

Accelerating Achievement in Boston Public High Schools:

Raising Rigor, Relevance, and Graduation Rates

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Boston Public Schools



Agenda:

- Review the Preliminary Plan
 - Urgency
 - Strategy (This evening's focus)
- Methodology
- Preliminary Findings
- District Theory of Action
- Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Framework
- High School Strategic Focus Areas
- Recommendations
- Performance Management Plan
- Concept Paper (Due 9/17/08)



Entry: “Striking the Right Balance”

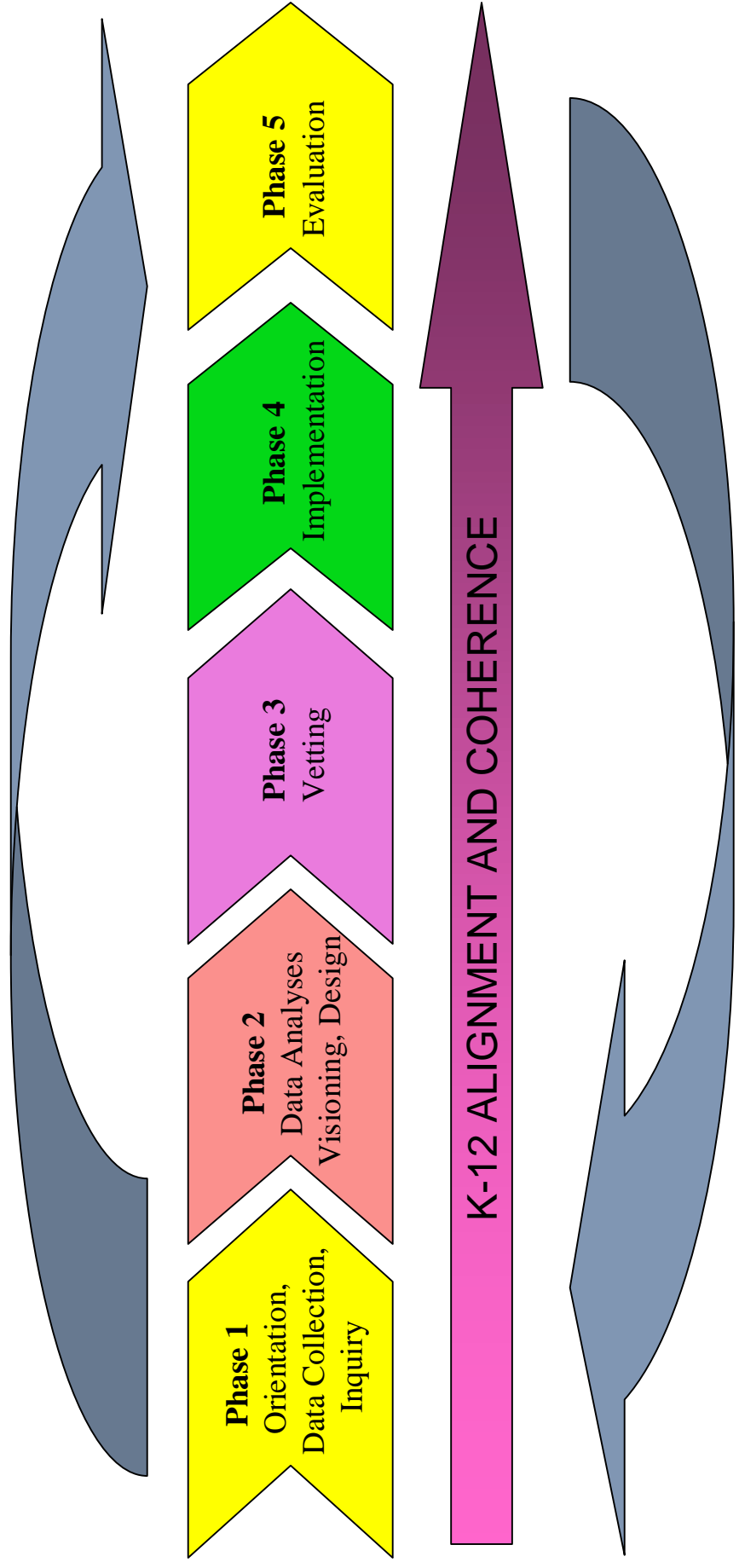
- **URGENCY**

- Credit Recovery (Pilot)
- Credit Recovery Full Year
- Advanced Placement Training
- Expanding AP Access
- International Baccalaureate
(2 schools identified)

