can't carpool, or study for the same tests. We won't have the schools our kids deserve until we build school communities that serve them well.”

*Mayor Thomas M. Menino  
State of the City Address, January 17, 2012*

## **School choice: The process so far**

- Mayor Menino appointed the External Advisory Committee on School Choice (EAC) in early 2012 to provide a recommendation on a new student assignment system
- We heard more than 4,000 voices during more than nine months of community engagement. BPS presented a variety of proposals to the EAC and community in September
- Community members and elected officials also offered proposals and new ideas
- Academic and technical experts joined the conversation to enhance analysis and understanding of our current student assignment system and each proposal
- 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

# School choice: Elements of all proposals

- **Grandfathering** of all students and **sibling grandfathering**. Under any plan, current BPS students may choose to stay in their assigned school and may be joined by their younger brothers or sisters
- **Sibling priority** and **walk zone access** are maintained in all proposals (walk zone is a one-mile radius from home, even if it is across a zone boundary)
- **More K-8 pathways**: Every student would have access to K-8 pathway school(s) in their menu of options
- **More predictability and closer to home**: Families can know more about the schools they can select with assurance they have more equitable access to quality; this could attract new families to BPS
- **More school options** will be possible – including in-district charters, Innovation schools, dual language and inclusion programs
- Create new **in-district charter and Innovation Schools** to address quality concerns in Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park
- Convert an Allston-Brighton school to a **regional option** (excess seats, capacity shortages)
- Committed to finding space to serve **downtown families**, where current walk-zone access is limited
- Earlier hotline activation to **move students off waiting lists** and into schools faster
- Offer **option for incoming K2 families** to be assigned to the closest available school in Round 7 One if they don't receive one of their choices on

# Refined proposals: 10-Zone and Home-Based

## 1. 10-Zone Model

- 10 geographically based zones, designed to better balance access to quality, offer options closer to home and support diverse school communities
  - Number of choices ranges from 3 to 14 within zones (average of 8), in addition to citywide options
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## 2. Home-Based/A:

- Creates a list of schools for each student based on his or her family's home address
- Each student has at least six choices balanced for school quality, plus any additional schools within a mile of the student's home (walk zone), citywide options and other nearby schools to ensure seat availability

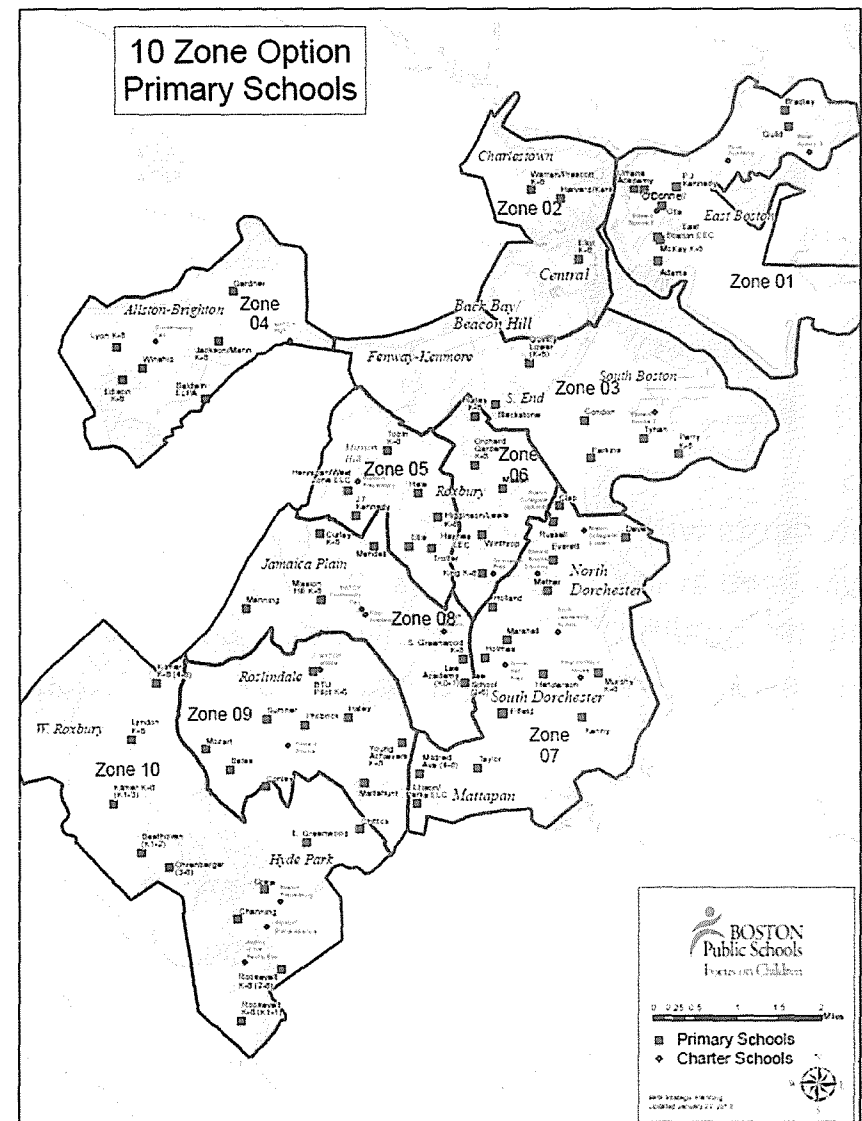
## 3. Home-Based/B:

- Creates a list of schools for each student based on his or her family's home address
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# 10-Zone Model

