

BPS TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What criteria were used to identify schools as underperforming?

The primary criterion for identifying underperforming schools was each school's MCAS Composite Performance Index (CPI) in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The ELA and Math CPI scores for 2009 were added together and divided by 2, and this average CPI was the primary basis for identification. Any school with an average CPI below 57 was considered an underperforming school. Any school with an increase of more than ten points in their average CPI from the previous year was removed from consideration. Graduation rates and dropout rates were also considered for high schools. A secondary criterion was CPI change over time (2003-2009) and the new student growth data released by the state this fall. We recognize that these scores are not the sole means of measuring school performance or progress, but proficiency for all is an essential goal in our Acceleration Agenda. This winter, the state will take a similar approach to generate the list of schools in need of greatest improvement.

What are the district's expectations for improvement?

We expect that every school demonstrate its immediate readiness, willingness, and capacity to make significant, dramatic improvement in student achievement. Schools will be expected to make at least a 10-point gain in their English Language Arts or Mathematics Composite Performance Index by June 30, 2012. These gains should occur in one area while the other subject area is maintained or improved.

What is the baseline against which future performance will be judged?

MCAS scores from the Spring 2009 administration in English Language Arts and Mathematics will serve as the baseline against which future performance will be judged.

Why types of interventions is the BPS considering to foster the "turnaround" of underperforming schools?

In keeping with federal guidelines, the district is considering three broad sets of interventions to foster the turnaround of underperforming schools:

- ***Transformational change***, which builds on the staff and programming already present at the school with additional investments and hiring flexibilities;
- ***Comprehensive change***, which requires major staffing changes, new school programs, and additional investments; and
- ***Fresh start***, which is a form of school reconstitution. In this case, all instructional and non-instructional staff will have to re-apply for their jobs in the building, additional staff hiring flexibilities and support will be provided to the incoming principal or headmaster, and complementary investments will be made in the school. This freshly started school would fall under the jurisdiction of the district and be overseen by a charter school operator, charter management organization, or an education management organization.

The full implementation of some of these options relies in part on passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 2009. These options represent three models for school turnaround. However, if we are not able to meet the needs of students, school closure will be considered as a last resort measure. In this extreme case, the district would close a school and enroll the students in another school or schools that are higher achieving.

What types of flexibilities and investments are being considered?

The supports that schools will receive may include, but not be limited to:

- Acceleration Academies (intensive instruction to struggling students during vacation weeks);
- Targeted central office support for particular student populations (e.g. special education, ELL) and subject areas (e.g. Literacy, Mathematics);
- Protection of effective provisional teachers;
- First priority teacher interviewing;
- Additional teacher training and professional development;
- Additional human resources support to evaluate ineffective teachers;
- Out-of-school time academic and co-curricular support(s);
- Specialized improvement programs (e.g. AVID);
- Additional school improvement funds from the state as they become available.

Other investments will be made based on the specific needs and assets of the school's staff, students, and leadership.

How will parents and families be notified of turnaround school status?

A letter to families was mailed on Monday, November 16, to inform them that their school has been designated to receive future investments and interventions. A subsequent school community meeting will further explain what this means for families and to learn their perspectives on assets and challenges at the school. These meetings will be held at the school and led by the school's academic superintendent:

School Community Meeting Dates*:

William Blackstone Elementary - Monday, December 7
Henry Dearborn Middle – Monday, December 7
Paul Dever Elementary – Wednesday, December 9
Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary – Tuesday, December 8
The English High School – Monday, November 30
Elihu Greenwood Elementary – Tuesday, December 8
Curtis Guild Elementary – Monday, November 30
Harbor (Middle) School – Monday, December 7
John Holland Elementary – Thursday, December 3
John F. Kennedy Elementary – Monday, December 7
Odyssey High – Tuesday, December 1
Orchard Gardens K-8 – Thursday, December 3
Maurice Tobin K-8 – Monday, November 30
William Monroe Trotter Elementary – Tuesday, December 1

*** All meetings will be held from 6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**