Improving School Choice:
New Home-based Choice System

Presentation to Quality Working Group
May 1, 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
The EACs recommended and the School Committee adopted a new home-based assignment plan.

“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 sibling priority, random number and seat availability.
Current Definition of Quality: BPS schools by tier

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

Tier 4 Schools
Schools below the Top 75% MCAS
Snapshot percentile:
Blackstone Elementary
Channing Elementary
Chittick Elementary
Ellis Elementary
Greenwood Elihu Elem
Grew Elementary
Hennigan Elementary
Higginson/Lewis K-8
Holland Elementary
Holmes Elementary
King K-8
Marshall Elementary
Mattahunt Elementary
Mendell Elementary
Mildred Avenue K-8
Perkins Elementary
Trotter Elementary
Tynan Elementary
Winthrop Elementary
Young Achievers K-8

Based on Quadrant Analysis Methodology:
Using Two Years MCAS Data for ELA & MATH (67% Proficiency and 33% Growth)
The School Committee also approved overlays for students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and middle school students.
This new assignment system provides many benefits to families compared to the status quo

• **The home-based plan** 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:
  
  − It is more equitable than the status quo
  
  − It protects the ethnic and socio-economic diversity we value in our schools
  
  − It does away with zones and puts a priority on helping students attend quality schools closer to home
  
  − It is more predictable than what we have today: it increases the chances a family will receive one of their top three choices to 80 percent
  
  − It reduces the average distance our children must travel by 40 percent
  
  − It ensures that neighboring children have similar lists of schools to from which to choose
  
  − It is self-correcting and adapts as quality improves; every time a school gets better, predictability and equity will increase and the distance students have to travel will decrease
In addition, the School Committee approved a number of additional EAC recommendations

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
Questions and Answers
For more information:

- Please see our website at [www.bostonschoolchoice.org](http://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/](http://maps.cityofboston.gov/models/)