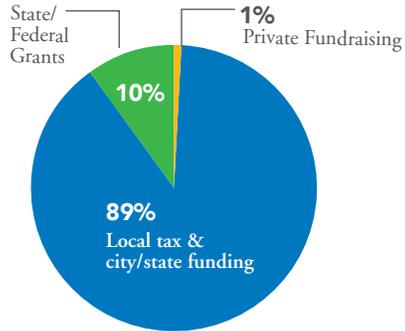


# Investing in Student Success: 10 Big Ideas to Unlock Resources in the Boston Public Schools

WE BEGIN BY UNDERSTANDING WHERE BPS FUNDING COMES FROM & HOW IT IS SPENT...

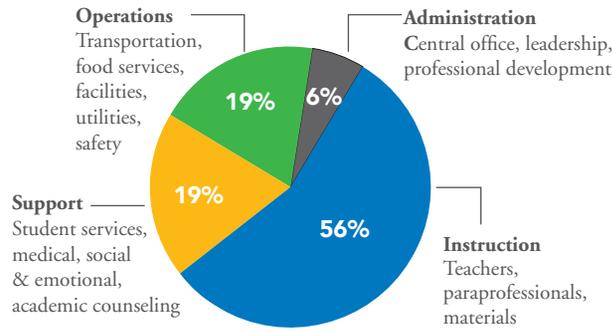
...AND HOW BPS SPENDING COMPARES TO OTHER DISTRICTS...

## WHERE OUR MONEY COMES FROM



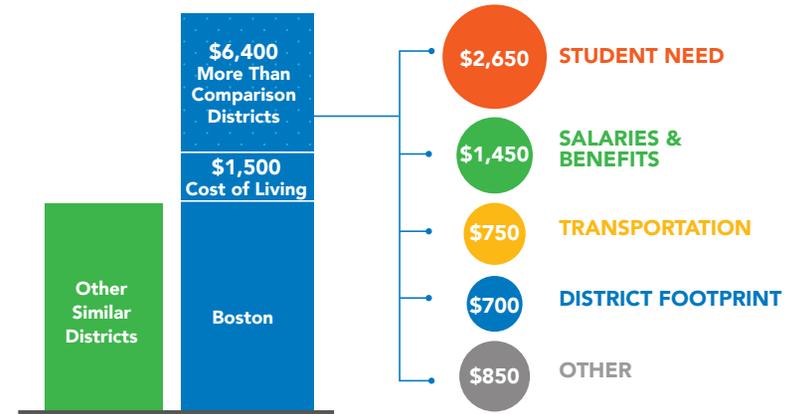
**\$1.15 BILLION TOTAL DEDICATED TO BPS IN FY16**

## WHERE WE SPEND OUR MONEY



## BPS SPENDS \$6,400 MORE PER PUPIL

than comparison districts, even after adjusting for the higher cost of living - this additional spending is concentrated in a few key areas:



Source: Boston Public Schools analysis of Education Resource Strategies report, December 2015

...WHICH RESULTS IN IDENTIFYING FIVE KEY AREAS OF FOCUS THAT ARE THE BIGGEST SOURCES OF STRESS ON THE BPS BUDGET



### TRANSPORTATION

**Over the last five years, Transportation costs have increased by \$40M**

BPS spends five times more than the average district on transportation. Transportation accounts for 11%, or ~\$110 million, of BPS's FY2016 budget. BPS' commitment to school choice allows students to attend schools farther from home, and also guarantees transportation to those schools. BPS must also provide transportation for non-BPS students in charter, private, and some parochial schools.



### DISTRICT FOOTPRINT

**BPS has more schools, classrooms, and programs than similarly sized comparison districts**

This results in higher costs across a number of areas: facilities, transportation, and teaching and administrative staff. This footprint is driven by a large number of small schools, by the 20+ grade configuration across BPS, and by SPED and ELL programs that are not always filled to capacity. Relative to comparison districts, BPS' schools are ~140 students smaller at the elementary level and ~220 smaller at the secondary level



### SALARIES & BENEFITS

**BPS pays employees ~20% more than surrounding districts**

BPS proudly pays its teachers more than most other districts, both regionally and nationally. BPS teachers earn an average of \$16,000 more a year than other districts around Boston. The average BPS teacher also earns more in a lifetime than their counterparts in any of the largest 112 districts nationally. And a recent initiative to extend the school day means ~5% increase in salaries for teachers who work the longer school day.



### STUDENT NEED

**BPS spends 53% more on special education than comparison districts**

BPS has more high needs students than ever before. 19% of students receive Special Education services, and there are increasingly higher-need students even within this Special Education population. English Language Learners comprise 30% of all BPS students, up from 20% prior to 2010.



### EXTERNAL

**State and federal revenue has been stagnant**

Federal and state revenue support has been flat or declining, leaving the city to support a growing share of the full cost of BPS. Over the past five years, Boston's investment in BPS has grown faster than other City Departments, growing by 25%, while public safety departments grew by 20%, and all other city departments grew by less than 13%.

Without change in these areas, expenses are expected to continue to rise faster than revenue, requiring BPS to make tradeoffs each year to balance the budget despite spending more each year. With expenses expected to rise 3-4% per year with revenue projected to grow 2%, BPS will be left making \$20-\$25M of tradeoffs every year.

