


**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Chairperson and Members  
Boston School Committee

FROM: Carol R. Johnson   
Superintendent

DATE: November 5, 2008

RE: Pathways to Excellence – Reprogramming Recommendations for Action

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At the November 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the School Committee, I will present to you our final Pathways to Excellence recommendations for school reprogramming, relocation, expansion, and closure. These recommendations represent several months’ worth of planning by staff; feedback from teachers, families, students, and community stakeholders; and a refocusing of our academic and financial resources to meet the needs of our students during challenging economic times.

Pathways to Excellence attempts to realign our school facilities and strategic planning around key academic goals and principles of expanding excellence, increasing access to quality programs, ensuring equity for all students, and operating more efficiently and effectively. It also attempts to address economic and financial realities that are growing in severity and will affect our budgets – and that of all public agencies – for the foreseeable future.

**Pathways to Excellence Recommendations**

I recommend that the School Committee approve the following reprogramming recommendations:

## K-8 Schools

<b>New / Expanded Program</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Beethoven / Ohrenberger K-8 pair	Reconfigure grades for K-8 feeder schools (K1-2, 3-8 by 2012)
Edison K-8	With current Garfield and Hamilton communities
Grew ES / Rogers MS	K-8 feeder pattern between two schools (no reprogramming)
Higginson / Lewis K-8	Merge two schools into new K-8
Holmes ES / K-8	Stone students assigned 2009; possible K-8 expansion in 2012
King K-8	With students reassigned from Dickerman ES
Mildred Avenue	Grades 1-8 with Shaw in 2009; K-8 with Ellison-Parks begins 2012

## Pilot Schools

<b>Expanded (for action Nov. 5)</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
TechBoston Academy	Expand to Grade 6-12 program (6-8 in current Wilson building)
Young Achievers K-8	Relocate and expand in current Lewenberg building
<b>New (for introduction Nov. 5 and action Nov. 19)</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Haley ES	Convert to pilot school
Lyon K-12	Expand gradually to K-12, using current Garfield building
Boston Teachers Union Pilot K-8	Open with K1-Grade 2, Grade 6 in Parkman building, expand to K-8

## “Graduation for All”

<b>New / expanded program</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Boston International High School	Relocate and expand at Thompson building
Noonan Academy for Business and Public Service	Academy of Public Service & Noonan Business Academy to merge into new high school at Dorchester Education Complex with performance contract
Newcomers Academy	Open at Thompson building for late-arriving ELL students

## Innovation and Enrichment

<b>New / expanded program</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
Montessori programs	One K2 classroom at East Boston EEC
Two-way bilingual program	Planning year in 2009-10, start in 2010-11 at location TBD
International Baccalaureate *	Planning year in 2009-10 for Quincy Upper School / partnership planning with Snowden International High School
Citywide marching band	Contingent upon private fund-raising

\* We understand that the 2009-10 budget has yet to be developed or approved by the School Committee. However, we need preliminary authorization to begin the planning to submit an application to the International Baccalaureate Committee. We will present a plan and budget to the School Committee for final approval during the 2009-10 school year.

### Buildings vacated

Current use	Recommendation
Dickerman Elementary School	Students assigned to new King K-8 School
Fuller Elementary School (former)	Boston International High School moves to Thompson building
Hamilton Elementary School	Students assigned to new Edison K-8 School
Higginson Elementary School	Students assigned to new Higginson/Lewis K-8 School
P.A. Shaw Elementary School	Students assigned to Mildred Avenue School (possible reuse in 09-10)
Stone Elementary School	Students assigned to Holmes Elementary School

### Other programs closed, with buildings scheduled for reprogramming / reuse

Existing program	Recommendation
Academy of Public Service	Merge with Noonan into new high school at Dorchester complex
Garfield Elementary School	House new Lyon 9-12, students assigned to new Edison K-8
Lewenberg Middle School	House expanded Young Achievers, students remain
Noonan Business Academy	Merge with APS into new high school at Dorchester complex
Wilson Middle School	Reassign students to expanded TechBoston Academy on site

In addition to the merged schools at the Dorchester Education Complex, the following schools will exist under performance contracts: E. Greenwood Elementary School, English High School, and Odyssey High School.

