

June 19, 2019

To the Boston School Committee:

At BPS, our obligation as a school system is to ensure that opportunity gaps are eliminated across every grade level and every demographic within our diverse student population. As several external reports have made clear, nowhere is there greater evidence of the consequences of years of inaction than in our high school system. I am encouraged by the superintendent-designee's commitment to authentic engagement throughout the Boston community as part of an important and impending strategic planning process. Throughout that process, I would expect the need for the district to reexamine and improve how we educate the young adults of our high schools will be of particular interest. As I have been reminded often throughout the course of the last year, whatever obstacles BPS will face going forward, they pale in comparison to the formidable barriers so many of our students must overcome through no fault of their own if they want to be college, career, and life ready by the time they leave the Boston Public Schools.

In light of the urgency and complexity of the challenges facing our high schools, and in response to the priority the School Committee has placed on addressing them, earlier this year I convened six working groups to analyze and communicate about distinct issues facing BPS secondary schools. These groups were convened in order to leverage the immense reservoir of internal talent and the broad array of external expertise at our disposal. They set out to assess and address the deep-seated systemic impediments to improving secondary schools in Boston. They collaborated with one another on the needs of off-track youth, how to advance academic rigor in all schools, and how to strengthen college, career & life readiness for all students.

The work groups included school leaders, staff members, central office administrators, and expert facilitators. They were charged with synthesizing findings - from the many external reports as well as their direct knowledge of our schools - to further develop the district's institutional expertise and capacity. The core findings summarized below come directly from each work group, along with detailed memos that outline key learnings and preliminary findings. Taken as a whole, the memos provide a rich summary of the context, challenges, and opportunities for implementing improvements across our high school system from the perspective of those who know it well. Hopefully they will serve as a useful resource in support of the upcoming strategic planning process.

The core findings across all six work groups are as follows:

MassCore Alignment and Graduation Requirements:

- 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; while avoiding 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.

Alternative Education Design:

- Create an Alternative Education guidebook, as a resource for all BPS stakeholders: students, counselors, central office staff, Headmasters, the Re-Engagement Center, and external partners
- Improve access to actionable data, especially monitoring how attendance changes (improves/declines) after students enroll into alternative education.
- Improve & streamline the process for students' transitions into alternative education schools and programs.
- Develop a mechanism to establish and support academic rigor across schools/programs through the lens of active engagement.
- 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 Guidance Counseling and Post-Secondary Support:

- Engage counselors and BTU representatives to begin a 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 PD 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).

Grade 7 – 12 School Design

- 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.
- 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 Education and Pathways:

- 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:

- Adopt the working group's proposed (or further refined) 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: Identify data tools which best align with school counseling frameworks, and develop training for these tools.
- Plan a district-wide attendance letter campaign, for pilot in SY2019-2020.

As I complete my tenure as interim superintendent, I hope these memos and the contributions of the work groups add to the ongoing and imperative effort to foster the systemic conditions necessary to ensure sustainable improvements in the BPS high school experience. While there is much more work to do, I am heartened by the thorough analysis, collaborative problem-solving, and commitment to our students evidenced in their efforts. It gives me great hope for continued progress toward closing opportunity gaps and ensuring college, career and life readiness for all of our students. I offer my sincere thanks to all who participated.

Regards,



Laura Perille,
Interim Superintendent

High School Working Group Memos can be accessed through the following links:

- [MassCore Working Group Memo](#)
- [Alternative Education Working Group Memo](#)
- [School Counseling Working Group Memo](#)
- [7-12 High School Design Working Group Memo](#)
- [Career Pathways Working Group Memo](#)
- [Early Warning Indicators and On-Track Data Design \(EWI-OTD\) Working Group Memo](#)

Additionally, the High School Working Groups co-hosted a Student Town Hall BSAC (Boston Student Advisory Council) on May 30, 2019 to gather student perspective and feedback on working group topics. Follow [this link](#) to see a list of participants.

MEMORANDUM

To: Laura Perille, Interim Superintendent
Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent-Designee
From: Joel D. Boyd, Ed.D., Academic Superintendent
Re: Findings from MassCore Working Group
Date: June 12, 2019

Section I: Opening

All high school students in Boston Public Schools need and deserve a curriculum that prepares them for college and career readiness and learning. Inconsistent programmatic rigor currently exists across the district given the variety of school graduation requirements. While our portfolio of high schools have each arrived at courses of study they have 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. Furthermore, our students and families are asking for greater coherence across the district, particularly when students must transfer from one school to another. The potential adoption of the MassCore recommended program of study, which aims to bring both rigor and equity to how the state's students are prepared for postsecondary success, is one possibility for creating such a baseline across the district and broadly exploring this option was the intent with which this working group was formed. The group was charged with exploring the following questions:

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

The group was able to come to a series of overarching findings, with specifics and rationale elaborated below. We are not recommending a uniform graduation requirement of MassCore for all BPS schools. In this memo we explore broadening the availability of MassCore as a program of study accessible in all schools to more students as well as a more consistent set of graduation requirements as a baseline for all schools, which for purposes of this memo we refer to as the BPSCore.

Membership of the working group included school leaders and a cross-section of central office support staff and leadership:

- Dan Anderson, Executive Director, Strategy
- Herve Anoh, Lyon High School
- Tess Atkinson, Director of District Administration
- Erik Bonner, Director of High Schools - Special Education
- Joel Boyd, Academic Superintendent
- Matt Holzer, Boston Green Academy
- Tony King, Boston International High School
- Cathy Lizotte, Legal Advisor
- Natacha Scott, Director History & Social Studies
- Rachel Skerritt, Boston Latin School
- Mark Racine, Director of Technology

- Patti Tao, Manager of School Design and Master Scheduling
- Andrea Zayas, Deputy Chief Academic Officer
- Shakera Ford Walker, Director of Teacher Development

Section II: Process & Community Engagement

The working group met in person several times over the course of three months and conducted much of its work through subgroups which were responsible for conducting deeper research from which the group eventually developed the ideas presented herewith. It was clear from the start that the adoption of the MassCore recommended program of study could not be considered without also addressing the quality and rigor of the included content of courses (i.e., at the syllabus level), something the group quickly discovered is not clearly outlined in MassCore. Through initial reviews of past documents and processes that examined adoption of MassCore, the group focused its research and exploration into [four categories](#) of learning: curriculum alignment/academics; professional learning and community engagement; policy, procedures and systems; and district priorities.

In addition to the research conducted by subgroups, we sought feedback from additional headmasters and students. All BPS headmasters received an update from all working groups during their May 16, 2019 professional development sessions and were invited to participate in a focus group conversation to share [their questions and concerns](#). During a [Student Town Hall hosted by BSAC](#) on May 30, 2019, two focus groups of between 3-4 students each provided feedback on two sets of questions related to students' *current* learning experiences (e.g., What courses should **all** students take in school? What do you *want* to learn about in school? How often do you think the district needs to review your course needs? How have you engaged with some of your standard core courses? How is it determined what goes into your classes? Who do you think designs these courses, syllabi, materials for the class?) and how those experiences were preparing them for their *future* experiences (e.g., Do you believe the classes you are taking are preparing you for the next step? If so, why? If not, why not? Do you know any BPS alums? Do you think BPS prepared them for the future? If so, why? If not, why not?). Headmaster and student feedback have been incorporated and considered in the creation of the group's preliminary findings.

Section III: Key Learnings

The group adopted a multi-layered approach to exploring the key question of if and how the district should adopt the MassCore recommended program of study. Its learnings across the [variety of questions](#) explored were deep and instructive for all engaged.

One of our initial key learnings was that 95% of BPS high schools currently meet the primary academic requirements (i.e., ELA, math, science, and social studies) recommended by MassCore. But even with those courses, three complications mean that not all of those students graduate college and career ready as reflected in just 31%¹ of BPS graduates currently meeting the full requirements of MassCore. The first lies in the way that we define and approve a MassCore course. BPS currently identifies MassCore courses as those flagged by OIIT as being "MassCore" in Aspen based solely on a review of course titles. There is no syllabus review, requirement for, or definition of how experiences meet the bar of being equivalent to a unit

¹ Source: [DESE statewide reports](#), SY2017-2018. Does not include BPS Horace Mann Charters.

(defined by MassCore as a “full academic year of study or its equivalent in a subject that covers all the standards contained in a specific Curriculum Framework.”) A course is expected to cover the standards that are assigned to it. Second, through discussions with school leaders, it became evident that between buildings, the same course title was being used for courses containing different content. This inconsistency results in confusion in course leveling, GPA calculation, and transcripts. Finally, the variety in rigor of courses, and therefore, preparation that students receive, is highly dependent on the instructing teacher. Students are keenly aware of this and are able to identify which teachers in their buildings are “easier” or “harder” resulting in vast differences of experience in courses that are identified as being “MassCore” aligned. Given that teachers make such a tangible difference in student achievement, future implementation of MassCore will require preparing our educator workforce with the knowledge, skills, dispositions and adequate resources necessary to enhance practice and ensure student success.

