



BPS This Week

A look at the week ahead from the Boston Public Schools

September 6, 2011



A BPS student receives a free backpack at the 2011 BPS Back-to-School Jamboree

Labor Day means Back to School!

This week, more than 56,000 Boston Public Schools students will head back to the classroom after a busy summer. Working with our partners and many committed educators, we nearly tripled the number of students who participated in summer programs that were aligned with academic objectives. In addition, **we have already started the school year at three new schools** -- Boston Green Academy, Roger Clap Innovation School and UP Academy -- each of which has been in session for more than a week. These steps are part of our Expanded School Year Initiative, which allows us to creatively extend academic experiences for students who need extra support.

This year, we will do even more with new Innovation schools, In-District Charters and Turnaround Schools. **Thirty-seven of our 125 schools now enjoy some level of flexibility regarding the length of the school day and the process of choosing the very best teachers.** This is exciting progress, but we must also offer excellence for every student in every school. We are working to create an improved teachers' contract that gives principals greater flexibility and allows us to extend the school day without forcing deep cuts elsewhere.

It is fitting that we begin a new school year the same week we celebrate Labor Day. This is a time for reflection about the important contributions our many unions have made to American society. Unions play a critical role in our democracy, leveling the playing field between those who make decisions and those who do the work. **We are proud to be a school system that rewards its employees with good salaries and unmatched benefits.**

This school year, the average salary for a regular education teacher in BPS will be \$81,633 -- about \$22,000 higher than the average salary for charter school teachers in Boston, and considerably higher than most districts in the Commonwealth. Many people in the education field want to choose our schools first. This was proven yet again this year when we received more than 4,000 applications for fewer than 70 positions at just one of our new in-district charter schools.

Considering our competitive salary and benefits package -- which we are proud of -- we believe it is not unreasonable to ask our teachers to work at least a seven hour day. This would benefit students by extending learning time at every school, not just the ones with Pilot, Turnaround, In-District Charter or Innovation status. It would also benefit our best teachers by ensuring the extra time they already put in can be used more effectively, both in the classroom and through more targeted time for planning and professional development.

We know that simply adding time does not guarantee results. This time must be used strategically and in partnership with teachers -- giving our students more time to learn and, for our teachers, more time to plan and prepare. **The bottom line is this: we will not be able to close the persistent achievement and access gaps for many of our students without giving them the additional instructional time they need.**

We hope you had a wonderful holiday and will join us in welcoming our students and staff back for another great school year. Our collective efforts and commitment to the children of this city will improve student performance in every school. We all count on each other to close achievement gaps, offer safe and welcoming schools, and expand access and opportunities for all the children of Boston.

Sincerely,

Carol R. Johnson
BPS Superintendent

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