### Impact on Enrollment

These recommendations are designed not only to enhance academic outcomes, but also to maximize school space and address excess capacity.

Current excess capacity: 7,824 vacant seats

- Elementary grades: 5,156 vacant seats (80.4% utilization)
- Middle grades: 2,668 vacant seats (72.2% utilization)

If Pathways proposals are adopted: 4,032 vacant seats

- Elementary grades: 2,857 vacant seats (88.1% utilization)
- Middle grades: 1,175 vacant seats (85.5% utilization)

The district will continue to monitor and adjust based on efforts to stimulate enrollment growth, demographic shifts, and parent choice.

Also attached is a chart showing our enrollment trends and projections through 2015-2016. We forecast that enrollment will continue to decline – although at far slower rates – before a small increase in 2015-2016.

### **Impact on Budget and Capital Expenses**

The fiscal analysis that accompanies the Pathways recommendations presents the estimated financial impact of these changes from three different perspectives: **annual** budget impact, **cumulative** budget impact and **cumulative savings**. A spreadsheet with more details is attached, and the following is a summary.

The **annual budget impact** answers the question of how much we will be able to reduce the budget each year over the next five years.

The annual budget impact quantifies, by program, the value that the budget would be reduced or increased each year over the next five years. The variables that affect this calculation consider the changes in grade structure, enrollment, and consequent staffing requirements as each program grows out. It also considers start-up costs, changes in utilities and facilities-related repairs and maintenance, one-time moving expenses, start-up costs, and potential per-pupil adjustments in Pilot School expansions.

If all proposals for reprogramming and transportation are accepted, this would allow for budget reductions in the following amounts. Please note that this will not translate into a lower total budget because of other anticipated increases:

- Year 1: \$2,682,160
- Year 2: \$934,622
- Year 3: \$1,112,018
- Year 4: \$33,947
- Year 5: \$394,014

The **cumulative budget impact** answers the question of how much will the budget will be reduced over the next five years. It simply adds the results of each year's budgetary impact to each successive year.

If we reduce the budget by \$2,682,160 in year 1 and \$934,622 in year 2, then after two years we will have reduced the budget by \$3,666,782.

If all proposals for reprogramming and transportation are accepted, the cumulative budgetary impact would be as follows:

- Year 1: \$2,682,160

- Year 2: \$3,666,782
- Year 3: \$4,778,801
- Year 4: \$4,812,748
- Year 5: \$5,206,762

**Cumulative savings** is different from budgetary impact. It looks at the value of expenditures over time. In order to explain this, we can look at a simple example:

If I have a grocery budget of \$1,000 per year and I decide to reduce it to \$800 per year then I have a budget reduction of \$200. If, over a five-year period, I make no additional adjustments to my budget, I have a cumulative budget reduction of \$200 (\$200 in year 1, \$0 in year 2, \$0 in year 3, \$0 in year 4, and \$0 in year 5). However, if I spend only \$800 per year, I have saved \$1,000 over a five-year period (\$200 in year 1, \$200 in year 2, \$200 in year 3, \$200 in year 4, and \$200 in year 5).

Cumulative savings is a measurement of expenditure levels. If all proposals for reprogramming and transportation are accepted, the cumulative savings would be as follows:

- Year 1: \$2,682,160
- Year 2: \$7,278,631
- Year 3: \$13,093,871
- Year 4: \$19,045,657
- Year 5: \$25,437,058

Also attached is a list of capital expenses broken down in several ways:

- Capital projects associated with the Pathways proposals
- Capital projects that are currently under way, as well as those that we intend to begin in the near future, contingent upon available resources locally and from the state.