A second major area of learning was in how BPS approaches graduation requirements and courses. While each high school has unique characteristics, there is a generally accepted baseline course of study that meets potential minimum graduation requirements. This course of study is four English courses (or humanities), four math classes (including Algebra 2), 3 lab sciences (including at least 2 of biology, chemistry and physics), 3 years of history and social studies (including US History and World History) and 2 years of a foreign language. These graduation requirements also largely reflect what is in the current BPS Guide for Families although the Guide for Families also includes PE, health and computers. While there is variety, this general course of study is included in nearly all high school graduation requirements. However, this general understanding of graduation requirements is complicated, with respect to MassCore, by how BPS has historically defined graduation requirements as “number of units” rather than specific courses, with only one exception (Algebra II); BPS also does not require a sequence of courses in any content area, though the district does recommend some sequences. With respect to the 1900+ courses that currently exist in the district, an on-going cycle for reviewing courses and evaluating their rigor does not currently occur, resulting in courses sharing the same number but having very different content and courses being coded inappropriately because there is not a clear process for adding course codes (e.g. a robotics course being coded as “Math” course).

A final area of learning centered around potential financial implications associated with increasing the rigor of courses envisioned with MassCore adoption. First is around professional development for teachers as the district must be prepared to provide teachers with the support and development (i.e., resources) they will need for this new standard. Given that teachers arrive at licensure through a variety of routes², it is hard to be confident that teachers are ready for new standards if they are still developing or deepening their knowledge of the current standards. In order to equip educators with the tools and resources to teach rigorous courses with common expectations across schools, BPS, at a minimum, would need the resources to convene educators who teach the same content during centralized PD in order to ensure professional learning to support any new curriculum or program of study. Second, for the

² Preliminary license requires a bachelor's degree and passing scores on the appropriate MTEL; an initial license requires preliminary licensure, plus completion of an approved teacher preparation program; a professional license requires an initial license, plus completion of one of the following: an approved master's degree program, completion of an approved alternative program, earning National Board Certification, or 3 years of teaching combined with completion of a one-year induction program; these routes of certifications are also not inclusive of educators who obtain certification through reciprocity coming from a different state.

majority of our schools (currently at 50-60%) that do not meet the other non-Core Academic MassCore requirements (i.e., physical education, art, five supplemental courses), BPS would need to determine the level of resources it can and would commit to bridging the gap. Finally, weighted student funding impacts MassCore directly and to a significant degree. Schools with higher concentrations of students with greater need face a reality of needing to channel resources to specific purposes (e.g., English language development) and so may have less freedom to provide electives or other supplemental courses. Determining resource needs for MassCore in general will require a school-by-school audit that examines: specific needs of all enrolled students (e.g., EL needs, special education services, trauma, etc.), current staffing, and facilities resources. Similarly, the current levels of weighted student funding may not be adequate to implement the curricula and experiences that students require in K-8 to be prepared to begin a MassCore aligned course of study at the high school level when they arrive at ninth grade.

Section IV: Preliminary Findings and Rationales

The Working Group's preliminary findings are centered on the development and subsequent rollout of a clearly defined set of courses and standard, districtwide graduation requirements that are aligned with MassCore's primary academic requirements while also (1) eliminating the current ambiguity of the published MassCore course guidelines and (2) accounting for the unique context of Boston's diverse high school portfolio. For purposes of this memo, that set of courses is labeled as "BPSCore" and the ideas for rollout are organized into two areas: Curriculum Alignment and Academics and Professional Learning, which are intended to be viewed in tandem as outlined in the accompanying timeline. This memo assumes that processes and necessary approvals would be implemented as collaborations between central staff and school leaders as has been the model of this working group; collaborations with teachers should also be coordinated around findings that directly impact their work and development.

Curriculum Alignment and Academics

Short-Term Ideas (Summer 2019)

- Finding #1: Create a plan (with accompanying implementation timeline) to update BPS graduation requirements to clearly delineate a program of study that serves as a "BPSCore" that all schools should maintain as their minimum requirement that incorporates, at a minimum, the core academic requirements of the MassCore program of study.
- Rationale: This suggestion provides a consistent baseline across the district while also allowing for a public and engaged conversation about what MassCore can mean in BPS. Schools can go above this requirement to create enhanced diplomas and waivers for requirements (i.e. for alternative/accelerated programs) can be sought through a common, equitable and consistent process. Through an accompanying communication plan, all graduation requirements and courses of study will be made transparent to the public, and published annually in school handbooks, websites, and communicated through the guidance process at each school site; this will begin the work of ensuring consistency and clarity for students and their families.
 - Finding #2: Conduct a systematic review of the BPS course catalog.
 - Rationale: The sheer number and variety of current courses makes it extremely difficult to understand what courses would align with a "BPSCore". The goal of this audit would

be to reduce, streamline, and simplify the course catalogue, and align it to the approved “BPSCore”; each remaining, approved course will have a course description, syllabus and appropriate EPIMS code associated.

Mid-Term Ideas (SY2019-2020)

- Finding #1: Each high school develops and publishes an approved course of study and graduation requirements.
 - Rationale: Having approved courses of study allows the district as a whole to achieve consistency in how requirements are communicated publically, particularly to students and families. These documents would clearly outline how the school’s course of study meets the “BPSCore” and a rationale for the school’s additional requirements, if applicable.
- Finding #2: Determine and publish an articulated process and set of criteria for adding/removing/adjusting courses in the BPS course catalogue along with a clear calendar.
 - Rationale: The existing 1900 courses are not organized or understood with respect to any form of criteria that helps understand their level of rigor. Without a clear and on-going process for course catalogue changes, achieving academic rigor through establishing a “BPSCore” that is preparing students for postsecondary success will have no meaning.

Long-Term Ideas (SY2020-2021)

- Finding #1: Facilitate an audit of K-8 implementation of standards-aligned core content in partnership with school leaders and teachers.
 - Rationale: A deepening of academic rigor at the high school level will have ripple effects into earlier grades; an audit, and potential adjustments, will ensure alignment across the academic pathway so that elementary and middle school grades curriculum and instruction are adequately preparing students for ninth grade work.

Professional Learning

Short-Term Ideas (Summer 2019)

- Finding #1: Develop a BPS Framework for integrating professional learning at the campus level and identify the appropriate central office staff to coordinate professional development.
 - Rationale: An investment in coordinated professional development will support teachers across the district with deepening their instructional rigor leading to more consistent and higher levels of student success.

Mid-Term Ideas (SY2019-2020)

- Finding #1: Prepare for implementation of BPS Framework: develop a communication plan; identify, select and train teacher mentors; and ensure adequate structures (i.e., scheduling, staffing, financing, etc.) are in place at every school.
 - Rationale: Implementing a new framework for professional learning requires planning and appropriate buy-in from all stakeholders, a key step that cannot be ignored in transforming academic rigor. Integrating mentors allows for greater peer to peer modeling and coaching.
- Finding #2: Test out providing centralized professional development for teachers of the same courses across schools.
 - Rationale: We know that a student’s academic experience relies on the quality of their teacher; we need to move towards greater consistency of course implementation so it is

not solely individually driven. This also provides an opportunity to curate and hold up exemplars of high-quality teaching from across the district to use as models for their peers.

Long-Term Ideas and Rationales (SY2020-2021)

- Finding: Implement the BPS Framework for integrating professional learning and develop an accompanying system for on-going evaluation and refinement.
 - Rationale: Allowing time and adequate input for the framework development and holding evaluation at the center ensures long-term integration to support teacher development.

Section V: Path Forward

The financial implications for the group's ideas must also be considered and assessed; weighted student funding will need to be reviewed to align to a "BPSCore". At this time, the group has not made any ideas around course sequences but we know that our students and families desire coherence across the district; some version of an agreed upon sequence, with reasonable and appropriate variation that is transparent to families and students, is needed.

