

**UPK Connector System  
Update  
November 2018**



## Introduction

In 2016, the research under the Boston UPK Advisory Board identified three key findings:

1. Working families need access to a high quality pre-k seat 12 months of the year, 8 hours a day.
2. 4,500 four-years olds in Boston are being currently served in either a community- based organization or in BPS's district K1 classrooms.
3. There are not enough seats in the Boston Public Schools to reach all remaining four-year olds.

As a result of these findings, the city under Mayor Walsh's approval has devised a plan to reach the identified 1,500 children not being currently served in Boston.

## Boston UPK Expansion Snapshot

With BPS as the lead educational agency, community-based programs will continue to close the quality seat gap for all four year olds in Boston UPK-funded classrooms.

Boston UPK Expansion Snapshot:

1. UPK funding will focus on infrastructure development in BPS to align quality indicators across educational settings.
2. A Boston UPK expansion RFP for 80 seats in community-based organizations was released on October 29, 2018.
3. The Preschool Expansion Grant which has created K1 seats since 2015 will end August 2019. For FY19, the UPK goal is to sustain the 330 K1 seats created under PEG & Boston UPK Oct 2018 RFP.

## Purpose of a CBO K1/BPS K2 Connector System

While Boston Public Schools and community-based organizations have worked together over the years, we work separately to enroll all 4 year olds in Boston.

The lack of cohesion between the two systems results in:

- BPS and CBOs serving the same children. For example, students already enrolled in a CBO are often pulled out to attend a BPS program from the waitlist. This process happens well into November and can run as high as 30%
- The lack of students is costly for CBO programs and challenges their ability to serve birth to three populations
- Missed opportunities to offer comprehensive services and improve academic alignment.

Therefore, we are piloting a connector while developing UPK and planning for UPK expansion in order to:

increase family engagement, streamline the transition process and requirements, minimize the number of transitions for all children, identify areas of support for our most high need population, mitigate economic impact on CBOs, test the connector model prior to scale.

## Pilot Overview

The purpose of the pilot is to inform the design of a scalable mixed delivery system in which families have the option to attend either a CBO K1 or a BPS K1 with a connection to their next academic setting.

### Pilot Overview:

- In SY 2017-18, BPS launched a pilot connector between community-based organizations and Boston Public Schools that were participating in the Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG).
- The small pilot established a pathway in which children enrolled in a K1 PEG CBO classroom were connected with a BPS K2 classrooms in either East Boston or Dorchester.
- Families who were eligible for the designated school did not have to participate in the pilot. The pilot gave the choice to select the designated school without having to potentially interrupt their child's participation in community-based programs during the Pre-K year.

## Pilot Overview

- Viability, equity, and coherence were quantified for each connector option. This included classroom configurations, historical selection of the schools and their ability to serve children with additional service needs.
- In Dorchester, the CBO K1 at Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester was connected with the K2 classroom in the BPS Everett Elementary School. In East Boston, the K1 classroom at the YMCA East Boston was connected with the BPS McKay K-8 School.
- Children were connected to BPS using the following steps:
  - Pre-registration event at the CBOs to learn more about the connector and the BPS K2 registration process.
  - Families then scheduled a date at the BPS Welcome Center and a date for language testing.
  - Families attended the registration meeting at the Welcome Center and were assigned the connector school.

## Finding and Considerations

- The pilot process highlighted the need to engage families as early as possible, to streamline CBO/BPS support and to better utilize the Countdown to Kindergarten department.
- One major logistical challenge was that several families that live in Dorchester had zip codes that were different from the Everett, which made them ineligible for the pilot. This must be addressed in the Y2 pilot.
- All children will be connected by the BPS K1 waitlist in Sept 2019.

## CBO/BPS Connector Pilot Team

- ❖ Boston Public School School Committee
- ❖ Harvard Business and Education School
- ❖ Connector Committee (meets bi-monthly)
  - Office of Engagement
  - Welcome Services
  - Office of English Learners
  - Finance/Planning and Analysis
  - Countdown to Kindergarten
  - Office of Special Education and Student Services
  - Early Childhood Department
  - Connector Pilot K2 Principals (Everett Elementary and McKay K-8)
  - Connector Pilot community based organization administrators (YMCA & Boys and Girls Club Dorchester)



## Recommendation for Y2 Pilot

Based on discussions with Executive Cabinet, School Committee members, and lessons learned from the pilot, we are recommending:

1. Continue the initial East Boston connector pilot which connects the East Boston YMCA to the McKay K-8. The K1 enrollment numbers in the East Boston YMCA and the district's K2 enrollment numbers remain low in SY 2018-19.
2. Expand the pilot in Dorchester to add a 3rd community-based program to the pilot. This would increase the pilot from 40 seats to 60 seats (East Boston would have 20 seats and Dorchester would have 40 seats). We recommend adding the Walnut Grove ABCD Head Start as the 3rd community-based program.