- This model creates 10 geographic zones across the city to maximize access to quality and socio-economic diversity
- Families get to choose from any school located inside the zone where they live, as well as any school within their walk zone (one mile from home for elementary school students), even if it is across a zone boundary, and citywide schools
- After learning about each school, families rank the schools they prefer their child to attend and are assigned to a school based on seat availability
- Students in Zones 5 and 8 would have access to Mission Hill K-8 School
- Uses current Roslindale feeder pattern as model for other K-8 pathways across the city



# Home-Based/A

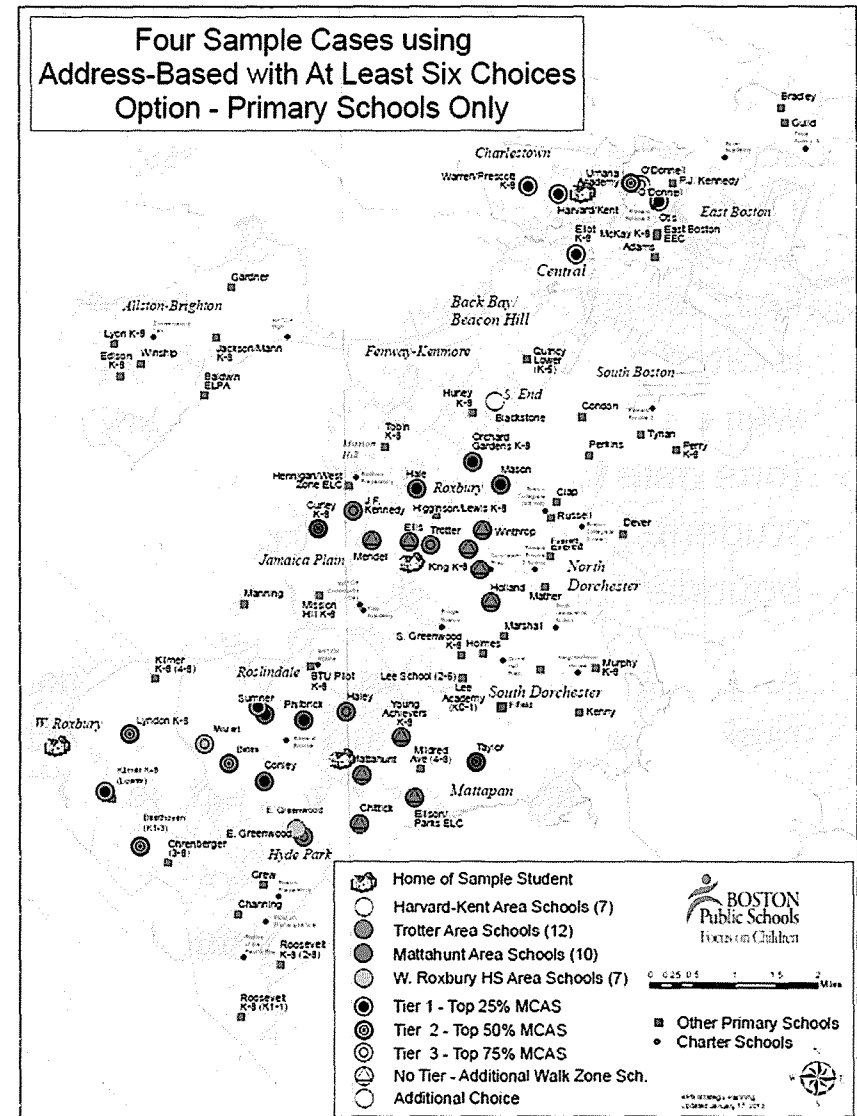
“Home-Based/A” ensures every family has high-quality schools on their list of options. It adapts to changes in quality and popularity over time. School choice lists are based on address and always contain the closest:

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

Students with higher-quality schools closer to home will have at least six choices; 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, academic growth and overall performance. Families would rank the schools they prefer their child to attend and be assigned based on priorities (walk zone and sibling) and availability



See appendix for list of schools by tier

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“Home-Based/B” ensures every family has high-quality schools on their list of options. It adapts to changes in quality and popularity over time. School choice lists are based on address and always contain the closest:

- 3 top-tier schools
- 6 top- or second-tier schools
- 9 schools from the first, second or third tier

