



Boston Public Schools

The Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement

ESSENTIAL: STUDENT WORK & DATA

Examine student work and data to drive instruction and professional development

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- School staff analyze and use data — MCAS results, student work, formative assessments, classroom observations, and feedback from students and teachers — for six purposes:
 - to track each student's progress toward proficiency
 - to plan instruction for each student
 - to check alignment among standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessments
 - to plan teachers' and the principal-headmaster's collective learning
 - to hold themselves accountable for students' achieving proficiency and for closing the achievement gap between sub-groups
 - to assess health of school climate and culture
- The principal-headmaster and Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) use data to develop the school's Whole-School Improvement Plan (WSIP), with ongoing performance measures.

EVIDENCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE AND HEAR

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| <h5>In Classrooms</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers keep track of each student's learning and share their progress with them regularly. Teachers use MyBPS Assessment to track patterns in their students' performance and modify their instruction in response. Teachers know the value and purpose of various kinds of assessments. Teachers use data to determine the specific content or pedagogical focus of their Collaborative Coaching & Learning (CCL) course of study. | <h5>Around the School</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A data management team, including the principal-headmaster, manages data and presents findings (disaggregated by ethnicity and program) to school staff twice each year to track each student's and each subgroup's progress toward proficiency. School teams analyze data and student work to plan instruction and identify their own learning needs. The ILT uses data to identify school-wide professional development needs in content or pedagogy, to select teams to participate in CCL, and to identify CCL courses of study. The ILT establishes school-wide standards for student engagement in their learning The school posts data publicly and in a timely manner. |
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EXPECTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS

- The superintendent, deputy superintendents, and central administrators use data to examine the effectiveness of major initiatives, to monitor the performance of subgroups and to make decisions.
- The district makes available formative assessments in core content areas for each grade that are aligned with state standards; the formative assessments are for schools to use strategically to learn about their students in a timely manner.
- The district makes student performance data available to schools through MyBPS Assessment in a timely manner.
- The district provides training on data analysis and MyBPS Assessment to central and school staff.

THE CORE ESSENTIAL: EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

Use effective and culturally relevant instructional practices and create a collaborative school climate that improves student learning, promotes student engagement, and builds on prior knowledge and experiences.

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- In every classroom, teachers use an inquiry-based approach — workshop instruction — that is organized in the following way:
 - Mini-lesson/Objective:* The teacher presents and models the day's learning objective — a standards-based fact, concept, strategy, or skill (approximately 20% of class time, which includes a "Do Now" task, five-minute warm-up, or review of the previous day's work)
 - Independent Work:* Individually or in small groups, students apply the learning objective to their reading, writing, or other work, while the teacher confers with some students about the learning objective (approximately 60% of class time)
 - Share/Summing Up:* The teacher sums up the learning objective, and students discuss how they used it in their work (approximately 20% of class time)
- The teacher differentiates instruction to ensure that the individual needs of students are taken into consideration in instructional delivery, support, and institutional practices.
- The teacher assigns meaningful, productive homework that reinforces the curriculum and strengthens students' understanding.
- During class and in every subject, students read, write, take notes, and solve problems regularly, doing work of high cognitive demand to help them reach proficiency.
- The school uses an integrated year-long curriculum in core subjects that delineates content and skills.
- The school develops positive relationships among staff and students that support a professional learning community for adults and an engaging, motivating learning environment for students. The school establishes a consistent student behavior policy that incorporates student input and ensures equity and fairness in its implementation.
- Instruction reflects that staff understand the social, cultural, economic, youth development, and family factors that affect student learning.

EVIDENCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE AND HEAR

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| <h5>In Classrooms</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can explain what they are learning and why and how it connects to what they have already learned. They are able to talk about the quality of their own work and what they must do to improve it. Students are active participants and valued partners in their education and academic achievement. Students work in their notebooks throughout the class by taking notes and completing work aligned with the day's objectives. The teacher and students engage in a high level of discourse that goes beyond right/wrong and yes/no answers to an emphasis on evidence, which demonstrates student comprehension of the content. Teachers give prompt and specific feedback to students on their work, based on standards. In conferences, both the teacher and students talk about the work. Classroom walls display current student work and charts that the teacher and students have created together about the content they are studying, standards for exemplary work, and class rules. Students refer to the charts frequently. The principal-headmaster spends time in classrooms every day, observing and discussing work with teachers and students. Classroom space is organized so that students can get what they need — books, journals, other materials — on their own. Classroom environments reflect the socio-cultural characteristics of the populations served (e.g. curriculum materials, supplementary texts, instructional displays). | <h5>Around the School</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students and staff are treated with dignity and respect at all times, with particular sensitivity towards cultural and linguistic differences. Every classroom has areas for students to read, write, and work on their own and in pairs and a common area for the whole class to meet and talk. Current, exemplary student work is posted throughout the school. Every teacher can explain what his/her students are learning and why and describe how his/her instruction will get students to proficiency in core academic subjects. The principal-headmaster and teachers — including teachers of special needs students and English language learners and teacher-specialists — meet regularly in teams to talk about instructional practice. The principal-headmaster spends time in classrooms every day, observing and discussing work with teachers and students. The principal-headmaster models learning by observing classroom practice, leading learning walks, and discussing his/her own learning with staff. |
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EXPECTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS

- The superintendent and central administrators use expectations for schools when observing classrooms and evaluating principals-headmasters.
- Every employee is able to explain Whole-School Improvement (WSI) and his/her role in that effort.
- Central departments base their decisions on the question, "How will this decision help students become better readers, writers, and thinkers and reach proficiency?"

The Bottom Line: Closing the Achievement Gap

In every grade, every student will reach Proficiency on MCAS: regular education students, special education students, and English language learners.

BOSTON'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS are engaged in an ongoing effort to improve instruction in every classroom and to support every student to reach proficiency.

That effort, **WHOLE-SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**, is organized around seven **ESSENTIALS**, which provide a framework for the work.

ESSENTIAL: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Invest in professional development to improve instruction

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- The school's Whole-School Improvement Plan (WSIP) is based on data and includes a professional development plan that:
 - outlines the school's implementation of Collaborative Coaching & Learning (CCL)
 - explains the school's use of contractual time
 - addresses the school's content and pedagogical learning needs
 - reflects the staff's understanding of the social, cultural, economic, and family factors that affect student learning, and their progress toward becoming more culturally proficient.
- With its coaches, each CCL team outlines its course of study, reads inquiry texts, demonstrates, and analyzes practice together in classrooms. By engaging in CCL, teachers continue to learn to teach more effectively and get better student results.
- Choices about off-site courses and other professional development in which teachers participate are based on the school's goals and students' learning needs.
- The principal-headmaster makes his/her professional development public and reviews each teacher's professional development so that it is aligned with the school's goals.

EVIDENCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE AND HEAR

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| <h5>In Classrooms</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers adopt and refine instructional strategies to meet the specific needs of their students. Teachers use workshop instruction in reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and other subjects. Teachers make their practice public and visit each other's classrooms. Teachers know their content and their students well, and help each other improve their practice. Teachers are knowledgeable about the socio-cultural characteristics of their students and incorporate that knowledge into instructional practice. | <h5>Around the School</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principal-headmaster and other administrators participate in at least one CCL cycle each year. The principal-headmaster develops a schedule that allows all teachers to participate in CCL over time. The principal-headmaster meets weekly with the school's content coaches. The school's norm is one of continuous learning for everyone; staff discuss instructional problems and solutions in formal and informal settings, such as in hallways and teachers' lounges. The school's professional development plan and schedule are posted and shared with staff, students, families, school partners, and visitors. |
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EXPECTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS

- The superintendent and deputy superintendents are responsible for ensuring that professional development in schools and the central office has coherence, is aligned with the seven Essentials, supports the improvement of practice, and enhances the sustainability of whole-school and whole-district improvement.
- Central administrators and school leaders embed principles of cultural proficiency into all professional development training.
- The superintendent and central administrators organize professional development for central staff so they understand Boston's reform framework and their role in it.
- The superintendent, deputy superintendents, and key central staff participate in CCL sessions when they visit schools.
- Deputy superintendents and assistant superintendents regularly review schools' professional development plans and schedules and look for evidence of implementation.