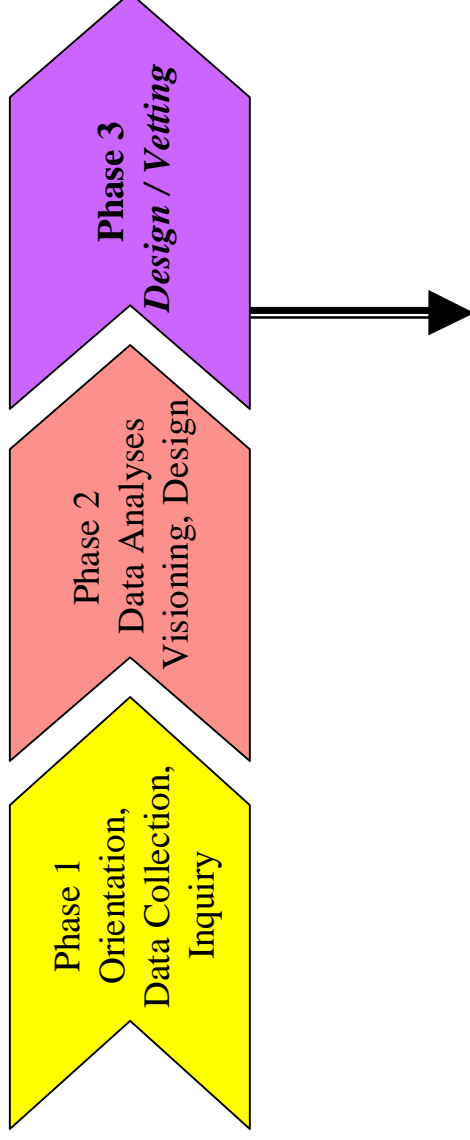
- **STRATEGY**

- Develop a long-term theory of action for High Schools
- Engage multiple stakeholders in the process
- Prepare to roll out the theory of action by fall 2008

Toward a Theory of Action for Student / High School Support



Toward a Theory of Action for Student / High School Support



Dates: June 1 – August 31 (Modified)

Goals: To gain feedback from stakeholders on the plan as well as the performance metrics and indicators.

Activities: Share with Executive Staff, High School Office, focus groups of Headmasters, Teachers, Students, Family and Community, Partners.

Deliverables: Revised plan based on feedback



Methodology

- **Literature Review (*International, National, State*)**
 - National and international research on high school reform and organizational change
- **Local Reports**
 - *Education Matters* evaluation of BPS & HSR
 - *Mathematica Report* on BPS High School Reform
 - “*Graduation for All*” *Community Forums*
 - *Gastón Institute* report on Latino Students in the BPS
- **OHSS Qualitative Interviews:**
 - Formal and informal interviews & focus groups with headmasters, students, and external partners (sample teachers, Oct. focus group)
- **District-Level Alignment:**
 - Formalized district-wide theory of action and requisite strategies



Recommendations -- Education Matters Report, December 2007

1. “It is likely that the district will need multiple professional development strategies to enable teachers to improve significantly their use of workshop strategies in specific content areas.”
2. “Develop opportunities for same subject teachers in each curriculum area to work together using strategies such as inquiry and looking at student work to improve their knowledge and skill.”
3. “Immediately address the teaching and learning needs of students with IEPs.”
4. “Review the status and quality, including rigor, of thematic/signature courses.”
5. “Look closely at how the district’s policies and requirements mesh with a) the stated goals and processes of high school renewal, and b) the needs of students in the schools.” (i.e. standardization vs. flexibility)
6. “Assess the knowledge and skills of each headmaster and identify areas of strength and areas in need of strengthening.”
7. “Take seriously the voice of students....they had not turned our or dropped out of school. Yet, they reported little engagement with most classes and little demand on their intellect.”