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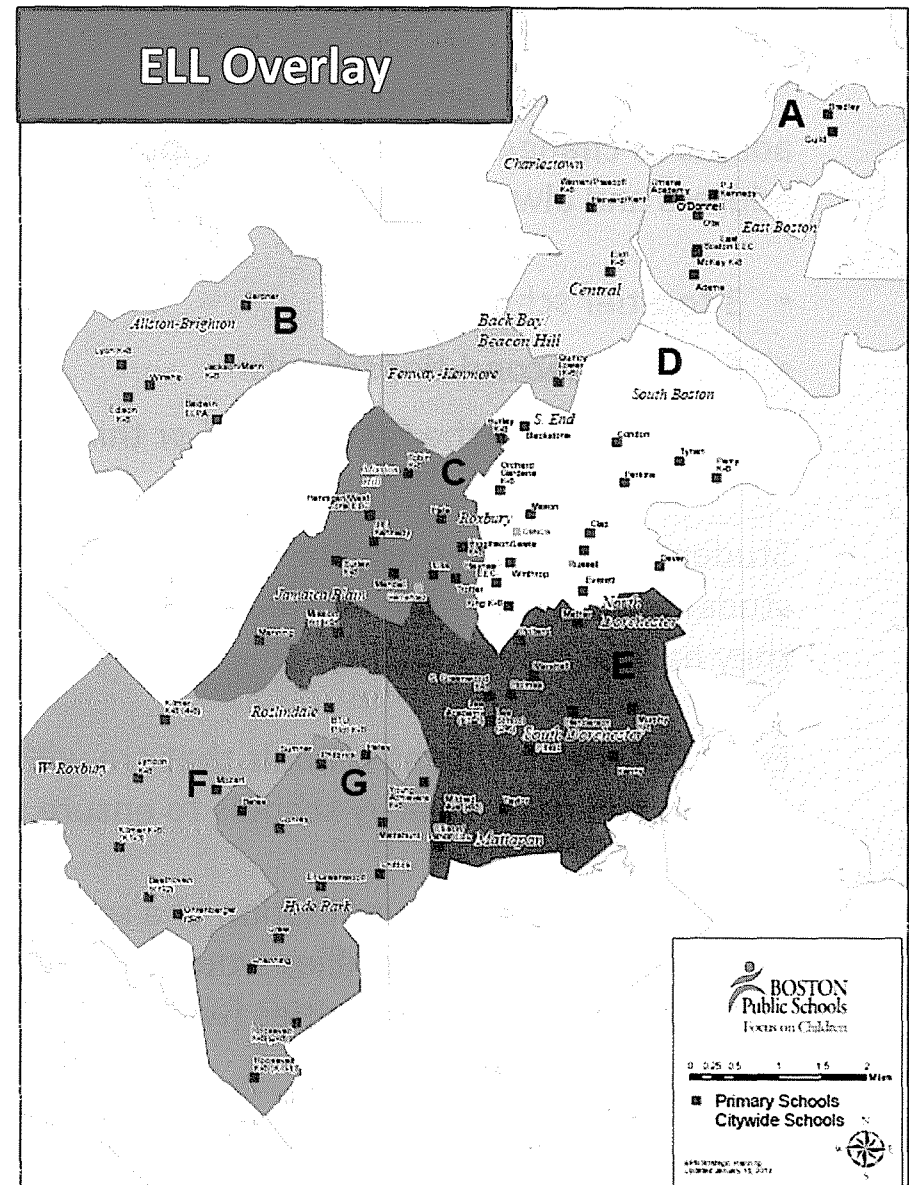
# English Language Learners (ELLs) Overlay

## Guiding Principles

- ELLs have access to any program within their “cluster”
- Overlay boundaries are based upon where students live; programs may need some changes to best serve student needs
- Same boundaries as Students with Disabilities Overlay to better serve ELLs with disabilities

## 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



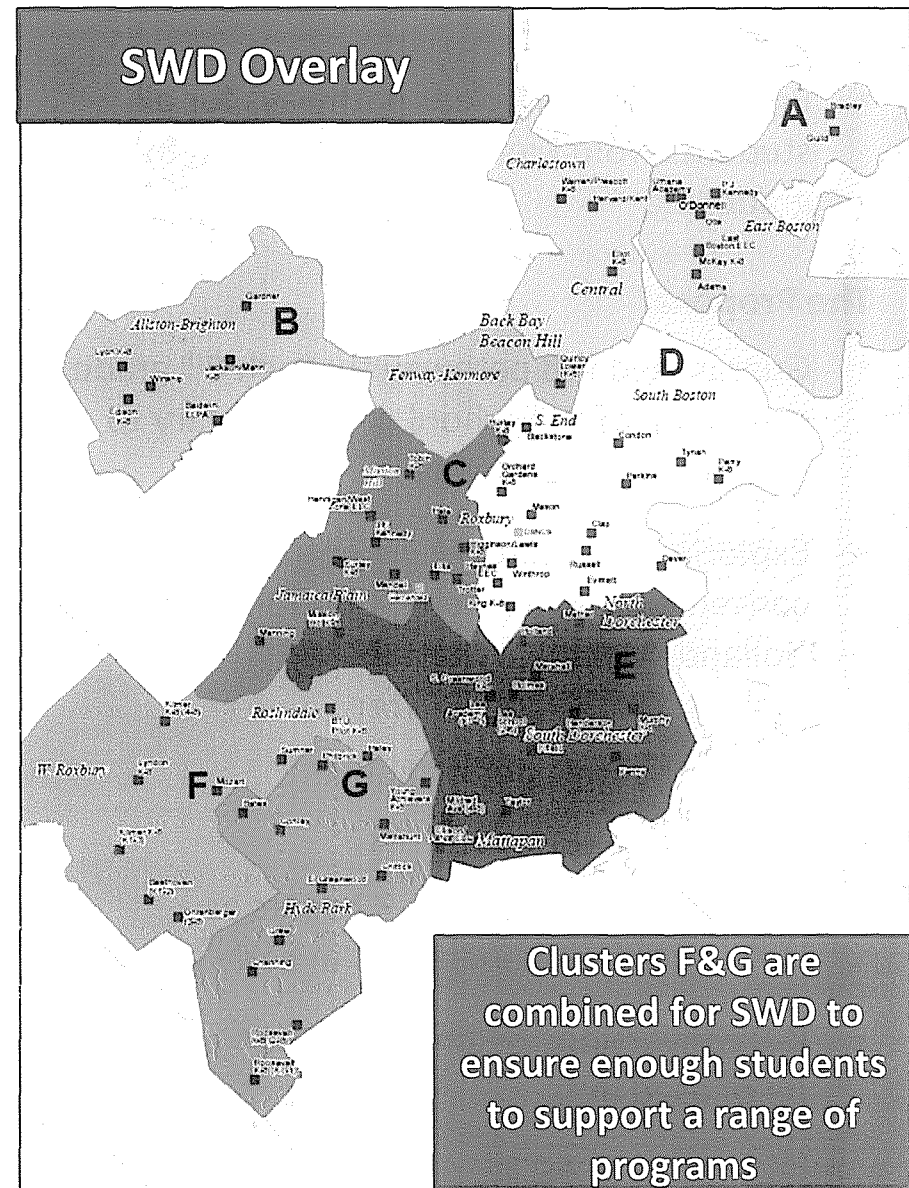
# Students with Disabilities (SWD) Overlay