**Appendix A:
Mass Core Working Group Learning Agenda**

Curriculum Alignment Academics	Professional Learning and Community Engagement	Policy, Procedures and Systems	District Priorities
<p>Academic Rigor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the recommended courses of study offered at high schools? (Are these courses of study for gen ed., SEI, Special Ed)? • How does the recommended course of study at high schools influence course offerings and curriculum decisions at the elementary level and what is the resulting impact on an overall implementation timeline for MassCore adoption? • How is/will course rigor be assessed/audited beyond the name of the course in SIS? <p>Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have the curriculum identified for a higher standard? • Do we have the materials required for those curricula? • How are we going to support schools that need instructional materials & professional development if they are not meeting MassCore? <p>Special Populations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does MassCore address the needs of specific populations (i.e., 	<p>Teacher Preparation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are teachers ready in terms of the content knowledge for a new and higher standard? • What would the cost of investment be and steps needed to adequately prepare the high school teaching force to offer “real versions” of these recommended courses to students? <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the appropriate order of communications and engagement in policy development, what method of communication is most effective, and how much time does that method of communication require with each stakeholder group (e.g., parents, BTU guidance staff and teachers)? • What do students and families see as the appropriate set of graduation requirements? 	<p>Definitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we define graduation requirements (i.e. exact course pathways vs. set of required courses)? • What are our definitions of an approved MassCore courses? (ex: Experiences vs. seat time) • What is the common definition of a “year-long course”? (How many hours are in a year-long course? How can we align credits w/ hours?) <p>Process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have a guiding policy for how credits are earned and what experiences can potentially replace seat time? • What is the process for approving Masscore courses? • In shifting graduation requirements, is there one timeline or could there be multiple timelines based on school type/current grad requirements? • How do other districts create and align graduation requirements? <p>Coding courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the implication 	<p>Equity in Choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should it be a choice or is this an equity concern (i.e. equitable access to college, career and life readiness)? • Has BPS ever gone the path of having two types of diplomas (one for traditional high schools and one for alternative education, for instance)? <p>WSF/Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does MassCore impact WSF? • What is the gap between the current resources that are available to schools and the resources that would be needed for whole-district implementation? <p>Central vs School-Based Decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What precedent is there in the district around establishment of common commitments / minimum standards upon which we can draw? • How closely does BPS want to align the expectations around a MassCore academic pathway and actual graduation requirements?

<p>SPED, Alt Ed and EL students)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alt Ed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What current courses are students most frequently missing when they arrive to alt schools? ○ Where do alt ed leaders see the greatest challenges if the task involved needing to increase their number of requirements for students? ● How would/could the additional academic requirements be worked into the varied schedules of diverse schools? 		<p>for schools that run on trimesters (as opposed to standard semester course codes)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does Humanities work in the schools where ELA and History requirements are met through Humanities? ● How do we treat courses that share a course number but have very different content and expectations? (e.g.. ROTC, advisory, Senior Math Seminar) <p>Understanding Gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is the gap between how many BPS students currently graduate with the complete, recommended set of courses that MassCore delineates and how many graduate with fewer requirements than this? ● What is the connection between college completion rates for various BPS high schools and their current set of graduation requirements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What parts can we agree on should be present in every school? What parts should we leave to school discretion/ autonomy?
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MEMORANDUM

To: Laura Perille, Interim Superintendent
Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent-Designee
From: Tommy Welch, Academic Superintendent
Re: Progress and Findings from Alternative Education Design Working Group
Date: June 11, 2019

Section I: Opening

For over twenty years, Boston Public Schools has developed an Alternative Education Network of schools and programs to help prepare students for future success by providing a supportive, non-traditional academically challenging school environment. These schools and programs create a more intimate academic setting, with strong social emotional supports that utilize alternative pedagogical strategies and individual approaches in order to meet the unique needs and build from the abilities and strengths of each student. All of our alternative schools and programs focus on increasing academic and positive behaviors, and develop the necessary skills needed for college, career, and life readiness. Moreover, our alternative schools and programs respect and value the unique contributions of each student, and assist students in becoming responsible, stable and contributing members of their communities.

During the 2018-2019 academic year, a group of 13 alternative schools and programs were brought together to constitute the BPS Alternative Education Network (also known as Network 9). Collectively, this network of schools and programs is committed to ensuring that every student receives the opportunities they require based on their individual needs, strengths, and experiences to reach their full potential. Currently, a variety of programmatic options within the network are designed to address the complex student needs that may be related to personal circumstances, school experience, community factors, and individual choices that may put them at risk of not graduating from high school. This description mirrors a reflection from the EY-Parthenon report of May 2018 targeting off-track youth: “Even as traditional high schools improve, there will always be a need for high-quality alternative educational offerings to better serve students who could thrive in a nontraditional setting.”

The Alternative Education Design Working Group was created to help all stakeholders (students, parents, headmasters, program directors, central office support staff and leadership, teachers, external partners, etc.) understand how alternative education schools and programs work with all schools in BPS to meet the needs of students seeking an alternative path to a diploma. Specifically, the group was charged with exploring the following five key questions:

- What are the current strengths and challenges of the BPS Alternative Education Network?
- Is the constellation of schools and programs comprising the BPS Alternative Education Network designed to meet the specific needs and profiles of the students classified as Young & Far, Old & Far, Old & Close, Overaged late entrant English Learners?
- What are the success indicators for alternative education schools and programs?
- How are students experiencing the transition into alternative education programs, and how can BPS better facilitate this process to ensure successful outcomes?
- How should the alternative schools and programs within Network 9 and at other high schools be redesigned in order to more effectively serve the students of BPS?

Membership of the working group included leaders from within Network 9 and a cross-section of central office support staff and leadership:

- Mark O'Connor, Principal, The Carter School
- Benjamin Helifat, Headmaster, Boston Adult Technical Academy
- Alison Hramiec, Headmaster, Boston Day & Evening Academy
- Tommy Welch, Academic Superintendent, Network 9
- Carlos Diaz, Senior School Coordinator, Office Of Secondary Schools
- David Fisher, Data Analyst, Central Office
- Manny Allen, Director, Re-Engagement Center
- Harold Miller, Senior Director, Policy & District Transformation, Office of Opportunity Gaps
- Deborah Froggatt, Director of Library Services
- Cindie Neilson, Assistant Superintendent, Special Education
- Yvonne Macrae, Senior Financial Analyst, Budget Office
- Chi Nguyen, Director of Supplemental Services, Office of English Learner

Section II: Process & Community Engagement

The Alternative Education Working Group met as a team multiple times during the spring semester to address the broader challenges facing the network of schools. Additionally, through the regularly scheduled monthly Network 9 leadership meetings, a larger group of school leaders and administrators had the opportunity to serve as a sounding board for some of the key issues presented to the team. To explore the working group's questions, four subgroups were created, each with an organizing question to guide its work:

- **Subgroup A** - Communication Plan: 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?
- **Subgroup B** - Success Indicators for Alternative Education: What metrics can alternative education schools and programs use to monitor and support student progress?
- **Subgroup C** - Re-Engagement and Enrollment of New and Transitioning Students: How do we establish a clear understanding/process of enrollment in alternative education schools and programs for all stakeholders?
- **Subgroup D** - Alternative Education Priority Projects/Initiatives: 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 best practices?

Over the past two months, each subgroup met in person or via phone 3 to 4 times with supplemental electronic communications to review and curate lessons from foundational documents and to create and provide feedback on emerging working group products. The whole group also gathered in person two times and once via conference call to have an opportunity to share subgroup updates. Throughout the process, the working group members used electronic communication and phone calls to provide feedback on the group's preliminary findings.

In addition to working group meetings, feedback was also sought from additional headmasters and students. Network 9 leaders received a focused briefing and all BPS headmasters received

an update on the work of all working groups during their May 16, 2019 professional development sessions. During a [Student Town Hall hosted by BSAC](#) on May 30, 2019, two focus groups of between 3 to 4 students each provided feedback on three questions: (1) What comes to mind when you hear the words “Alt-Ed” or “Alternative Education”? (2) What are your thoughts after looking at the draft of the Alt-ed guide? And (3) Do you think it is important for Alt-Ed students to participate in sports? Student feedback has been incorporated and considered in the creation of the group’s preliminary findings.

Section III: Key Definitions and Learnings

Proposed Definition:

The working group developed a “working” definition for alternative education in BPS:

All alternative education schools and programs are committed to ensuring that every student receives the opportunities they require based on their individual needs, strengths, and experiences to reach their full potential.

Key Learnings:

- The constellation of schools and programs that comprise the BPS Alternative Education Network:
 - Has a strong capacity to serve students who are 17+ and within one year of graduation. (i.e., Old and Close)
 - Requires additional seats for younger high school students who are more than one year off-track for graduation (i.e., Young and Far)
 - Requires additional seats for over-aged students in middle school
 - Requires greater capacity to serve English Language Learners Level 1-2
 - Requires greater capacity to serve additional students requiring Special Education Services
 - Lacks a designated pathway for career or technical/vocational education
 - Lacks formal designated dual-enrollment options
- BPS leaders outside of the alternative education network, in central office and in schools, have inconsistent understandings of what alternative education means.
- The transitions into alternative education are smooth overall, but BPS should move towards greater consistency. It has previously sometimes taken two weeks or more for a student to be successfully placed.
- Alternative School leaders are eager to supplement traditional metrics of student success with metrics that BPS designs to fit the context of alternative education and are committed to continuing the work established by the working group during the 2019-2020 academic year.

Section IV: Preliminary Findings and Rationales

The Alternative Education Working Group’s preliminary findings primarily focus on the three broader categories covered by the subgroup A, B, and C, and incorporated the suggestions of a wider range of initiatives covered by the work of subgroup D. These findings focus on:

1. Establishing a clear communication and “branding” strategy to help all stakeholders understand the purpose and variety of programs offered within the BPS Alternative Education Network
2. Improving the student transition experience and the support available to school-based staff at both traditional and alternative schools

3. Emphasizing instructional practices aligned to student needs throughout the network of alternative schools and programs
4. Continuing to assess the programmatic design of the BPS Alternative Education Network to ensure alignment to student need
5. Developing metrics for student success that build on traditional metrics and are tailored to the context of alternative education

The following outlines key preliminary short-, mid-, and long-term findings with accompanying rationales.

