



HIGH SCHOOL WORK GROUP UPDATES

*Carlos Diaz, David Fisher, Marsha Inniss-Mitchell,
Michele Pellam, Marinell Rousmaniere, Mandy Savitz-Romer,
Michelle Sylvaria, Tommy Welch and Andrea Zayas*

Presentation to Boston School Committee
June 19, 2019

Charge to High School Work Groups

- Synthesize findings from the many external reports as well as frontline knowledge of our schools to further develop the district's institutional expertise and capacity to implement improvements across our high schools.
- Outline key learnings and preliminary findings, summarizing the context, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
- Contribute to the development of concrete implementation strategies for how to address distinct but interrelated challenges facing BPS high schools.
- Serve as a useful resource in support of forthcoming strategic planning led by the incoming superintendent.

Work Group Topics:

- Across all six High School Improvement Work Groups, the goals were to:
 - Address the Needs of Off-Track Youth;
 - Advance Academic Rigor for All; and
 - Strengthen College, Career & Life Readiness (CCLR) Preparation and Supports for All Students
- Work Group topics:

MassCore & Graduation Requirements	Early Warning Indicator Systems (EWIS) and On-Track Data (OTD)
Alternative Education Design	Career Pathways
School Counseling Supports	7-12 High School Design

MassCore: Core Challenges

- Inconsistent programmatic rigor currently exists across the district given the variety of school graduation requirements, not adequately preparing all of our students for college and career readiness and learning
- Our portfolio of high schools have each arrived at courses of study designed to provide a rigorous and appropriate education for the students they serve, in order to equitably serve *all* our students, identifying and establishing some form of baseline graduation requirements is a primary concern
- Students and families are asking for greater coherence across the district, particularly when students must transfer from one school to another
- DESE guidelines for what constitutes a MassCore course are subjective and ambiguous and described only as needing to be “rigorous, engaging, and based on appropriate learning standards for high school or beyond”

MassCore: Key Questions

- What, if any, impediments are there to a district-wide adoption of the MassCore recommended program of study?
- To what extent is it possible for BPS to adopt, on a district-wide basis, the MassCore program of study?
- What is the appropriate implementation timeline for the adoption – to the greatest extent possible – of MassCore program of study and graduation requirements across BPS?
- What are the specific action steps that must precede a recommendation by the superintendent to the Boston School Committee to adopt Mass Core?

MassCore: Primary Input

- Sub-Group research: Curriculum and Alignment, Professional Learning and Community Engagement; Policy, Procedures and Systems; and District Policies
- BSAC Student focus groups
- School leader focus group

MassCore: Findings

Recommended Program of Study defined as successful completion of 22 units:

- 4 units of English
- 4 units of mathematics
- 3 units of a lab-based science
- 3 units of history
- 2 units of the same foreign language
- 1 unit of the arts
- 5 additional "core" courses
- Physical Education (as required by law)

Mass Core: Key Findings

- Adopt a program of study (i.e., a “BPSCore”) that all schools maintain as their minimum graduation requirement that incorporates the core academic requirements (i.e., ELA, math, science, and social studies) of the MassCore program of study; not recommending a uniform graduation requirement of MassCore for all BPS schools
- Broaden availability of MassCore program of study to be accessible in all schools to more students
- Conduct a systematic review of the BPS course catalog, currently at 1900 courses

Alternative Education Design: Core Challenges

- There is no agreed upon definition, vision, or pedagogical framework for alternative education among all BPS stakeholders
 - Acknowledging different program designs, we also need a common framework for: pedagogy, school operations, and metrics for student success
- Established programming within the Alternative Education Network does not match the current array of student profiles and needs
- When a student enrolls into alternative education, the process is often complex and lengthy

Alternative Education Design: Key Questions

- How is the district ensuring a clear understanding of the programs and services offered to overage & under-credited students seeking an alternative path to a BPS diploma?
- What metrics can alternative education schools and programs use to monitor and support student progress?
- How do we establish a clear understanding/process of enrollment in alternative education schools and programs for all stakeholders?
- How does the Alternative Education network interface with all schools within Boston Public Schools, and how do we develop mechanisms to create seamless transitions, dialogue, policy alignment, school/program redesign, ensure academic rigor and share of best practices?

