

Boston Public Schools: From Transition to Transformation

The Context:

- Mayor Menino has made education a top priority, and in fulfilling that commitment we have made significant investments in:
 - Early childhood experiences for kindergarten students
 - Safety nets for high school students who are at risk of dropping out
 - Innovations through our pilot schools and Newcomers' Academy
 - Significant investments in facilities, schoolyards and athletic fields
- Even with this commitment, the national and state economies do not allow us to cover the following:
 - Losses in state and federal funds
 - Rising cost of employee salaries and benefits
 - A transportation system that is twice the cost of comparable districts and increasing rapidly
- While our enrollment has stabilized and more families are choosing BPS, this has occurred while enrollment overall declined by 7,000 students over the last decade
- This has led to multiple years of significant reductions for schools and the central support services, leaving schools with insufficient resources to provide the types of interventions required to ensure excellence, equity and access for all
- We are committed to continuing to offer excellent and innovative school choices for students across the City of Boston

The Problem:

- While these investments have produced results, the escalating costs of our enterprise make it impossible for us to continue given the following:
 - The nation is slowly emerging from recession, leading to minimal revenue increases in coming years
 - \$31 million in ARRA funding will be going away in Fiscal Year 2012
 - With the increase in the charter cap, new charter schools will be coming online, reducing BPS funding and increasing excess capacity
- The loss of revenue is so large that incremental reductions cannot solve the problem
- **The financial solution cannot come from external sources; it must come from within**
- We must find savings tied up in complex structural problems
- If we avoid these difficult decisions, we put the Acceleration Agenda and the entire district at risk

- State and federal mandates demand higher academic performance, graduation rates and college preparation at a time when the investments are stretched to create even a basic program

The Solution:

- We need to transition from a year-to-year approach to designing a multi-year strategy where we will communicate projected changes for Fiscal Year 2011 and Fiscal Year 2012
- We need to transition from annual, incremental reductions to a position of financial stability where we have additional funds to reinvest in schools
- We need to transition from schools with empty seats and minimal programming to schools filled to capacity with a rich variety of program and elective course offerings
- We need to transition from children spending 45 minutes riding on a bus to high quality options in every neighborhood, enabling greater family and community involvement before, during, and after school
- We must transition significant investments on compliance oriented functions to a focus on quality instructional investments that support learning
- We need to transition to being the first and best option that parents think of when deciding where to send their children to school

What are we doing to prepare for this transition?

- The five year Acceleration Agenda presents a roadmap for achieving academic excellence in all schools and prioritizes key investments
- Education Resource Strategies is assisting BPS in analyzing all aspects of our budget, including positioning the district for competitive federal grants (Race to the Top, Investing in Innovation) and examining how we compare with other urban districts
- A cross-functional team has been established to examine the cost of empty seats and develop options for rightsizing the district
- The Office of Institutional Advancement was established in 2009 to maximize our capacity to generate additional private, philanthropic and corporate sector resources to invest in our Acceleration Agenda and innovation plans
- In 2009, we began the process of exploring student assignment options and through a federal grant will continue to review other models as well as how our special needs, English as a second language and other program placements impact transportation costs
- We are reviewing all elements of our collective bargaining agreements as well as how we are organized centrally to identify potential efficiencies and savings