Communication Strategy (Subgroup A)

Short-Term Ideas (Summer 2019)

- Finding: Improve the communication strategy for alternative education by creating an Alternative Education guidebook that will serve as a multipurpose resource for all BPS stakeholders, including students, counselors, central office support staff, Headmasters, the Re-Engagement Center, and external partners.
 - To ensure that all stakeholders are aware of how the alternative education network is aligned with the vision of BPS by clearly defining:
 - How the alternative education network of schools and programs serve students of BPS
 - What programs are available, aligned to student need
 - Who the network serves
 - When and how alternative education students transition into schools and programs
 - The process of enrolling or transitioning to an alternative school or program

Mid-Term Ideas (by November 2019)

- Finding: Implement the alternative education communication strategy through Headmaster and academic counselor professional development meetings, the BPS website, and other opportunities to share with central office leadership teams
 - Connected to the first short-term suggestion of creating a BPS Alternative Education Guidebook, key stakeholders will use the guidebook and information within as part of professional development module. This will ensure that the guidebook will be a resource and not just an artifact, in helping all key stakeholders in finding an appropriate placement for potential candidates who would thrive in an alternative education setting.

Student Success Metrics (Subgroup B)

Mid-Term Ideas (by November 2019)

- Finding: Improve access to actionable data, especially monitoring how attendance changes (improves/declines) after students enroll into alternative education
 - Changes to attendance, also described as gains-based attendance metrics, help to measure success of the core mission of alternative education: re-engaging students in school.
 - Acknowledging different program designs, we also need common metrics for the success of all students.
 - Increasing ease of access to student data will enable data-informed student supports, and will help school leaders to plan both their current and future school years.

- Transparent sharing of data will assist the alternative education network and the Office of Secondary Schools with aligning long-term budget and programmatic planning with student need

Long-Term Ideas (SY21 and beyond)

- Finding: Implement and refine holistic success metrics across Network 9 schools and programs, including metrics for student re-engagement, individualized supports and planning, and student outcomes.
 - The short-term suggestion focuses narrowly on the specific work of monitoring gains or losses in student attendance rates, after students enroll into alternative education. Holistic measures offer broader insights, also accounting for individualized student supports to each student, and student outcomes.
 - Network leaders broadly agree that alternative education needs its own metrics for student success. This memo considers new metrics as being in addition to traditional ones, to offer greater nuance and actionable information.

Student Transitions (Subgroup C)

Short-Term Ideas (Summer 2019)

- Finding: Improve the student transition experience into alternative education schools and programs
 - To clarify the process and responsibility of the BPS staff who work directly with students and families as they transition from traditional high schools, enroll in BPS as a new student, and re-enroll in BPS after an extended absence.
 - Develop a clear process that is aligned with Superintendent's Circular AMT-5 through the Re-Engagement Center.
 - Ensure that the Welcome Services and the Office of Special Education teams have a clear understanding and are aligned with the responsibilities of the Re-Engagement Center staff when working with overaged students.
 - Minimize the enrollment timeline for students transitioning into alternative education schools and programs (a goal of no more than ten days from referral to enrollment)

Mid-Term Ideas (by November 2019)

- Finding: Reduce the time between interview, acceptance/rejection and start date for students entering alternative education (for a maximum of ten days) by adding administrative staff (0.0 FTE to 1.0 FTE) and an additional re-engagement specialist (2.5 FTE to 3.5 FTE):
 - By increasing the Re-Engagement Center staffing levels up to include an administrative assistant and an additional specialist, the team can:
 - Focus on improving the enrollment experience of previously disengaged students by taking a more hands on approach
 - Manage the potential increase in 19-21 year old students to be processed based on the new Maximum Age Assignment and Enrollment policy (AMT-5)
 - Eliminate the need for re-engagement specialists to rotate the front desk/administrative job throughout to day to cover phone calls and walk-ins
 - Move toward a staffing model that reflects similar-sized urban school districts

Instructional Practices & Program Designs (Subgroup D)

Short-Term Ideas (Summer 2019)

- Finding: Develop a mechanism to establish and support academic rigor across schools/programs through the lens of active engagement

- The rationale is to ensure the academic progress of all actively engaged students assigned to schools and programs.
- Develop formal professional development opportunities for Alternative Education teaching staff focused on teaching and learning
- Include the Instructional Round Protocol as part of professional development for school leaders within the alternative education network, as well as in collaboration with teachers and leaders of traditional schools
- Establish an attendance baseline for alternative education students
- Establish a Quality School Plan for all alternative education schools and programs based on collaboratively developed metrics (with Network 9 school leaders)
- Explore and develop best practices and rubrics to assess:
 - Curriculum
 - Instruction
 - Assessment
 - Social-Emotional Support
 - Attendance/ Active Participation
 - Attainment of credit toward graduation

Mid-Term Ideas (by November 2019)

- Finding: Assess programmatic needs based on student profiles and demand to ensure alternative education programming is relevant to student interest and district goals. This assessment can be through the continued program redesign and enhancement by expanding, minimizing, closing, or opening new programs within Network 9.
 - Rationale: To allow for the traditional and alternative schools/programs to better align their programmatic design based on the needs of the students in BPS.
 - Ensure that all schools and programs are aligned with the current demand and need based on student profile and interest
 - Align programmatic investments within the alternative education network to student need

Long-Term Ideas (SY21 and beyond)

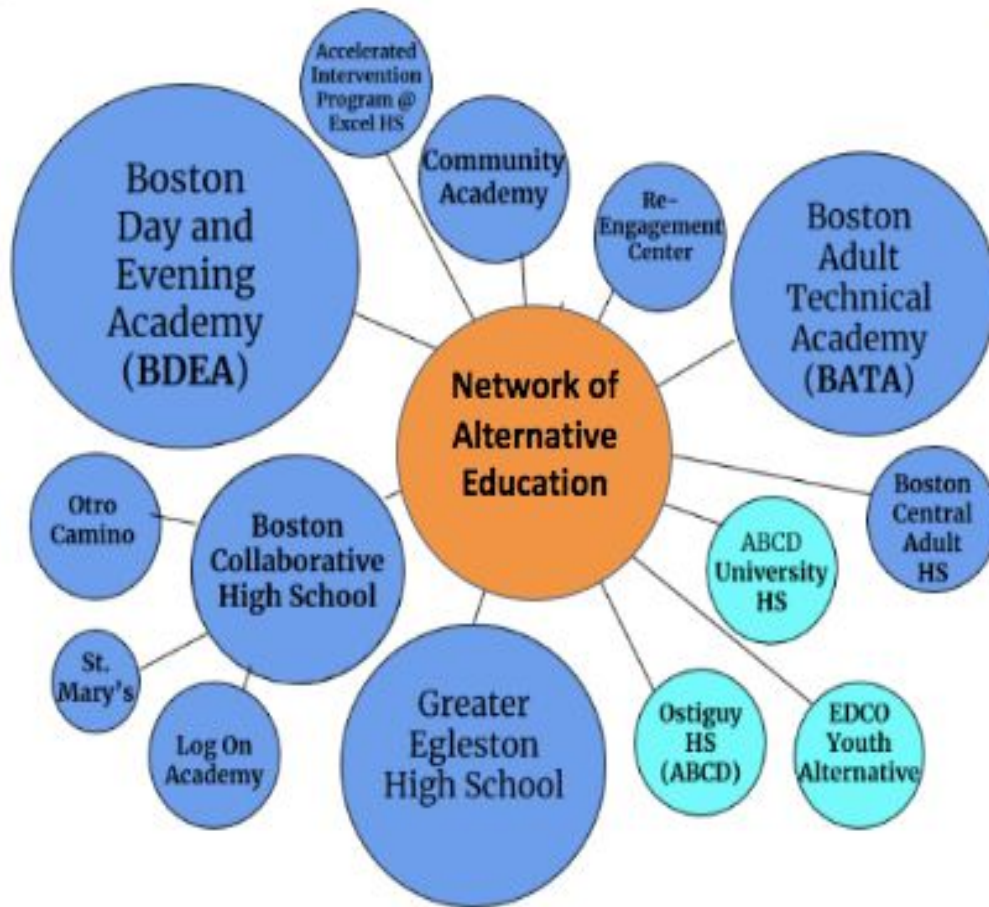
- Finding: Continue to further refine Network 9 through thoughtful conversation regarding the re-design of the Alternative Education Network by exploring different program models to meet the evolving profiles of students enrolled in the alternative education network.
 - The goal is to establish programs that are meaningful to the alternative education student experience, as well as being aligned with the vision and goals of the Office of Secondary Schools. Although the development of new programs may require the redesign of how some programs currently serve students, the working group discussed a couple of options for the future of alternative education:
 - Developing formal Career Technical Education pathway options in the network
 - Formalizing dual-enrollment opportunities with local colleges
 - Exploring partnerships with traditional schools to become programs embedded within a school
 - Partnering with the Boston Central Adult High School program to support student nearing or exceeding the maximum age of enrollment in BPS
 - Collaborating with BPS central office leaders and external partners to further enhance program options at alternative education schools and programs, such as work-based learning experiences, certificate programs, and other options based on student interest

Section V: Path Forward

The Alternative Education Network leaders will continue to meet on a monthly basis, as we did throughout the 2018-2019 school year. These meetings will address many of this report's findings.