## 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
- Same boundaries as ELL overlay to better serve ELLs with disabilities

## 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
- Inclusive options are being expanded



\*Includes autism, emotional impairment, mild/moderate intellectual impairment, specific learning disabilities. 13

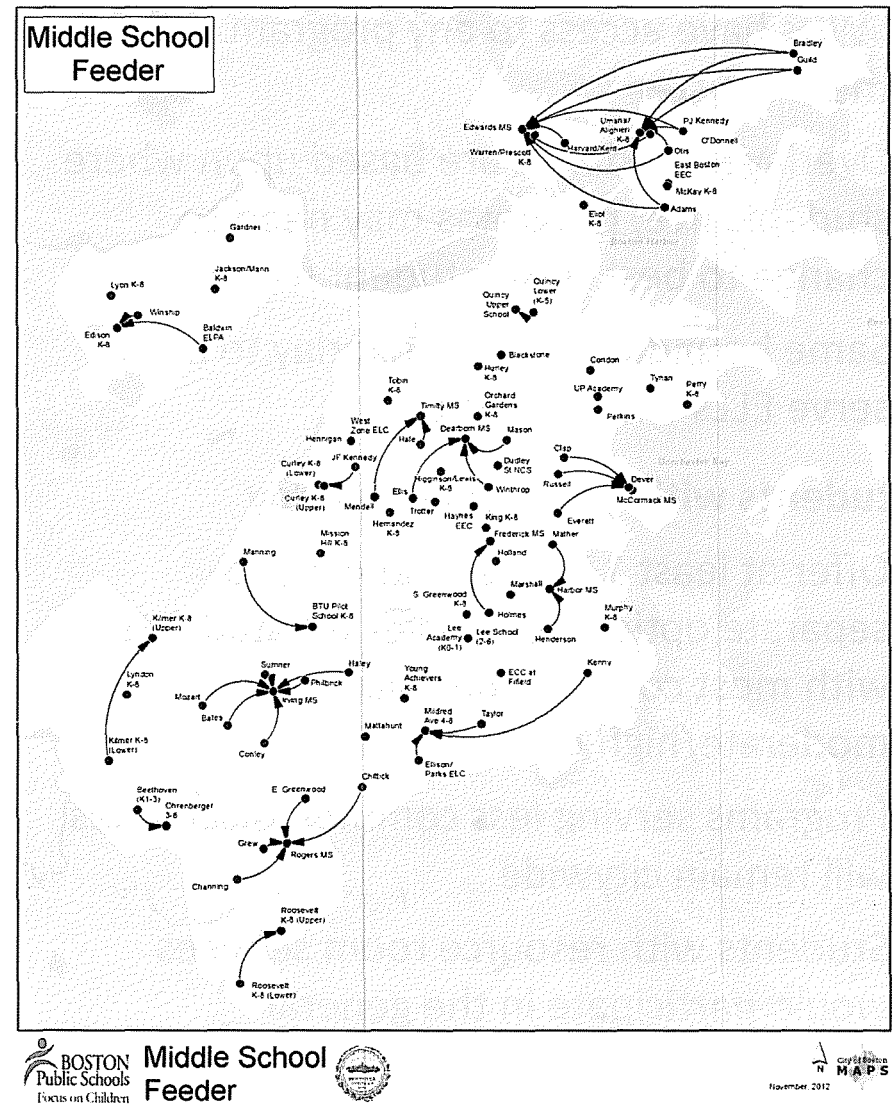
# Middle School Overlay

## Guiding Principles

- Predictability and clear pathways for all students from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade

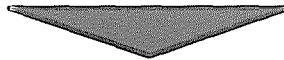
## The Proposal

- Guaranteed K-8 pathway through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, consisting of K-8 school or elementary to middle school pathway
- Exploring feasibility of potential K-8 conversions: Blackstone, Condon, Hennigan, Holland, 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



# Technical limitations

- The technical team is using state-of-the art econometric demand analysis conducted at MIT to simulate outcomes under different zone proposals
- The central assumption is that by using families' stated choices from a previous year, it is possible to quantify what makes them pick certain schools (distance, school quality, etc.) and therefore simulate the alternatives
- Many reasons why parents rank schools are not observed in our data, so this method is suitable for statements about patterns on average, rather than for individuals
  - Also, the tool is most valuable under the assumption that *nothing else changes* except for choice menus
  - If there are changes which make certain schools more attractive (e.g., through quality interventions) or changes to assignment policies (e.g., parent compacting, or new information about schools), these will not be incorporated
- We also have more confidence simulating plans closer to the current system because these do not require extrapolation too far out-of-sample
- Moreover, the analysis is based only on offers for the first round; it does not incorporate subsequent rounds or school enrollment decisions



**While predicting future behavior is always challenging, the methods are the best available given the data that is collected**

# Defining Quality

- **We have worked closely with the EAC to define a metric for quality that looks at student growth and performance**
- EAC developed a comprehensive definition of quality
  - Not all components can be measured by current data
  - We will work toward creating a way to measure quality using this definition
- We are using academic performance and growth based on MCAS to identify higher-performing schools, although we recognize that school quality is based on much more than MCAS scores
- We have adjusted our measure of quality based on feedback from the EAC
  - We are now calling the top 50% of schools “high-quality,” rather than top 67% of schools
  - We are weighting performance more heavily than growth (2/3 of the metric is from performance, 1/3 from growth)
- This metric is intended to be used to compare models