# 10 BIG IDEAS

Over the last year, an advisory committee of BPS stakeholders generated a list of possible changes to address fiscal challenges, and evaluated the opportunities, challenges, and financial impact of each. The committee ultimately prioritized the “10 Big Ideas” below on the criteria of size, feasibility, and impact on families. These are not recommendations, but rather a set of ideas to be considered by the BPS community.

## 1 Reduce Long-Distance BPS Transportation by adjusting student assignment policies

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**\$4-18M**

In 2012, BPS moved from a 3-zone student assignment system to a home-based assignment system which over time will reduce transportation costs. However, cost reductions from this reform are currently limited for two reasons: First, there is a delay in the time it will take to realize the full savings of home-based assignment given that current students (and their siblings) are “grandfathered” into their current schools. Second, the former 3-zone student assignment system is only one of several reasons that students are assigned to schools far from home. In addition, the district also supports a number of specialized programs that draw students from across the city. Looking for ways to address these causes could result in significant savings.

## 2 Adopt State-Mandated Transportation-Eligibility Distances

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**\$8-10M**

Currently, the provision of BPS transportation is more generous than the requirements set forth in state law. BPS provides yellow-bus transportation to any kindergarten or elementary school student who lives more than a mile away from school and to any sixth-grader who lives more than a mile and a half from school (state law requires K-6 transportation only for students who live two miles or more from school). Additionally, BPS offers transportation services to students in grades 7-12 who live two miles or more from school, which is not required under state law, except for students requiring transportation as part of their IEP accommodations. Adopting state-mandated transportation-eligibility distances could result in significant savings.

## 3 Maximize Efficiencies in Transportation

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**\$4-7M**

In order to increase efficiencies, the committee prioritized the following potential changes: 1) better balancing school start times so fewer buses are needed on the road, 2) clarify which students do not need transportation, and 3) expand transportation options for students who live far from school. The following ideas also warrant exploration: shifting to two bell times, increasing students’ maximum route time, increasing walk to stop distances, “linking” schools, and exploring a “hub and spoke” model.

## 4 Reconfigure the District’s Footprint

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**VARIES**

Running underutilized schools across a variety of grade configurations is costly; add in a plethora of programming and city-wide enrollment patterns and it creates a system with classrooms that are not full. BPS can concentrate resources to offer richer programming at fewer sites by making adjustments to: 1) the number of total schools, 2) the number of locations at which certain programs are offered, and 3) the methodology used for student assignment and enrollment projections, which link closely to the coherence of grade configurations across schools. For all of these changes to occur, decisions must be made based on reliable, accurate data that reflects school capacity, student demand, and assessments of equity by neighborhood.

## 5 Examine Teacher Wages and School Day Length

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**VARIES**

While teacher salaries across the country have declined or remained flat in real terms over the last few years, teacher salaries in Boston have increased (teachers made an average of \$91K in fiscal year 2017). Today, the average teacher in Boston makes more than national or neighboring districts. The district, in partnership with the Boston Teachers Union, could make adjustments both to the rate of growth of the wage schedule and to the terms of implementing extended learning time. If the next contract were similar to the terms of the current contract, we would expect annual costs to increase ~\$50M within three years.

## 6 Advocate to Change Tenure Law

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**\$10-15M**

Three years ago, BPS implemented an early hiring initiative aimed at giving school leaders greater ability to choose the staff employed in their classrooms through mutual consent hiring. While the program has had many successes, it remains expensive because, based on state law, teachers who do not secure a position are still owed a salary, costing the district ~\$10-\$15M annually. If the Massachusetts Legislature were to amend this law, the savings would be significant.

## 7 Ensure Special Education Identification & Administration Support Students Appropriately

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**\$10-15M**

When considering changes in Special Education, where BPS’ highest need and most vulnerable students are served, BPS always considers changes through the lens of serving students better and more efficiently. They include strategies such as prioritizing tiered interventions to best serve all students, improving identification and placement practices, clarifying guidelines for assigning and removing additional supports for students as needed, and considering alternative models for special education administration.

## 8 Streamline Central Office

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**\$2-4M**

In all difficult budget cycles, BPS looks to protect school budgets as much as possible. For this reason, historically the district has focused reductions in central office and will continue to look for opportunities to do so. At ~6% of the overall budget, the opportunity here will be limited in size, but exploring this closely will be critical. One specific opportunity is paid administrative leave, ensuring that all cases are being handled appropriately and expediently. In addition, BPS is looking closely at the central office organization structure and assessing each function, the extent to which it effectively supporting schools, and whether it can be performed more efficiently.

## 9 Advocate to Realign State Education Formulas

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**VARIES**

The Massachusetts’ charter school finance model is broken for Boston. There are two possible areas of advocacy at the state level. First, we can advocate to create a reliable transition funding mechanism (Charter Reimbursement). Second, we can advocate to adjust state education formulas and the city’s charter school assessment to recognize the true cost of the highest need students.

## 10 Advocate to Give Boston More Flexibility to Modify its Revenue Structure

**POTENTIAL SAVINGS**  
**VARIES**

Boston’s revenue sources and growth are limited by Proposition 2 ½ and State Law. Boston doesn’t have the legal ability to impose broad based sales or income taxes, unlike many cities outside of Massachusetts. It is also limited in its ability to raise excise taxes such as motor vehicle, room occupancy and aircraft fuel. As net state aid is declining and Boston generates nearly one-fifth of state tax revenues (2014), we should advocate that Boston is given more flexibility to modify its revenue structure.

Please visit [bostonpublicschools.org/financialplan](https://bostonpublicschools.org/financialplan) for opportunities for your voice to be heard.