In addition to these monthly conversations, the network's leaders will continue to work aimed at effectuating the mission of BPS's Alternative Education Network. We will pilot student success metrics that are designed to fit the context of alternative education, collaborating with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop best practices for measuring success. The Re-Engagement Center will continue to improve the student transition process, while also focusing on its core mission of connecting with students who are disengaged from school. Finally, we will continue dialogue with leaders across BPS to ensure that the Alternative Education Network is part of a holistic approach to our city's secondary schools.

Appendix A:
Network of Alternative Education



MEMORANDUM

To: Laura Perille, Interim Superintendent
Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent-Designee
From: Marsha Inniss-Mitchell and Mandy Savitz-Romer
Re: Progress and Findings from the School Counseling Working Group
Date: June 11, 2019

Section I: Opening

Previous reports (Savitz-Romer & Brion Meisels, 2015) indicated that school counseling in the Boston Public Schools was not being fully leveraged to address key challenges facing the district. In light of numerous reports calling for improved college and career readiness, expanded attention to students' social and emotional health, and increased need to identify students who are off track towards graduation, the school counseling working group was launched in March 2019 to identify action steps that build on existing knowledge of the challenges and opportunities related to school counseling (re: guidance) in Boston. In a short amount of time, the working group examined how BPS school counseling could be improved upon to ensure equitable access to academic, postsecondary and social-emotional support, regardless of high school attended. The working group focused their efforts at determining findings regarding action steps the district can take to scale up existing effective practices and identify improvements to current programs and roles.

The working group was made up of representatives of schools and central office staff and lead by Marsha Inniss Mitchell, Director of Postsecondary Initiatives. In addition, Mandy Savitz-Romer, faculty member from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, was enlisted as a co-facilitator to provide content expertise on the topic of school counseling. The working group consisted of school leaders, school counselors, and central office staff from Academics & Professional Learning, Office of Human Capital, Special Education, Secondary Schools, Opportunity and Achievement Gaps, and Behavioral Health. Specifically, group members included:

- Nora Vernazza - Headmaster, TechBoston Academy
- Geoffrey Walker - Head of School, Fenway High School
- Lindsa McIntyre - Headmaster, Burke High
- Filomena Cabral - Registrar, Burke High
- Christian Ekholm-Jacobson - Director of Counseling & Student Support, Boston Latin Academy
- Carmen Calderón O'Hara - School Counselor/School Social Worker, Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers
- Andrea Zayas - Deputy Chief Academic Officer
- Andria Amador, Senior Director of Behavioral Health Services
- Erikk Bonner - Assistant Director of High Schools (Special Education), BPS
- Ilyitch Tabora - Executive Director, Immigrant & Targeted Populations
- Chelsea Banks - Director of Special Projects (Office of Human Capital), BPS
- Danielle Duarte - Doctoral Student, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Laura Hecht - Masters Student, Harvard Graduate School of Education

As part of the Interim Superintendent's charge to the High School Working Groups, school counseling was identified as a key lever to addressing challenges the district faces, considering the question: *What do we want all students in Boston to have access to, regardless of the school they attend?*

Rather than sitting in the why and weaknesses, the group's goal is to consider where to strengthen our current system of education. Innovation is happening across the district, and the workgroup is looking to build on these successes by identifying where they are happening, while also considering where clean up is needed to create a stronger system. To advance this goal, the working group was charged with the following 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?*

Together, the working group sought to capture an overview of the systemic issues and ultimately, determine ways that school counseling in Boston can be more efficient, equitable, and manageable.

Section II: Process & Community Engagement

The working group held four full-group meetings, each one lasting two hours and involving hands-on work and discussion. These meetings largely took place in Boston high schools. In addition, the working group held several subgroup meetings to advance the work on specific, key issues and those that had synergy with other working groups (i.e. EWIS).

To broadly inform our process, our group sought feedback and insight from multiple stakeholders. In addition to our regular working group sessions, our working group conducted the following:

- 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
- 2 subgroup collaborative meetings between School Counseling and EWIS

To accomplish our goal of drawing on national best practices to improve upon school counseling in Boston, the working group also carried out the following:

- Reviewed the national school counseling model
- Reviewed job descriptions and organizational structures from peer districts
- Reviewed measurable data points that support counselors' practice
- Reviewed school counseling vision statements from approximately 20 other urban, peer districts

These stakeholder conversations and best practice documents served as the basis for our working group discussions and the final set of findings.

Section III: Key Definitions (as needed) and/or Learnings

Our group framed the work around the national model of school counseling that articulates counselors' work as promoting academic, social-emotional and postsecondary counseling. A number of terms were defined for our purposes, all of which can be found in the *glossary of terms* at the conclusion of this memo.

Initial discussions and reviews of key sources prompted early learnings that we translated into a set of priority areas that would guide the group's path toward findings. This early identification of priority areas provided a roadmap for the working group's development of ideas and reflects the specific areas that the group believes warrant attention by the district.

- 1. School counselors need access to ongoing professional development and learning opportunities.** The district needs to invest in the school counseling workforce to ensure optimal services are being delivered to students. To date, little to no attention is given to new counselor onboarding, mentoring or coaching, ongoing professional development and updated evaluation tools.
- 2. The BPS needs stronger and broader leadership and an articulated vision to guide school-based practices.** Current practices are widely varied and do not offer consistent, equitable support for students, nor are they guided by a clear district-wide vision.
- 3. School counselors in the BPS require a clear and updated scope of role and purpose.** Current practices do not reflect national best practices used to advance student success, inclusive of the "guidance" terminology and emphasis in some schools on administrative duties. Further, job descriptions and actual role vary greatly and do not fully leverage all that counselors are trained to offer.
- 4. BPS school counselors need additional support in the form of tools and systems to facilitate high-quality counseling supports.** Strong practices in the district are augmented by the use of data-driven tools, student support teams, curricula, and partnership management. However, these systems are not evenly utilized and all are developed at the school level rather than as a district-wide approach.

One specific key learning from our process was the need for a district-wide counseling vision statement and/or mission statement. BPS could articulate a vision statement to guide the work of school counseling programs. These statements communicate a clear articulation of what and how school counseling programs in BPS advance opportunity for all students. The vision statement should guide the work of school-based counseling programs and school counselors. Ideally, it should guide and be a filter through which we can view and assess school health broadly, with the ability to articulate specific aspects of counselor practice. Further, the vision should guide school decisions regarding counseling staffing support, define the scope of counselor practice, communicate to students and families about what they can expect from counselors, and offer clarity regarding the role of leadership in the counseling process.

The BPS is one of very few districts of its size and demographics that does not have such a statement. Although the working group believes a final vision/mission should reflect multiple voices and perspectives, our group developed a draft statement, which could be used as a starting point for further articulation:

School counseling in the Boston Public Schools' ensures that all graduates have the emotional strength of character, social capital, and knowledge of self to actualize a life of options and opportunities. The goals for students align with the district's vision of a BPS graduate, and the City-wide College, Career, and Life Readiness Framework that calls for students to have the skills and competencies to be lifelong learners and engaged global citizens, well prepared for post-secondary pathways.

Similarly, the working group offers the following mission statement to be used as a starting point for further refinement:

School counselors, in partnership with students, families, teachers, administrators, and community partners, provide culturally-affirming, proactive, responsive, and comprehensive services that attend to the social emotional, academic, and postsecondary needs of all students. Through deep relationships, advocacy, leadership, and collaboration, school counselors utilize data to provide equitable, multi-tiered supports to ensure all students have access to supports necessary for them to thrive in school and beyond.

Section IV: Preliminary Findings and Rationales

The following section outlines our proposed short-term, mid-term, and long-term findings, along with the rationale or key learnings that informed the findings. Each of these findings falls into one of four categories that emerged as priority areas:

1. Professional Learning & Development: BPS counselors should have consistent access to relevant professional development and learning to support their work.
2. District Leadership, Vision & Support: The district needs stronger leadership to support school based student support services that align with district-level initiatives.
3. Role Clarity and Focus: The school counseling positions need stronger alignment and focus to ensure we are leveraging their skills and expertise and delivering supports to meet students growing needs.
4. Professional Tools and Systems: BPS school counselors need additional support in the form of tools, curricula, and systems to enable high-quality counseling supports.