## **EAC Definition of Quality**

Acknowledging that quality varies for each individual, the EAC Defining Quality and Equitable Access Subcommittee – with its members' expertise, community feedback, and BPS research on quality – has drafted the following preliminary definition of a quality school to include:

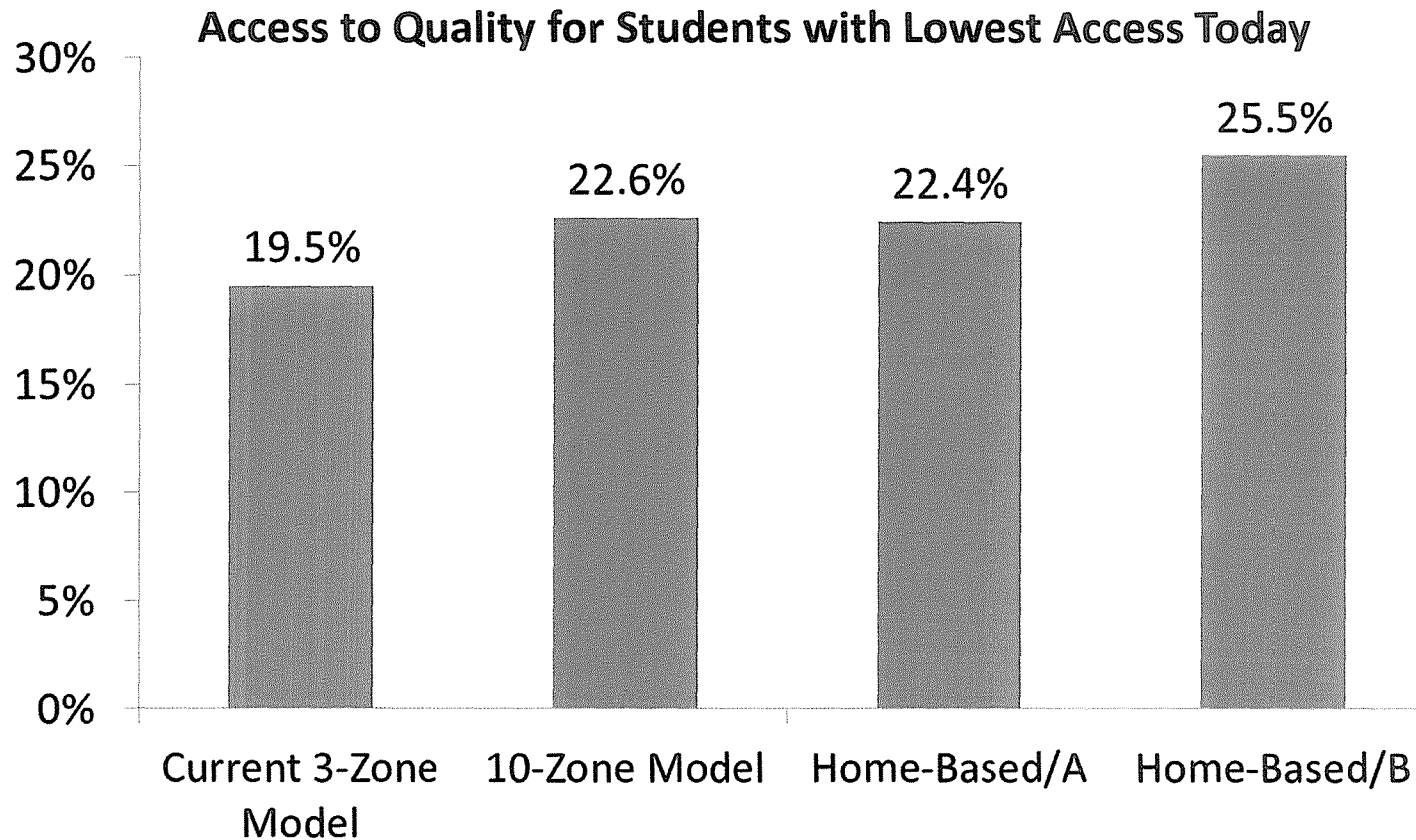
- Academic excellence and student academic growth in all grades, across all subgroups of race, ethnicity, English Language Learners and students with disabilities
- Principal effectiveness and teacher excellence with caring teachers and school staff
- Parent engagement and a sense of community within and outside of the school
- Effective community partnerships
- Focus on the development of the whole child and the needs of all learners, through arts, music, athletics, and program and course offerings
- Safe and positive school climate including social and emotional support
- Adequate and appropriate facilities
- As close to home as possible

## **EAC Definition of Equitable Access**

- A new student assignment process should seek to provide every child, in every neighborhood; including but not limited to the following subgroups; race, national origin, color, gender, immigrant status, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, special needs or disability, with the same opportunity to learn and succeed in the Boston Public Schools.
- If the new student assignment plan is geographically-based, each defined area should seek to provide an equal opportunity to receive a quality education, and at a “quality school” as defined by the EAC based on data and community feedback.
- The EAC will ensure that its recommendations to BPS take into account how all students in every subgroup will be affected by the proposed student assignment models and policies, and that the EAC’s recommendations support continued diversity throughout BPS.