### Rationale:

- a. Adding this PEG CBO into the pilot creates an opportunity to learn more about how to connect across Dorchester, why families leave, why they stay, and what they need as they transition from the CBO into BPS.
- b. UPK data indicated Dorchester is an area where demand slightly exceeds the number of Pre-K seats and the BPS school choice varies by Dorchester zip codes. This Dorchester PEG CBO had 13 families leave for BPS K1 in 2017-18 and 10 children so far for 2018-19.
- c. Headstart is the largest provider in the city and a likely UPK partner, so the pilot affords the opportunity to learn across systems.

## Recommendation for Y2 Pilot

3. Expand the connector pilot to add a larger selection of BPS K2 options in the Dorchester area for both CBOs not just one, testing out the pros and cons of a non one to one relationship between program and school.

Rationale:

This addresses the ineligibility of some families. Families at the BGCD and ABCD who are not eligible for the connector based on their Dorchester zip code would have a connector option.

### **Registration/Connection Process**

- Families will learn about the K2 connector options for which they are eligible and rank them in the order that they prefer.
- BPS will internally connect families to their top-ranked K2 connector school based on a lottery of randomly assigned numbers.

## Recommendations for Specific Dorchester K2 Connector Schools

### Edward Everett School

- .5 miles from 1st pilot CBO but does not reach all Dorchester families
- DESE Level 2
- BPS Tier 2
- 1st year Pilot
- Increased enrollment from CBO from 1 child to 3 children
- .588 OI score\*

### Holmes Innovation School

- 3 families from ABCD chose
- DESE Level 1
- BPS Tier 1
- K-8 Pathway to Frederick Middle School
- Surround care with fee
- .678 OI score\*

### UP Academy Holland

- 9 families from ABCD chose
- DESE Level 4
- BPS Tier 4
- Improving...2018 performance would put it at Tier 1\*\*
- Starts early, has a after school
- .706 OI score\*

\*OI score-A higher opportunity index score indicates a higher average level of student need as defined by the index.

\*\* According to current BPS School Quality Framework, any school with \*\*Turnaround status (DESE Level 4) is automatically listed as BPS Tier 4 for school choice listings, regardless of actual school performance levels.

## Year 2 Connector Outline - For BSC Approval

### East Boston

\*East Boston  
YMCA

**BPS K2  
Connector**

\*Donald  
McKay K-8  
School

\*was previous  
connector  
option in Y1  
pilot

### Dorchester

\*Boys and  
Girls Club  
Dorchester

ABCD  
Walnut  
Grove

**BPS K2  
Connector**

\*Edward  
Everett  
School

Holmes  
Innovation  
School

UP  
Academy  
Holland

## Long Term Recommendations

Before the end of the pilot in Aug 2019 and as we move to only Boston UPK, we will need to:

- Develop connector policies and procedures that are aligned with the current BPS enrollment system and timing of school choice process.
- Arrive at a definition of the high-need population for eligibility and an assignment process to create mixed income/need classrooms. Sources that will be used to create this definition includes BPS at a Glance 2017-18, the Inclusive Preschool Learning grant, and criteria used by state and federal government for subsidy and Head Start eligibility.
- Develop a connector map to determine how to connect each UPK CBO to each BPS K2 aligned with the Mayor's expansion plan.  
Determine how connectors are selected and what additional supports they will need.
- Communicate the Mayor's plan to expand K1 in community-based programs.  
Align with district Build BPS plans for K1.

## Dec 2018- Jan 2019

- Confirm Y2 pilot connector with CBOs and principals
- Translate/distribute family communication regarding the connector options
- Pre-registration events
- Family ranks connector options

## January 2019 - August 2019

- BPS K2 registration - ends March 2019
- Family schedules language testing; Language testing conducted
- Family notified if they received one of their two ranked connector schools
- Implement of transition timeline between C2K, CBO and BPS K2 School.
- Complete long term recommendations & follow up with BSC