ESSENTIAL: SHARED LEADERSHIP

Share leadership to sustain instructional improvement

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- Principals-headmasters have concrete strategies to develop and share leadership with teachers and other staff.
- Teachers have opportunities to assume leadership roles outside of the classroom.
- Teachers share responsibility for the school's instructional decisions.
- The principal-headmaster and administrators make it "safe" for teachers to talk about their practice.
- Schools have a written student engagement policy documenting opportunities for students to assume leadership roles within classrooms and the broader school community.

EVIDENCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE AND HEAR

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| <h5>In Classrooms</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School administrators are in classrooms every day, talking with students about what they are learning and conferring with teachers about their informal observations and decisions on next steps. Teachers describe their colleagues and school leaders as resources for helping them improve instruction and meet their goals. Teachers teach each other, and some teach courses for colleagues. Teachers demonstrate lessons for CCL. Students work collaboratively, teach each other and, when appropriate, co-facilitate class discussions; students publicly demonstrate their learning. | <h5>Around the School</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers lead looking at student work sessions, data team meetings, inquiry groups, ILT meetings, and ad hoc committees. The agenda for ILT meetings is set by the principal-headmaster and ILT members. Teachers and other members of the ILT take part in learning walks in their own and other schools. Teachers and students work collaboratively to help create school policies and practices which foster an encouraging, inclusive, "risk free" environment that reflects the social and cultural backgrounds of the students served. Staff and students refer to the school as "our" school, not "my" school. Students have meaningful involvement in school governance and decision-making. Students at the high school level and parents are full participants in the School Site Council. |
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EXPECTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS

- The superintendent, chief operating officer, deputy superintendents, and assistant superintendent of human resources align evaluation tools with expectations for instructional improvement and the goal of proficiency for all students.
- Mid-level managers visit schools and confer with school leaders in making decisions about their department's policies and practices.
- The superintendent convenes a teacher advisory committee to help refine the district's work.
- Deputy superintendents work with principals-headmasters to increase teacher and student voice in each school.
- Deputy superintendents and assistant superintendents are supervisors for principals-headmasters, advising them and evaluating them on best leadership practices in instruction.
- The superintendent ensures that student voice is reflected in district policy.

ESSENTIAL: RESOURCES

Focus resources to support instructional improvement and improved student learning

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- The school's resources — people, time, funds, materials, technology — are allocated to meet its student learning and engagement goals, and its budget is the financial plan for implementing the WSIP.
- Corporate, family, and community resources support specific student learning and engagement goals.
- School staff and students use student learning goals to decide whether to start, continue, or discontinue any initiative.
- Schools manage resources within their approved budget.

EVIDENCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE AND HEAR

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| <h5>In Classrooms</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers have help in the classroom from other professional staff and trained volunteers to give students more individualized attention. Each student has a daily (uninterrupted) block of at least 90 minutes for literacy and 60-90 minutes for math. Teachers start on time, get right to the lesson, and minimize "housekeeping" announcements. Teachers give individualized time to each student every week. Every classroom has a classroom library and instructional materials and equipment. | <h5>Around the School</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The schedule maximizes instructional time for core subjects and increases the number of professionals in each classroom. School staff use all contractual time for professional development. With few exceptions, teachers are not pulled from school for off-site professional development. School staff use MyBPS and other technology to improve instruction, provide targeted individualized student assistance, and maximize productivity. Before- and after-school time programs incorporate student input and are coordinated with in-school time so that students have extended coherent instruction and access to enrichment opportunities. |
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EXPECTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS

- The superintendent and administrative staff allocate resources equitably, so that all students have comparable, high-quality learning environments.
- Deputy superintendents and the Office of Teaching and Learning support principals-headmasters to maximize instructional time and individualize support for each student.
- The superintendent, Office of Teaching and Learning, and Budget Office help schools align budgeted resources with WSIP priorities.
- Deputy superintendents share with schools examples of well-thought-out budgets, professional development plans, job descriptions, school schedules, and use of volunteers to maximize resource use.
- Deputy superintendents support schools to achieve personalized relationships for every student.
- Central departments manage resources within their approved budget.