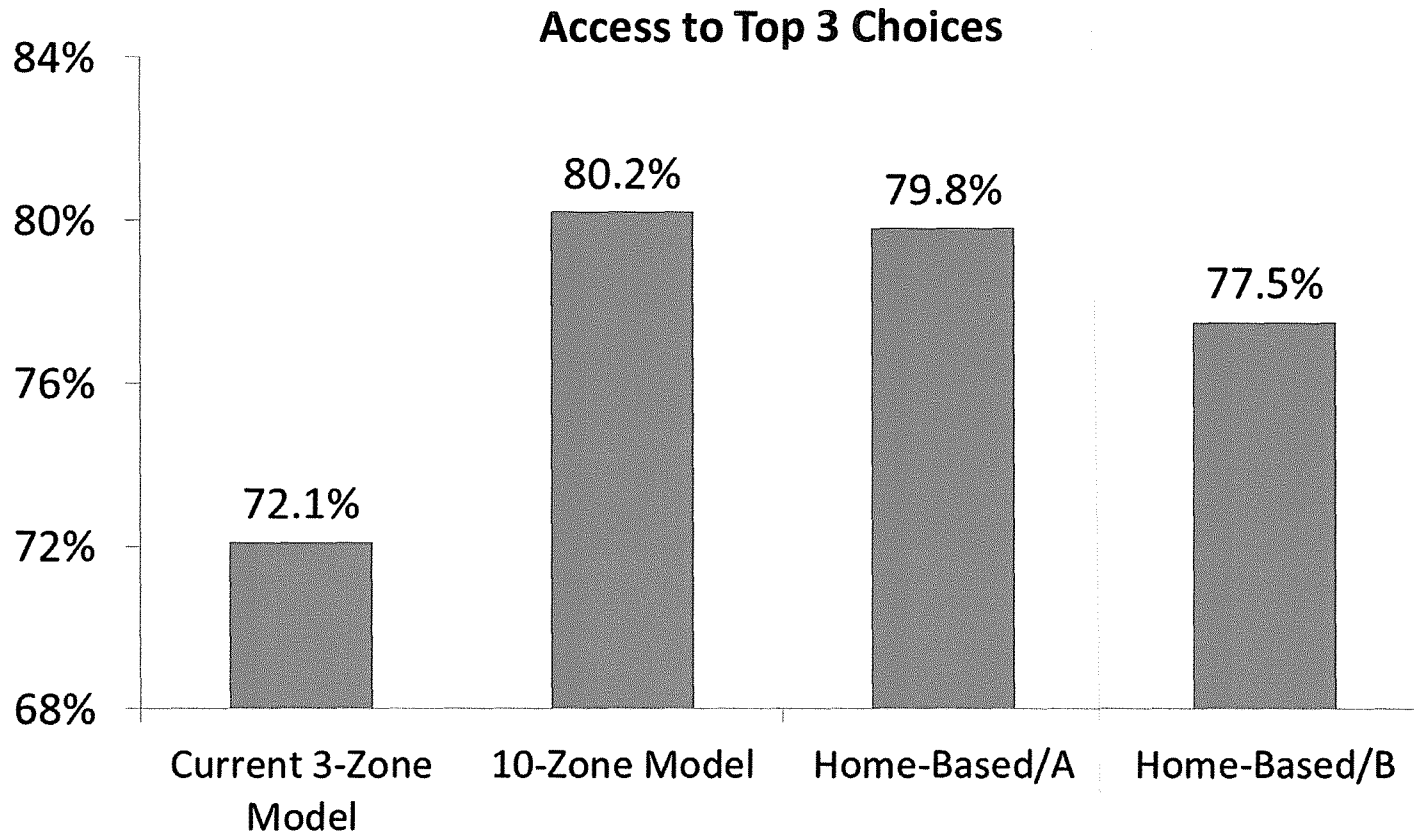
## Increase in Access to Quality Schools

- Equity requires that we increase access to quality for students who currently have the lowest access to quality
- Each proposed model would increase access to quality for these students compared to the current 3-Zone model