Additional information about many of these findings can be found in the Appendices.

Short-Term Ideas

Professional Learning & Development

1. Develop a one-day, School Counselor Learning Institute in August (See [Appendix A](#) for sample agenda)
2. Establish expectations/Create policy for counselor release time for professional development

District Leadership, Vision and Support

1. Begin the process to hire a senior management position to support the current leadership and expand the district's capacity to explore these findings (See [Appendix B](#) for sample job description)
2. Formulate a District-Wide Vision Statement

Role Clarity and Focus

1. Create a working group of counselors and BTU representatives to begin a process of developing a single school counselor job description for Student Development (See [Appendix G](#) for sample job descriptions) Counselors, Guidance Counselors, and others working in those roles (i.e. Community Field Coordinators).
2. Dedicate one session at ALI to educating school leaders about school counseling and effective student support systems, highlighting schools with strong student support models (See [Appendix C](#) for sample content)

Professional Tools and Systems

1. Identify district staff member to work with counselors to implement EWIS/ data-driven practices

Mid-Term Ideas

Professional Learning and Development

1. Implement Monthly Professional Development Series
2. Invite counselors and school leaders to attend training together on the use of EWOT data reports (See EWIS findings)
3. Drawing on the district leadership team, identify 3-4 cross-department professional development opportunities (i.e. behavioral health, partnerships).

District Leadership and Support

1. Explore the possibility of creating a unified student services division at the district level to create alignment and coordination across multiple offices that deliver student support services (i.e. Office of College and Career Readiness, Guidance, Behavioral Health, Office of School and Community Partnerships)
2. Establish a cross functional team that creates opportunities for collaboration and coordination across academic, social emotional and postsecondary areas to support counselors' work (i.e. Postsecondary Initiatives, Partnerships, Behavioral Health)

Role Clarity and Focus

1. Ask school leaders to include ONE school counseling goal into their QSP
2. Establish/Create "LEAD COUNSELORS" at every high school to provide school-level leadership, system development, resource coordination, and summer work/planning (See [Appendix D](#))

3. Provide all schools a mapping tool that will allow them to match specific student needs with an appropriate staffing model and student support structures

Professional Tools and Systems

1. Provide counselors and school leaders regular EWOT data reports with metrics that guide their work (See [Appendix E](#) and *EWIS group findings*)
2. Establish management expectations and practices to guide school-based agreements, drawing support from the Office of School and Community Partnerships
3. Implement Monthly [Postsecondary Leadership Teams](#) across the district to implement the My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) system
4. Draw on existing models for the use of teams lead by counselors/support staff (Student Support Teams, Intervention Teams, Postsecondary Leadership Teams - See [Appendix E](#))

Long-Term Ideas

Professional Learning and Development

1. Create learning networks to augment professional development on data-driven practices and the use of EWOT data
2. Identify and utilize grant funding to create counselor coach/specialist positions to offer counselors support in building structures and systems at school level
3. Align counselor job description and professional development with evaluation tools
4. Use Professional Learning Communities to offer PD on a range of topics of interest to the counselors (i.e. trauma, sexual identity, early college awareness)

District Leadership and Support

1. Provide school leaders support with hiring, role clarity, and evaluations by the Senior Director of School Counseling
2. Update counselor evaluation tool to align with expectations of role in Boston Public Schools

Role Clarity and Enhancement

1. Train school leaders to co-evaluate counselors (w/District School Counseling Leadership)
2. Create staffing models that reflect the variation of schools in BPS from which leaders can select

Professional Tools and Systems

1. Establish and disseminate protocols to use data to guide decisions about school-based partners
2. Explore the existing relationships between counselors and service providers and create clear expectations about models for collaborative practices with school and community partners, drawing on extensive experience with college access partnerships
3. Select model to guide district-wide school counseling framework (i.e. MTMDSS, ASCA national model)

Section V: Path Forward

The BPS School Counseling Working Group was part of a comprehensive effort meant to identify the systemic changes to which the BPS must commit ourselves in order to ensure those graduating from BPS high schools are indeed college, career, and life ready. Our working group examined how BPS school counseling (re: guidance) can be improved upon to ensure equitable access to academic, postsecondary and social-emotional support regardless of high school attended. The ideas in this memo reflect the very first step in what will require a longer process. Scaling up the existing best practices in the district and those implemented nationally will require additional effort among many in the district.

Making improvements to our current systems of counseling supports will require the continuation of a working group, and perhaps identifying other groups who can move this work forward. Specifically, we suggest the following:

- Using the August Institute as a launch, we suggest the district create a school counseling steering/advisory committee comprised of school counselors to support district level changes (i.e. job descriptions, vision statements, data reports) and further develop the materials/tools needed to advance the findings described in this memo.
- One of the key challenges we faced around counselors' role clarity was the variation among job titles, job classifications, licensure, and job descriptions. Given the important role of the Boston Teachers Union as it relates to these variables and school leaders' classification practices, we were unable to fully articulate the staffing models at each high school, or complete an accurate mapping of counseling staff by school. This may be an area of future work for the Office of Human Capital.
- Making the kinds of comprehensive changes suggested in this memo will take time, constant attention, and a coordinated approach. The district might consider a coordinated approach to improvements and expansion of school counseling programs with the help of an intermediary partner, building on the success of initiatives such as, The Fifth Quarter Initiative with Boston After School and Beyond and BPS Arts Expansion with EdVestors.

Work Cited

French, M. & Williams, E. (2015). Postsecondary Leadership Team (PLT): Driving Student Support and Outcomes. Presentation at the 2015 College Changes Everything Conference, Tinley Park, IL, 2015.

Savitz-Romer, M. & Brion Meisels, G. (2015). School Counseling, Post-Secondary Partnerships, and Student Support: *A Landscape of Current Efforts to Support the Academic, Social Emotional and Post-Secondary Development of BPS Students*.

Glossary of Terms

American School Counseling Association (ASCA) - The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is the only national organization for school counseling professionals. This organization is responsible for a national model and accompanying standards that guide school counselors' work.

August Leadership Institute (ALI) - The August Leadership Institute is an opportunity for Boston Public Schools principals, headmasters, teacher leaders, new teachers, and other school-based staff to engage in professional learning and access district supports and resources to successfully begin the new school year.

Intervention/Student Support Teams - Intervention teams or Student support teams are comprised of high school staff that provides early, systematic assistance to students exhibiting behavioral or academic problems. The SST, as its name suggests, is a completely student-centered problem-solving team, comprised of educators who support the work of teachers and counselors to reduce student underachievement. Schools accomplish this by using a referral system that enables teachers and other school staff to refer students in need of additional support.

Multi-tiered, multi-domain system of supports (MTMDSS) - This concept reflects a system whereby schools provide services on a continuum from universal supports for all students (Tier 1) to targeted and intensive supports for students with higher levels of need (Tier 3) across all three domains - academic, and postsecondary.

MyCAP (My Career and Academic Plans) - Formerly called the Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a student-directed, multi-year planning process designed to personalize learning and increase students' understanding of the connections and relevance of what they are doing now in high school to their future success. Students utilize a college and career planning platform and structured advising sessions to identify their talents and skills, establish flexible career and life goals, develop a four-year academic plan, future postsecondary plans, and career plans that align to those goals.

Postsecondary Leadership Teams (PLTs) - The Chicago Public Schools utilizes and defines PLTs as "body that drives a structured system of support that fosters a strong college-going culture and improved student postsecondary outcomes." These teams are comprised of counselors, college and career coaches or advisers, principals, teachers, students, community partners and agencies, and even parents. These teams also review data on postsecondary metrics to assess progress and identify gaps in services.

Quality School Plan (QSP) - The QSP Action Plan serves as a road map that provides clarity to specific priorities and actions that are most important during the first 90 school days. The plan will help ensure the focus of all stakeholders toward an aligned understanding of the implementation and progress of our school's improvement initiative.

School Counselor - Although the BPS currently uses the terms, guidance counselor and student development counselor, to describe the professional roles that deliver counseling supports across academic, social-emotional or postsecondary areas, the term used most widely today is, school counselor. The community field coordinator (CFC) role assists with the implementation of school-wide support and community outreach and is not a counseling function.

List of Appendices

The Following Links Will Take You to Samples

- Appendix A: [Sample One Day School Counselor Leadership Institute](#)
- Appendix B: [Sample Senior Director of School Counseling Services Job Descriptions](#)
- Appendix C: [Sample Content for ALI Institute for School Leaders](#)
- Appendix D: [Sample Job Descriptions for Lead Counselors from Peer Districts](#)
- Appendix E: [List of EWIoT and Related Metrics for Counselors](#)
- Appendix F: [Multi-Tiered, Multi-Domain System of Supports](#)
- Appendix G: [Sample Job Descriptions for High School Counselors](#)

MEMORANDUM

To: Laura Perille, Interim Superintendent
Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent-Designee
From: Donna Muncey, Deputy Superintendent of School Supports
Re: Progress and Findings from 7th-12th High School Design Working Group
Date: June 11, 2019

Section I: Opening

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. The 7th-12th Grade High School Design Working Group was formed with this context in mind and charged with considering the following questions:

1. 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?
2. 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?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. What are the implications for K-5/6 schools with regard to the district move toward additional 6/7 – 12 high schools?