Sample Report Findings -- *Mathematica* “Focus on High Schools”

- **Significant changes in some student outcomes after the implementation of Focus on High Schools.**
 - Number of days students were absent declined
 - Number of unexcused absences declined
 - Number of days tardy declined
- **However, other estimated changes in outcomes were not consistent with the goals of FOHS:**
 - MCAS scaled scores and proficiency rates declined (principally in ELA, more modestly in Math)



Sample Report Findings -- *Gaston Institute* – Focus on Latino Students

- Assess district high schools with an eye to identifying factors that lead to the very high dropout rates among Latino students in each of those schools and to putting in place short-term initiatives to alleviate such massive school leaving on the part of Latino students.
- Establish a state-of-the-art dropout prevention program in Boston Public Schools.
- Support Mass Senate Bill (S 2462) to improve dropout prevention and reporting of graduation rates. The bill proposes to raise the compulsory attendance age to 18 years, to establish a Graduation and Drop-out Commission and to provide grants to implement in-district “early education indicator system” to track students unlikely to graduate on-time from high school.
- Support a family and community education initiative to reduce the dropout rate.
- Other recommendations listed in full report....



Report Findings – “Graduation for All” Community Forums

- Youth are seeking schools where they are well-known, welcomed, and respected, and where their communities and cultures are understood.
- Many youth need significant social and emotional supports in order to achieve academically.
- Schools should engage families and provide them with more effective supports.
- Youth are seeking more relevant curriculum and instruction that also allows them to catch up.
- Schools should be designed to promote student responsibility for their learning.
- BPS should draw from the lessons of its most promising schools.



Summary Findings of Reports on BPS High School Efforts:

- **Strengths:**
 - Students
 - Portfolio of schools / pockets of excellence and high achievement
 - Focus on small & personalization
 - Entrepreneurial / creative leaders and staff
 - Engaged external partners
 - Committed City, School Committee, district leadership
- **Challenges :**
 - Lack of instructional coherence (curriculum, instruction, assessment)
 - Insufficient safety nets / educational options for “off-track” youth
 - Insufficient support for students’ social, emotional, mental needs
 - Limited access to data to support real-time intervention (data infrastructure)
 - Limited cross-functional sharing (Pilots, SLC, Small, Exam, Alt. Ed)
 - Non-systemic engagement of partners (parents, agencies, CBOs)
 - Inconsistent leadership development for existing / aspiring Headmasters
 - Inconsistent accountability of leadership & central supports
 - No systemic plan for building relationships and trust



Theory of Action for the Acceleration Agenda

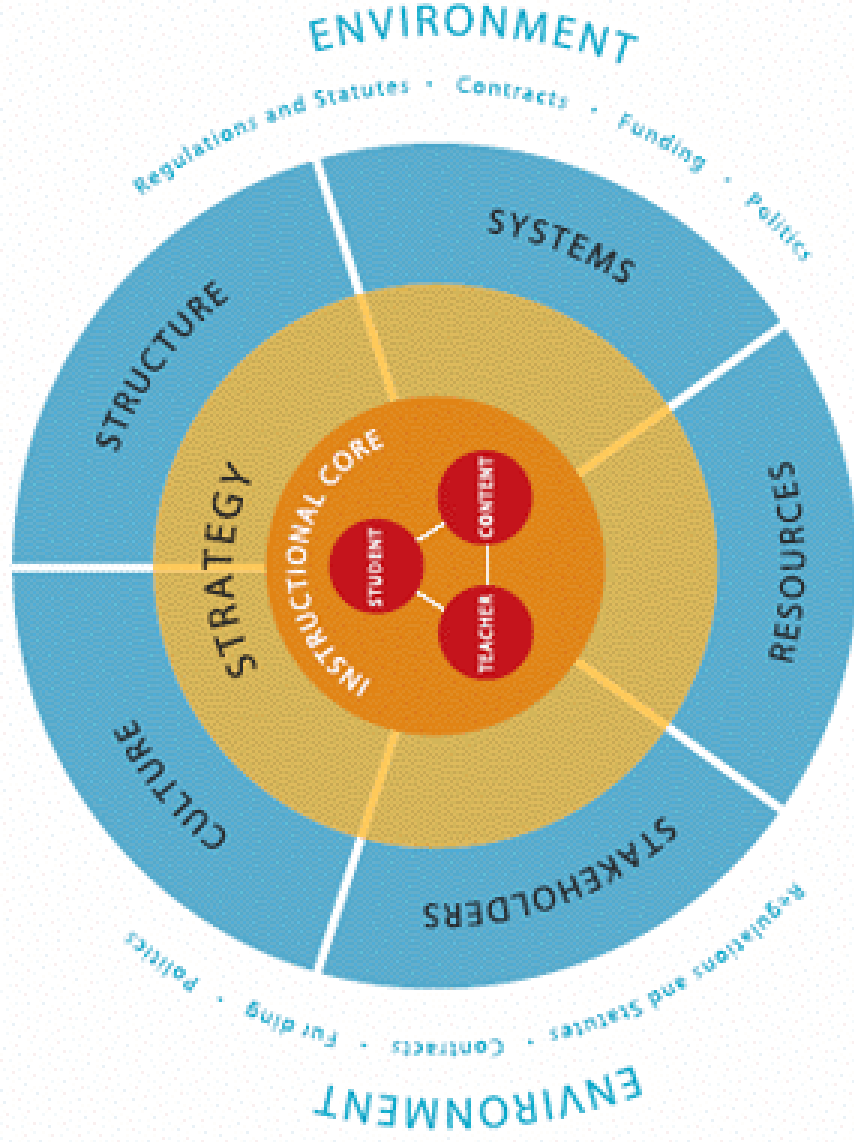
IF the district **delivers** effective instruction that is both rigorous and relevant and **develops** the infrastructure necessary to increase the knowledge and skills to support and implement that instruction, **THEN** instructional practices will improve in **every school** and the quality of student work will increase.