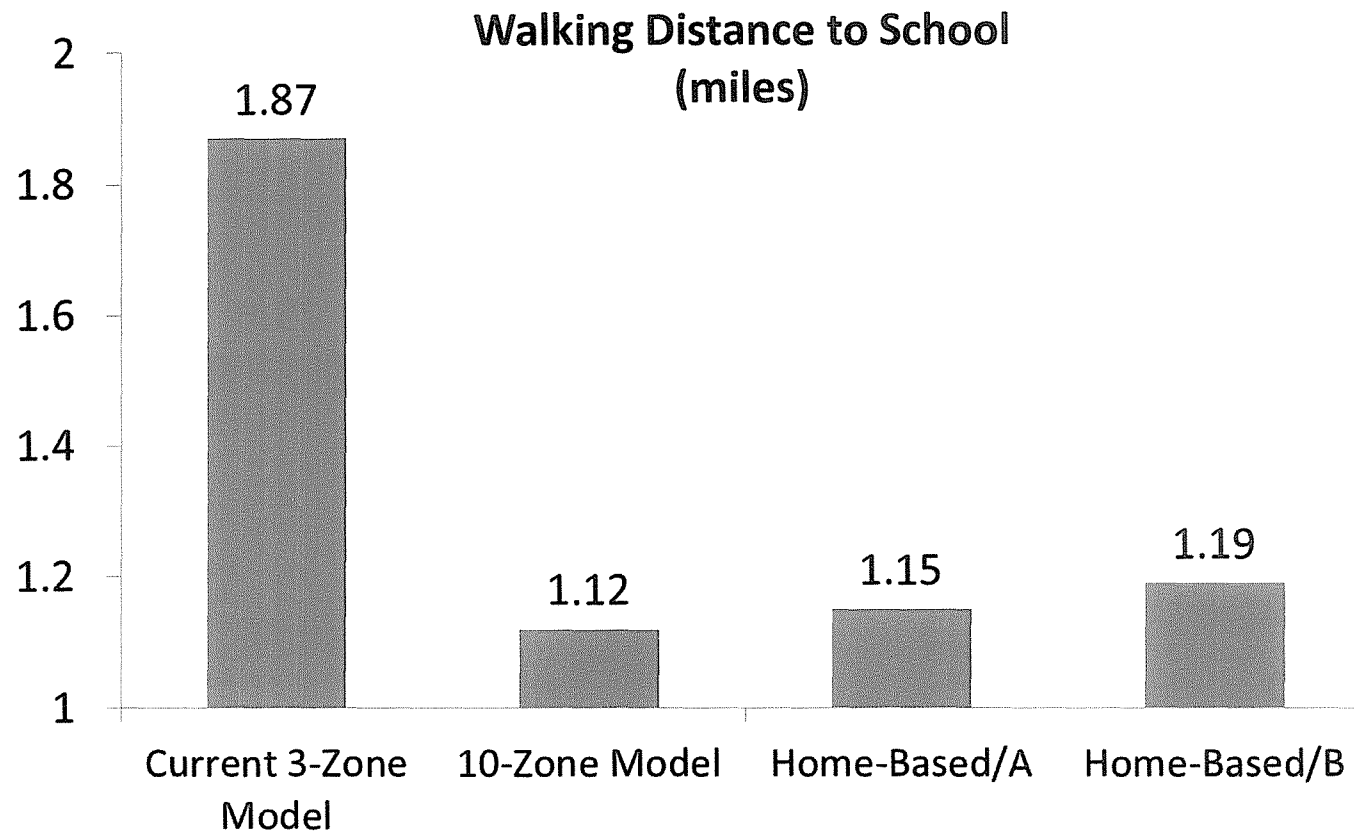
## Increase in Predictability

- Each proposed model would increase a student's access to one of his or her top three choices, 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



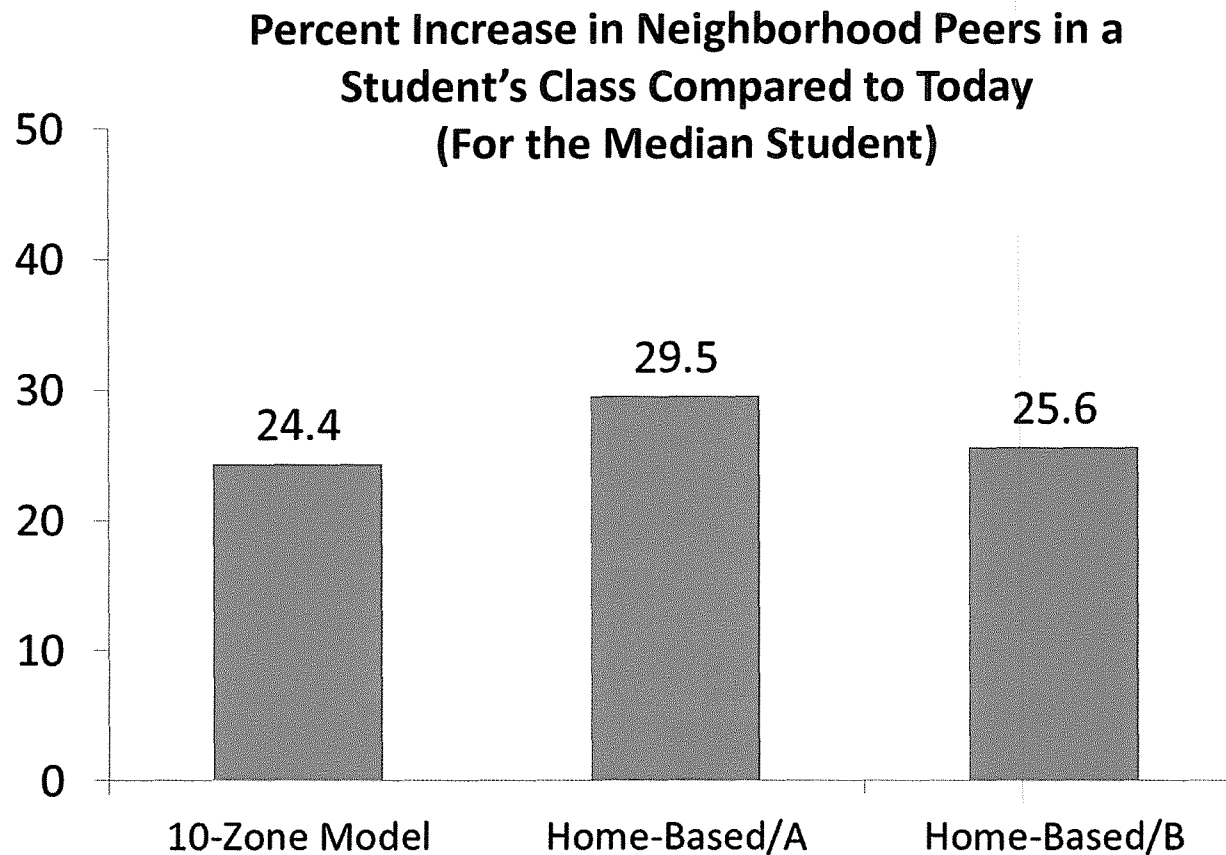
## Closer to Home

- Each proposed model would decrease this distance by more than half a mile, reducing distance traveled by approximately one-third
- Currently, for the median BPS student, the walking distance to school is 1.87 miles



## Strengthen Communities

- Compared to the current 3-Zone model, each proposed model would increase the opportunity for students to attend the same school as peers from their neighborhood



## Maintain Diversity:

### New proposals have 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

	<u>% Peers Free lunch</u>	
	Typical	Range (25p-75p)
Current	58%	51-62%
10-Zone	56%	46-65%
Home-Based/A	57%	46-65%
Home-Based/B	57%	47-65%