Membership of the working group included school leaders and a cross-section of central office support staff and leadership:

- Erik Bonner, Assistant Director with High Schools, Special Education
- Richard Chang, Interim Academic Superintendent
- Stephen Cirusuolo, Quincy Upper
- Mary Driscoll, Associate Superintendent
- Oneida Fox-Roye, Director, English Language Arts and Literacy
- Jessica Greene, Physical Education Director
- Matt Holzer, Boston Green Academy
- Francine Locker, Boston Community Leadership Academy (BCLA)
- Ted Lombardi, Operational Superintendent
- Donna Muncey, Deputy Superintendent of School Supports
- Sherri Neasman, Boston Collaborative High School
- Cindie Neilson, Assistant Superintendent, Special Education
- Ligia Noriega Murphy, Assistant Superintendent
- Michele Pellam, Another Course to College
- Linda Ruiz Davenport, Director of K-12 Mathematics

- Josue Sakata, Assistant Director, History & Social Studies
- Patricia Santin, Interim Executive Director, Office of Social Emotional Learning and Wellness
- Priya Tahiliani, Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners
- Nora Vernazza, TechBoston Academy
- Naia Wilson, New Mission

Section II: Process & Community Engagement

Over the course of three months, working group members met five times in person, with subgroups conducting additional research outside of the group. In an effort to focus its work, the group organized its research and learning goals around the following two charge questions: (1) 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? and (2) 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?

In an effort to answer these questions, the group sought feedback from/conducted research with the following:

- Headmasters who have created newly formed 6/7-12 schools through the expansion of their high schools presented and discussed lessons learned during working group meetings
- Mary Driscoll, Associate Superintendent, presented on the process for the McCormack Middle School reconfiguration and selection of BCLA to create a new 7-12 school
- Members reviewed two pitch decks from a 2016 invitation to high schools to express their interest in expanding to 7-12
- Research and conversation with representatives of Cincinnati Public Schools which has recently reconfigured the majority of its district through its “My Tomorrow” initiative to be 7-12 grade schools
- Headmasters received a briefing and shared their questions related to the process for becoming a 7-12 school at a May 16 PD session; two headmasters subsequently joined the working group
- Reviewed previous recommendations from the existing Grade Configuration High School Affinity Group, whose members are the headmasters of current 6/7-12 non-exam schools (many of whom also participated in the Working Group)
- Gathered feedback from students on what they’d like to see in a comprehensive 7-12 school campus
- Literature research on the efficacy of the 7-12 grade configuration model

Section III: Key Learnings

Throughout the working group process, it was clear there is great interest across the district from high schools to expand to become 6/7-12 grade schools and curiosity as to what the process will be for other interested schools following the McCormack reconfiguration decision. As an example, a 2016 invitation for schools to pitch their ideas for expansion resulted in 20 interested high schools with only one of those (BCLA) now moving forward.

The data collected and discussed, while rich and thought provoking, did not yield complete consensus from the team concerning the answers to our charge questions. In both designing and operating 6/7-12 grade schools, the group learned or affirmed that careful planning and

attention must be paid to the following areas, which begin to form a framework for how to design 6/7-12 grade schools:

- *Planning and Designing 6/7-12 Grade Schools*

The group was able to draw on the expertise of leaders who had been through the process of creating 6/7-12 grade schools, reflections on the current McCormack reconfiguration and from colleagues in Cincinnati. There are a variety of considerations beginning with responding to demographic shifts. For example, Cincinnati hired demographers to chart funding that was going towards buildings that were under capacity and reported on student losses to area charter schools. In Boston, leaders agree that with the current overabundance of middle school seats, schools are competing for the same students and that competition with charter schools is also a threat. However, many of our middle schools, though under enrolled, are currently in buildings that are in relatively good shape.

In the planning phase, the group learned of the need to remain flexible and open to community engagement throughout the process, making sure to engage all school partners for complete buy in. For example, in the McCormack process, an initial proposal was met with negative community feedback which ultimately led to a changed process and the current outcome. Planning will take at least a year and must be a thoughtful process working across key district departments and engaging students, staff, families and partners. One key step in the McCormack process was engaging staff from the McCormack in visiting and getting to know interested high school partners.

The actual path to creating 6/7-12 schools is also varied. From high schools in the city that have expanded to include middle school grades, the general guidance is to add a grade a year. For the McCormack, which will be a conversion, they may be interested in learning more from Cincinnati which closed their middle school campuses and reopened new schools with combined grades all at once.

- *Curriculum and Instruction*

Regardless of how a 6/7-12 school is formed (e.g., expanding “up” or “down” in grades), the entire academic pathway across the 6th-8th grade years must be considered with attention to standards, choice, the types of collaboration that can be made possible across middle and high school programming and creating shared expectations; key in this consideration is remembering that younger students have distinctly different developmental needs than older secondary students. Instruction, therefore, must be adjusted to meet the needs of students; a successful secondary school cannot just transpose their model to middle school and vice versa. The group also agreed that in designing instructional planning, there could be opportunities to create longer and more integrated and connected academic pathways built on standards (which must be addressed even in autonomous schools), allowing for choice, and potentially sharing expectations as well as providing opportunities for middle and high school collaboration. A consideration here, however, is that in an attempt to provide access to higher-level coursework, middle schoolers could potentially be in 9th/10th grade classes. The group wondered whether this was best for students academically and developmentally as well as whether middle school students would receive credit for the high school courses they complete. Additionally, there was alignment in two areas in particular related to curriculum and instruction: first, 6/7-12 schools must have adequate and specialized student supports, including for ELLs and other special populations (in the McCormack process, guidelines were created outlining the kind of

programming the newly configured school had to provide); and second, P.E., athletics and other extracurricular activities will need to be differentiated for students across the grade levels. Finally, 6/7-12 schools need to recognize and incorporate physical education as vitally important to meet the kinesthetic needs of middle schoolers.

- *Culture and Climate*

The successful development of a 6/7-12 school, particularly one that emerges from the merger of other schools where cultures might collide, lies in the creation and support of a strong and seamless culture. Providing adequate time for planning is key to aligning vision and mission and determining the answers to a series of key questions: how will the culture be the same/ different within the whole school and across the middle and high schools? What will onboarding and mentorship need to look like? What are the standards for behavior in a diverse age setting? How do race and intersectionality factor in? All leaders agreed that the level of social emotional support that middle schoolers require is much wider and deeper than at the high school level and is one argument for intentionally keeping the 7th and 8th grades smaller to address key needs.

- *Operations*

The design and planning of 6/7-12 schools result in a series of interconnected operational decisions and choices. First, while important to create a single school with a unified culture, the actual physical facilities serving 6/7-12 students must be appropriately sized and configured. Many schools have separate entrances and restrooms for their middle and high school students and designated spaces for both groups. Second, the structure of the day must meet the needs of different learners. Middle school students benefit from fewer transitions and still need physical activity (e.g., recess) during the day. In Cincinnati, for example, there is a strong recommendation against block scheduling and many of their campuses have 7-8 periods a day which coincide with the younger grades on the campus. In Boston, by contrast, some schools have created two different bell schedules where the middle school has fewer time blocks than the high school. Finally, the actual physical space must be continuously reviewed and updated as needed to meet the needs of students, ensuring adequate space for extracurricular programming and sports.

- *Human Resources*

The actual success of a 6/7-12 grade school lies in the actual human capital driving activities. Key is the leadership of the school - leaders who possess both the vision and capacity for sustained long-term planning. In addition, the capacity of staff to understand middle grade needs must be expanded and many schools often choose to have designated staff for their middle and high schools; ongoing professional development and opportunities for teachers to meet in grade level teams will be key. The group also engaged in discussion about the need to value the expertise of leaders and teachers in our current stand alone middle and existing K-8 schools; these leaders could be hired into newly formed schools rather than being considered "excess" staff. An outstanding question is the kind of licensure teachers in 6/7-12 schools should have.

- *Family & Community Engagement*

Finally, as Boston considers the creation of new 6/7-12 grade schools, it must remember that community and family engagement are key in both planning (as noted earlier) and on-going implementation. Initially, this means paying particular attention to the communication and

messaging around a merger or conversion to ensure transparency. And in the early years of a newly formed school, it means gathering and responding to feedback on an ongoing basis through various methods that are transparent, equitable to all parents, and accessible to all family and community stakeholders.