Alternative Education Design: Primary Input

- Sub-Group research and design: Communication plan; Success indicators for Alternative Education; Re-Engagement and enrollment of new and transitioning students; Alternative Education priority projects/initiatives
- BSAC Student focus groups
- Network 9 Headmaster and Program Director PD
- Central Office Department Leads

Alternative Education: Key Findings

- BPS needs an Alternative Education guidebook, as a common resource for all stakeholders: students, counselors, central office staff, Headmasters, the Re-Engagement Center, and external partners.
- Alternative schools need increased access to actionable data.
- BPS can improve & streamline the process for students' transitions into alternative education schools and programs.
- We will continue to compare programmatic needs based on student profiles and demand to ensure alternative education programming is relevant to student interest and district goals.

School Counseling Supports: Core Challenges

- The current “guidance” program in Boston lacks a clear strategic plan and focus, fails to reflect national shifts in the role, and potentially leads to inequities among offerings for students
- Variation among school level practices and role confusion are exacerbated by a lack of alignment of student support structures at the school *and* district
- School counselor practices in BPS are not equitably available and counselors are frustrated by the ambiguity in their roles. Students also request deeper understanding of counselor roles and wider access to counselors.
- BPS School Counselors do not have regular access to professional learning and development, nor is there enough attention to the hiring, onboarding, and evaluation of counselors.

School Counseling Supports: Key Questions

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of BPS's current guidance system?
- Where and how are those strengths and weaknesses experienced within BPS?
- What are the specific steps and timelines that must be established at the district and school-based levels, respectively, in order for the BPS students to enjoy a thoughtful, intentional, and personalized path toward graduation?
- How are peer districts deploying school counseling supports and what can we learn from them?

School Counseling Supports: Primary Input

- Stakeholder Discussions
 - 4 strategic workgroup meetings representing school and central office leadership
 - 2 Counselor Discussion Groups (14 counselors)
 - 2 Student Discussion Groups (9 students)
 - 1 Interview with current Director of Guidance
 - 5 Meetings with outside community partners
 - Brief discussion with Headmasters during Network PD session
 - Student focus group
- Reviewed key sources
 - Reviewed the national school counseling model
 - Reviewed job descriptions and organizational structures from peer districts
 - Reviewed and developed a draft set of measurable data points to guide counselor practice
 - Reviewed school counseling vision statements from approximately 20 other urban, peer districts

School Counseling Supports: Key Findings

- Create a Senior Director (or ED) of School Counseling Services role and explore possibility of a unified student services division at the district level.
- Engage counselors and BTU representatives to begin process of developing a single counselor job description for Student Development Counselors, Guidance Counselors, and others working in those roles, and establish a “Lead Counselor” role at every high school.
- Launch a monthly professional learning structure to offer professional development on how to use data to best support students and other topics of interest to counselors (i.e. trauma, sexual identity, early college awareness) beginning with an August Launch Institute
- Select a model to guide district-wide school counseling framework (i.e. Multi Tiered, Multi-Domain System of Support (MTMDSS), ASCA national models).

7-12 High School Design: Core Challenges

- Looking at the demands and constraints the future will place on the City of Boston and its public schools, we need to look head-on at systems and structures present to ensure the best outcomes for our children in terms of student achievement and their formative development
- One way to accomplish this is by providing more predictability for families by minimizing transitions for our students; our more than 20 current grade configurations make it difficult for families to navigate the system.
- With the Boston School Committee's vote to adopt K-6/7-12 and K-8/9-12 as the preferred grade level configurations for the district, the need to consider the impact of, and best practices for forming and operating, 7-12 grade schools is more salient than ever; current process for forming 7-12 grade schools is not clear nor transparent

7-12 High School Design: Key Questions

- What lessons has BPS absorbed with regard to best practices from other 6-12 and 7-12 models in Boston and elsewhere, both with regard to the process of forming a 6/7 – 12 high school, but also the operating of a 6/7 – 12 high school?
- What organizational or district-wide challenges (programmatic, enrollment, etc.) will the establishment of more 6/7 – 12 high schools help to resolve or improve? What challenges may it present and what do we need to be prepared to address by way of potential unintended consequences?
- What is the appropriate sequence with regard to identifying opportunities to convert or establish 6/7 – 12 high schools, and how should that sequence unfold?
- What are the developmental or growing pains that newly formed 6/7 – 12 high schools will likely confront that BPS can prepare for prior to the establishment of a new (or newly converted) school?
- What are the implications for K-5/6 schools with regard to the district move toward additional 6/7 – 12 high schools?