- Racial/ethnic diversity

	<u>% Peers Asian</u>		<u>% Peers Black</u>		<u>% Peers Hispanic</u>		<u>% Peers White</u>	
	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%
10-Zone	3%	2-6%	26%	9-37%	45%	41-61%	10%	5-18%
Home-Based/A	3%	2-6%	25%	9-37%	45%	40-58%	10%	5-19%
Home-Based/B	3%	2-6%	25%	9-37%	45%	40-58%	10%	5-19%

# Academic Interventions: Introduction

- Families have told us that their number one priority in any student assignment change is quality – and we agree
- Changing student assignment models can make access to quality more equitable, but it cannot improve quality, in and of itself
- The community has made clear that changes to the assignment system must include academic interventions to improve quality
- Past improvement efforts guide our current thinking. The Turnaround schools initiative includes effective strategies for improving low performing schools, which involves making multiple changes at once
  - These changes include: ensuring effective leadership and teaching; extending the school day; building capacity for data use; and leveraging partnerships with non-profits and the community



## Further 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

# 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

## For more information:

- If you would like more information, please feel free to visit the following:
  - Glossary & users guide: a more in-depth explanation of each model, along with definitions of each measure used to evaluate the models
  - Technical report: describes the methodology and equations used to evaluate the various assignment models
  - Detailed graphs: provides in-depth data about each assignment model in a variety of charts, graphs, and maps
- These reports are posted at [www.bostonschoolchoice.org](http://www.bostonschoolchoice.org)



# Appendix

# Home-Based models: Tier and capacity explanation

These models ensure every family has high-quality schools on their list of options, as well as all walk zone schools (within one mile from home). It also adapts to changes in school quality and popularity over time and ensures a match between supply and demand.

## How does it work?

BPS uses MCAS data to chart two years of overall academic performance of students in Mathematics and English in each school (grades K-5) and the rate of academic growth. Each school is given a numeric value based on these metrics, with overall performance counting for 2/3 of the total, and growth counting for 1/3.

From here, we group our schools into four tiers:

- Tier I: The top 25 percent of schools in BPS
- Tier II: The middle 26-50 percent of schools
- Tier III: The middle 51-75 percent of schools
- Tier IV: The remaining schools.

Every family will get a **customized list** of schools based around their home address (a “home-based list”). For Home-Based: A, every family’s list would include the closest two schools from Tier I, as well as the four closest schools from Tiers I and II, then the six closest schools from either Tier I, II or III. In some cases, these schools would be the same, meaning a student would have six school choices. In other cases, for example if a family lives very close to many schools but lives far from a high-quality school, it could be many more. The average number of schools on a family’s list would be about eight, in addition to citywide options. The list would also include all the schools in the family’s walk zone (within one mile from home). Home-Based: B is the same, except students would have the three closest schools from Tier I, the nine closest schools from Tiers I and II, and so on.

To ensure a match between supply and demand, we also look at three years of demand data to determine schools that can usually seat any student who requests it, regardless of performance. These schools are called “capacity schools,” and may also appear on a family’s choice list. Sometimes, these are Tier I or II schools – other times, they are Tier III or IV. Every family is given the option to choose from the three closest capacity schools.

The capacity schools, as well as the Tier lists, would be set each year based on the most current data available.

# Home-Based model groupings

*Note: For 2014-15, this list would change based on 2012-13 MCAS and demand data*

## **Tier 1 Schools**

*Schools in the Top 25% MCAS  
Snapshot percentile:*

Bradley Elementary  
Conley Elementary  
Eliot K-8  
Hale Elementary  
Harvard/Kent Elementary  
Henderson Elementary  
Hurley Elementary  
Kilmer Lower/Upper  
Lyndon K-8  
Lyon K-8  
Manning Elementary  
Mason Elementary  
Murphy K-8  
Otis Elementary  
Philbrick Elementary  
Quincy Lower (K-5)  
Roosevelt K-8  
Sumner Elementary  
Warren/Prescott

## **Tier 2 Schools**

*Schools in the Top 26-50% MCAS  
Snapshot percentile:*

Bates Elementary  
Beethoven/Ohrenberger  
BTU Pilot  
Clap Innovation School  
Curley Lower & Upper  
Edison K-8  
Sarah Greenwood K-8  
Guild Elementary  
Jackson/Mann K-8  
Kennedy John F Elementary  
Kennedy Patrick Elementary  
Kenny Elementary  
Mather Elementary  
Mission Hill K-8  
Mozart Elementary  
Orchard Gardens K-8  
Taylor Elementary  
Mario Umana Academy

## **Tier 3 Schools**

*Schools in the Top 75% MCAS  
Snapshot percentile:*

Adams Elementary  
Condon Elementary  
Dever Elementary  
Everett Elementary  
Gardner Elementary  
Haley Elementary  
Lee Elementary/Lee Academy  
McKay K-8  
O'Donnell Elementary  
Perry K-8  
Russell Elementary  
Tobin K-8  
Winship Elementary

## **Capacity Schools**

*Schools that have had available  
seats between 2009-2012 based  
on demand:*

Bates Elementary  
Blackstone Elementary  
Chittick Elementary  
Condon Elementary  
Edison K-8  
Ellis Elementary  
Everett Elementary  
Gardner Elementary  
Greenwood Elihu Elem  
Harvard/Kent Elem  
Higginson/Lewis K-8  
Holland Elementary  
King K-8  
Mather Elementary  
Mattahunt Elementary  
Mendell Elementary  
Russell Elementary  
Sumner Elementary  
Taylor Elementary  
Warren/Prescott  
Winship Elementary  
Winthrop Elementary