ESSENTIAL: FAMILIES & COMMUNITY

Partner with families and community to support student learning and engagement

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

- School staff reach out to show they value all children and welcome families and community members as partners and contributors to the teaching/learning process.
- Teachers and administrators establish student engagement opportunities outside of the classroom based on student academic and social needs.
- Each school develops a plan to engage families in their children's school life in a manner appropriate to the characteristics of the families served. In middle and high schools, the plan details how staff will work with students to identify issues of importance to them. The plan is shared with families and community members and is posted in the school.
- Each teacher communicates regularly with families (in English and in the adult's first language) about their child's progress and ways families can support students at home.
- Families show interest in their children's schoolwork and learning, monitor their attendance, attend parent conferences, and participate in parent councils.

EVIDENCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE AND HEAR

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| <h5>In Classrooms</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each teacher sends home an easy-to-understand "syllabus" based on the school's curriculum. Teachers call, write, e-mail, and/or meet with students' families regularly to share progress and suggestions about helping students learn. Teachers promote home reading and home math and reach out to those who don't participate. | <h5>Around the School</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families and community members are present and active in the school and in school activities, and the school organizes successful parent-teacher conferences each year. The school has a written Family Involvement Policy and Home-School Compact. Parents are active participants in the School Site Council and play a consistent role in school governance. School staff follow a protocol for greeting visitors, take messages reliably, and respond promptly and respectfully to questions and concerns. |
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EXPECTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS

- The superintendent and deputy superintendents hold principals-headmasters accountable for strong and measurable outreach to families and community members.
- The deputy superintendent for family and community engagement shares examples of schools and practices that work effectively with families and community members.
- The Office of High School Renewal highlights schools that are effectively soliciting students' and families' concerns and acts in partnership with them to identify and implement solutions.
- The Office of Family and Community Engagement provides technical assistance to schools to develop and implement their family engagement plans.

ESSENTIAL: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Maintain high levels of effectiveness, efficiency, and equity in our operations

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

- The school recruits and hires a diverse, highly qualified, culturally proficient staff in a timely manner.
- The school supports, evaluates, and retains a high-performing team of educators and support staff who have high expectations and achieve results for all students.
- The school maintains a safe, clean, and orderly learning environment.
- The school uses technology to analyze and provide access to information and resources in order to inform decision-making and to address systematically the needs of all individuals and subgroups.
- The school reports accurate student, personnel, programmatic, and operational data in a timely manner.

EVIDENCE: WHAT YOU SHOULD SEE AND HEAR

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| <h5>In Classrooms</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All classrooms are staffed with qualified, culturally proficient teaching professionals. Classrooms are safe, clean, and orderly. Each classroom has adequate supplies and materials to conduct class and has resources available that reflect students' backgrounds and communities. Student and staff information reported to MyBPS and Peoplesoft HR reflects what is actually seen in classrooms. | <h5>Around the School</h5> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional, support, and operations staff receive regular, meaningful evaluations and are held accountable for their performance. The indoor and outdoor common areas of the school are safe, clean, and orderly. The school applies the Code of Discipline consistently and fairly on school grounds, on school buses and the MBTA, and at all school-sponsored events. School safety contingency plans are updated annually, and schools conduct quarterly evacuation and containment drills. School doors accessible to the outside are closed and locked from the outside, but allow for egress. Visitors are approached promptly, both to welcome them and to ensure that it is appropriate for them to be in the school. School staff cite data as a justification for decisions. |
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EXPECTATIONS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATORS

- Central departments provide the support needed to ensure that schools can reach these stated expectations.
- Central departments examine and ensure equity in the kind and quality of services they provide to students, staff, and families at all school sites.
- Central departments work together to provide services efficiently and effectively, enabling schools to focus their time and resources on maximizing student and adult learning.
- Central departments are accessible and responsive to schools, families, and communities, and provide high-quality, culturally-appropriate customer service.
- Central departments communicate clearly and effectively with schools, families, and communities, maintain a clear decision-making process, document policies and procedures, and regularly solicit feedback to improve their service.
- Central departments leverage technology to provide services more efficiently, drive decision making, and inform programmatic evaluation.