7-12 High School Design: Primary Input

- 6/7-12 school leaders
- Grade Configuration High School Affinity Group
- Local and national research
- BSAC Student focus groups
- Central Office Department Leads
- School leader focus group

7-12 High School Design: Key Findings

- Articulate a framework for how to create effective 7-12 schools that creates “buckets” of work needed to plan, create, grow, and sustain effective 7-12 schools:
 - Planning and designing
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - Culture and climate
 - Operations
 - Human resources
 - Family and Community Engagement
- Facilitate a transparent and visible process for how and when conversions/creations of 7-12 schools - beyond the current McCormack-BCLA merger - will happen

Career Pathways: Core Challenges

- Absence of district framework to guide schools and partners in efforts to expand and improve career learning
- Systems and structures (e.g. schedules & staffing) do not support career pathways opportunities at the school level due to the variety of school models
- Lack of clear alignment with experiences in the middle grades and timely communication of options to students and families on the opportunities which can inform the high school choice process
- Need for system of career learning opportunities for students in alternative education, special education, and who identify as English Language Learners

Career Pathways: Key Questions

- What are the purpose, goals and intended outcomes of career pathways and/or career readiness education for Boston Public School students?
- Based on these goals and intended outcomes, what are the specific, research-based career learning experiences that provide a core/ Tier 1 scope and sequence for career readiness for all students?
- How do we create a cohesive strategy and communications about career pathways in BPS, which currently include CTE, Innovation, and Early College? (e.g. what's the expectation for schools to provide pathways, how are they distributed, how do we provide equitable access?)
- What district, school level and other supports and policies are needed to implement these strategies in all high schools?

Career Pathways: Primary Input

- Work Group meetings
- BSAC student focus groups
- Headmaster focus group
- Career Pathways Coordinator focus group
- Private Industry Council and BUILD
- National and local research

Career Pathways: Key Findings

- Complete a College and Career Readiness Framework
 - includes foundational college and career connected learning experiences for all students as well as career pathway models.
 - lays out the vision, current status, and key steps for schools, central office, and partners.
- Develop coherent and aligned pathways and experiences starting in the middle grades that lead students and families through the high school choice process
- Ensure appropriate scaffolds are implemented for students to access career learning opportunities, particularly students in alternative education, students with disabilities, English Learners and SLIFE students that respond to the scale of school programs and student needs.

Early Warning Indicators & On-Track Data: Core Challenges

- There is no agreed upon definition for what it means to be “on-track” for graduation in BPS.
- There are strong examples of EWI systems in BPS, but no initiatives work universally across all schools.
 - Central office has the opportunity to model & support this work in our operations.
 - Centralizing and automating certain workstreams can free valuable time for school staff.

Early Warning Indicators & On-Track Data: Key Questions

- What does it mean to be on-track for graduation in BPS?
- How does BPS define an early warning indicator system?
- What data points to school leaders and student support staff need at their fingertips, to help ensure that all students are on track?
 - How can data tools, like a dashboard, support this work?

Early Warning Indicators & On-Track Data: Primary Input

- BSAC Student focus groups
- Sub-Group meetings
- Central Office Department Leads
- Feedback form for definition drafts

Early Warning Indicators & On-Track Data: Key Findings

- We have an opportunity to adopt district definitions for:
 - What it means to be on track in BPS, and
 - What an Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) is.
- In partnership with school counselors, BPS ought to identify data tools which best align with school counseling frameworks, and develop training for these tools.
- Piloting a district-wide attendance letter campaign, in SY2019-2020, could further centralize this work.