<b>Future reprogramming work</b>
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Our Pathways to Excellence proposals do not cover everything we hope to accomplish in reprogramming. Below are proposals we have put on hold pending greater clarity on academic, financial, and capital needs. We plan to work on these proposals now and return to the School Committee with recommendations, consistent with the conceptual framework up for approval on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

- **Harbor 9-12 component:** The Harbor School community has submitted a thoughtful proposal to expand its full inclusion programming to the high school grades, creating a seamless K-12 inclusion pathway with the O’Hearn Elementary School. We support this project; however, the capital needs to accomplish it are too great at this time. We will work with the City and the Harbor School community to find creative ways to enable the Harbor and O’Hearn to expand to K-12.

- **Boston Adult Technical Academy:** We are examining the buildings vacated in 2009-10 to find a new home for this program.
- **Truancy and Transition Center:** We are eager to create safety nets for truant students and those who are returning from dropping out, and we will examine current space as well as buildings vacated to house this program.
- **Timilty 6-12:** We will work with the Timilty Middle School to expand its programming into the high school grades as an “early college” choice, contingent upon facility needs.
- **Single-gender classrooms:** We are continuing discussions with the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to locate single-gender classrooms.

### **Implementation team**

We are aware of the academic, financial, and operational magnitude of the Pathways to Excellence proposals, as well as its impact on families and school choice. I am appointing a Pathways to Excellence Implementation Team, co-chaired by Chief Operating Officer Michael Goar and Chief Academic Officer Barbara Adams, to oversee the transitions required. This internal team will consist of a project manager as well as the following staff, with other staff brought in as needed:

- Michele Brooks, Assistant Superintendent, Family & Student Engagement
- Craig Chin, Assistant Chief Operating Officer
- Marilyn Decker, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction
- Richard Jacobs, Director, Transportation
- Carleton Jones, Director, Capital & Strategic Planning
- John McDonough, Chief Financial Officer
- Carolyn Riley, Senior Director, Special Education
- Denise Snyder, Senior Director, BPS Welcome Services
- Mark Teoh, Special Assistant to the Chief Academic Officer
- Permanent Director of English Language Learners, to be named

This team and I will continue to work with an external advisory committee representing various community-based groups.

### **Conclusion**

Over the course of the past five weeks, School Committee members, staff, and I have listened and learned at 18 community meetings (the 19<sup>th</sup> and final one was November 3<sup>rd</sup>) and an equal number of meetings with staff. We have read dozens of e-mails and letters. We have heard from families and students devoted to their schools, from teachers and staff dedicated to improving their classrooms, and community members and civic leaders who are passionate about the education of Boston’s children. We want to thank all of them for considering these recommendations and taking the time to voice their opinions as well as suggest alternatives. Their feedback and ideas contributed to an overall informed, civil, and enlightening discussion.

Our work is not over if the School Committee adopts these proposals. We will spend the coming days, weeks, and months working with schools on transition plans, answering questions from staff, and helping students and families navigate these changes so that they can make informed decisions. We know that parent and staff participation in the specific details will be critical to the success of implementation.

We know that in some cases, there is disappointment and sadness in schools that will be closing or merging. We are committed to making the transition as smooth as possible and ensuring that students and staff in these schools are accommodated next fall. We also know that the staff in these buildings will continue the important work of educating students and remain focused on the daily work of teaching and learning.

There is little doubt that the financial condition of our city, state, and nation will get worse before it gets better. Anticipated collective bargaining increases alone will be in the millions for FY 2010, and the Pathways proposals are simply a first step in our attempt to streamline costs and operate more efficiently. All of us in the Boston Public Schools must remain committed to academic excellence for all, even as we confront the difficult budget years ahead.

Still, the goals with which we started our Pathways to Excellence work – expanding excellence, increasing access, ensuring equity, and operating with greater financial efficiency – will continue to guide us. The academic achievement of Boston Public Schools students will always be first and foremost on our agenda, and we look forward to working with all of our stakeholders to accomplishing our vision of a high-quality education for every child.

Attachments: List of reprogramming recommendations  
School-by-school details  
Districtwide enrollment projections  
Financial analysis  
Capital expenditure projections