** In addition, **IF** every employee throughout the district (schools and central office) understands how his/her role impacts student performance and accepts **personal responsibility** for enabling all students to excel, **THEN** the achievement of students at all performance levels will accelerate, and we will close the achievement gap.*



Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) Framework

PELP Coherence Framework





Preliminary Focus Areas:

- **Instructional Core:** *Focusing on content, instruction, student engagement*
- **Structural:** *Focusing on resources of time, people, finances, and programs to support effective instruction and engagement*
- **Relational Trust Focus:** *Focusing on developing relationships that support sustainable improvements*
- **Results Driven Focus:** *Focusing on learning from data and adjusting*



Recommended Strategies in each Strategic Focus Area:

- **Instructional Focus**
 - Expand access, retention and achievement in Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate
 - Conduct curriculum audit 6-16 to calibrate rigor across the district
 - Targeted literacy support: transitioning 8th graders, 9th grade students (ELL & SPED)
 - Targeted training for leaders & teachers (Literacy, Rigor, Relevance, Relationships)
- **Structural Focus**
 - Develop coherent dual enrollment programming
 - Implement full-year Credit Recovery Programming
 - Reconfigure alternative schools - educational options (begin with Transition / Truancy Centers)
- **Relational-Trust Focus**
 - Systemize CBO partnership to support students' social, emotional, and mental health needs
 - Develop district-wide incentive plan to encourage student / family engagement and achievement
 - Facilitate bi-annual partners' conferences
 - Work with Mayor's Office / City Agencies to intervene with off-track youth
- **Results-Driven Focus**
 - Align work to District's performance targets
 - Help pilot Integrated Data Management System
 - Inquiry-based training for leaders / teams



Preliminary Performance Indicators:

- **Graduation Rates**
 - On-Track to Graduate
 - Post-Secondary Placement
 - Career, Vocational, Technical Placement
- **Access, Retention, and Achievement rates**
 - MCAS, AP, IB, SAT, PSAT, NAEP, Benchmark Assessments
- **Safety and Climate Rates**
 - Attendance, Truancy, Tardies, Suspensions,
- **Customer Satisfaction Rates**
 - District & School-wide Survey
- **Equitable Resourcing**



Next Step: A Performance Management Plan

- Focuses on a 3-4 year implementation
- Prioritizes the work
- Sets clear timelines
- Identifies “cross-functional” nature of work (Lead/Support offices)
- Establishes project leaders
- Sets incremental goals and benchmarks to monitor progress, adjust
- Provides a plan for partners to rally around and target their support
- Increases the probability of sustainability
- (See attachment)



Questions and Answers