In addition to learnings around planning and implementing 6/7-12 grade schools, the group also conducted research on the efficacy of 7-12 grade model. In general, the research affirms that during the transitional period of adolescence, students experience a decline in achievement, compared to elementary grades. Some studies indicate that students in K-8 schools perform better than their 6-8 counterparts, although the difference is not statistically significant. By content, K-8 schools may produce a slight improvement in literacy and also outperform 6-8 middle schools in Language Arts and Math, for Special Needs Students, with the effects most significant in math. The literature also seemed to indicate that transitions for students come best at 7th grade, compared to 6th grade where students are at a more impressionable age, and where exposure to older peers and more freedom may have a negative learning effect. Overall, however, grade configuration by itself is not a predictor of student success; thus, an attention to meeting the particular needs of middle grade students is what is most important.

Section IV: Preliminary Findings and Rationales

The working group offers here two categories of findings that have emerged from our collective conversation and reflection:

Planning and Designing 6/7-12 Grade Schools:

- With the School Committee's approval of K-6/7-12 and K-8/9-12 as the primary desirable grade configurations, facilitate a transparent and visible process for how and when conversions (beyond the McCormack and BCLA) will happen.
- Articulate a framework for how to create effective 6/7-12 schools, that is based on both theory and local and national experience to create "buckets" of work that need to be done to plan, create, grow, and sustain effective 6/7-12 schools; create profiles of how current 6/7-12 grade schools were developed, to be used as prototypes and resources moving forward.³
- Plan systematically, with equity at the center, in the design of 6/7-12 schools, mindful of the balance of seats with 9-12 and elementary school configurations and evaluate how well the system is meeting the needs of all students on a regular basis. This work should be coordinated with, and aligned to, BuildBPS or whatever other facilities planning process the district might adopt in the future.
- Have sustained community engagement and input, particularly from middle-grade and high school students and parents, in all phases of a 6/7-12 grade school design and implementation.

Programming for 6/7-12 Grade Schools:

- Create a framework for curriculum and instruction for middle school grades to address the historic dip in academic success for this age group; incorporate the expertise of school leaders from stand alone middle schools, K-8 schools, and current 6/7-12 schools.

³ The PELP Framework (Appendix A) was suggested as a model because it is comprehensive and has been used to plan and implement change nationwide.

- Develop a suite of professional development experiences that prepare teachers to be both content and relationship experts in working with students in grades 6-8.
- Ensure explicit instruction in social emotional competencies, particularly those most relevant to the health and well being of early adolescents.
- In designing extracurricular activities, ensure equitable access, particularly with respect to athletics, that provide ample opportunities for middle school student participation.

Section V: Path Forward

Given the district's commitment to moving forward with more 7th-12th grade schools, the working group anticipates the need for the creation of structures and frameworks to guide planning processes moving forward. Members of this working group are particularly interested in the process the district will use and in having opportunities to inform and participate in one that is transparent and visible.

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Appendix A: PELP Framework



MEMORANDUM

To: Laura Perille, Interim Superintendent
Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent-Designee
From: Michelle Sylvaria, Executive Director of Career and Technical Education
Cc: Marinell Rousmaniere, EdVestors CEO; working group co-facilitator
Re: Progress and Findings from Career Pathways Working Group
Date: June 12, 2019

The focus of the Career Pathways Working Group (CPWG) was to envision a Boston Public Schools (BPS) where all students have an opportunity to be college and career ready upon graduation and students and families know the options for career learning, including career pathways, as part of an overarching, rigorous, and engaging secondary schools strategy. In pursuit of this purpose and focus, the group was guided by the following questions:

1. What are the purpose, goals and intended outcomes of career pathways and/or career readiness education for Boston Public School students?
2. Based on these goals and intended outcomes, what are the specific, research-based career learning experiences that lead to the essential skill development and career readiness of all students?
3. 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 they are distributed, how do we provide equitable access?)
4. What district, school level and other supports and policies are needed to implement these strategies in all high schools?

The members of the Career Pathways Working Group, listed below, met seven times from April 29th through June 6th.

Name	Organization/School
Michelle Sylvaria	Executive Director of Career and Technical Education
Marinell Rousmaniere	EdVestors, President & CEO
Brett Dickens	Headmaster of Madison Park Technical Vocational High School
Dana Brown	Headmaster of Dearborn STEM Academy
Dania Vazquez	Headmaster of Margarita Muniz Academy
Ajay Trivedi	EDCO Youth Alternative, Director
Holly Rosa	BPS Director, K-12 Science & Technology/Engineering
Claudia Willis	BPS OELL Instructional Specialist
Francina Victoria	BPS Manager of Pipeline and Diversity Programs
Jennifer Smith	BPS Asst Director of CTE
Alison Slate	BPS Budget Coordinator
Erikk Bonner	BPS SPED

LaVonnia Montoute'	EdVestors, Director of Career and Technical Education
Janet Anderson	EdVestors, Executive Vice President
Ayele Shakur	BUILD, CEO; OAG Task Force Co-Chair
Eva Mitchell	City of Boston Deputy Chief of Education

Section II: Process & Community Engagement

During the working sessions, the CPWG explored career learning opportunities in the district, discussed research-based best practices and local models of career education, and identified supports or resources for the district to consider. The working group meetings brought forward themes of career education leadership and staffing as well as student access and communication, which informed our 3 focus group sessions with BSAC students, Pathways Coordinators and Headmasters from individual high schools, in addition to larger community conversations with the PIC and through an event sponsored by the Shah Foundation. Finally, the CPWG was uniquely positioned to bring in insights and work from a pre-existing working group of district staff on this topic. There was a mutual exchange of ideas from the previous group and current members through the discussion of previously developed draft ideas and documents to guide the work in this area.

Section III: Key Lessons Learned

Roadmap to College and Career Readiness for All

The CPWG identified multiple examples of ongoing efforts to prepare youth for postsecondary opportunities (inclusive of career learning) in the district as well as numerous partners to support them. However, with the diversity of models and partners in the landscape, the district needs a framework that guides all career learning opportunities towards a north star that results in career ready graduates and demonstrates the points of intersection for all stakeholders.

With a framework in place, the district will be better prepared to address the challenges of getting to all. As opportunities for career learning grow, there are still specific populations, such as students in alternative education settings, special education, or identified as English Language Learners who face significant barriers to participation or, in some cases, an absence of opportunity for career learning. In recognition of these observations, the group purposed to ensure all students could access college and career learning experiences, both by ensuring that appropriate scaffolds exist for all students to engage in career exploration; and by investigating ways to better connect students in the aforementioned specific populations to career learning opportunities.

College and Career Readiness Leadership & Staffing

Through working group discussion and in focus groups, there was an expressed need for an organizational structure that aligns district level leadership and support with school level staffing to drive improvements and shepherd college and career preparation forward at the district and school levels. Nationally, many peer districts such as Chicago, Baltimore, and Denver have addressed these concerns by creating district Departments of College and Career Readiness

which are charged with improving student outcomes in post-secondary attainment and increasing access to high skill career opportunities. These departments identify needed resources and provide a strategic system of support to school-level leaders to implement the best practices to ensure that every school has the effective conditions in place to graduate students who are successful beyond high school. The success of this work depends upon developing sustainable capacity to lead this work at the district and school level.

Communication and Alignment of Learning Opportunities

Another theme that emerged is the need to increase visibility and communication of career learning opportunities for all students. A system of aligned pathways and other career learning programs should begin in the early grades through student and family engagement and experiences that build awareness of college and career opportunities as they move towards the secondary school student choice process.

Accountability for Career Learning

An additional area of need is developing data collection systems to track and monitor indicators of college and career readiness. These data collection systems will allow district and school leaders to use data and current research to drive decisions and measure progress toward district and school improvement goals. In some cases, data is housed in external databases which need to be integrated into the BPS student information management system.

Finally the CPWG developed a draft purpose statement which aims to serve as a starting point to develop a central message on the importance of and vision for college and career readiness that addresses career learning and leverages the network of supports that exist for Boston Public Schools.

Draft Purpose Statement: *The purpose of College and Career Readiness is to increase student awareness of career options by exploring their interests and talents, building industry knowledge, and engaging in work-based learning experiences to inform their college and career decisions and enhance their future opportunities. We will accomplish this goal by coordinating a comprehensive system of supports, inclusive of educators, industry, and community partners. The aim is for all middle and high school students to experience a core set of activities that leads to each student finding their purpose and potential in order to become college, career and life ready.*

Section IV: Preliminary Findings and Rationales

- Short-Term Findings and Rationales: Actionable by June 30th, 2019
- Mid-Term Findings and Rationales: Actionable by October 30th, 2019
- Long-Term Findings and Rationales: Actionable in 2020-21SY and identified, as needed, to include in November 2019 budget process

CCR for all

a. Mid-term

- i. Establish a framework of college and career readiness including foundational college and career connected learning experiences for all students and career pathway models that lays out the vision, current

status, and key steps to achieve the vision for schools, central office, and partners. Ensure all schools are reflected in the framework and are able to identify college and career connected learning approach that aligns with their mission and approach.

b. Long-term

- i. Complete a landscape analysis of career connected learning opportunities within schools and community partners.
- ii. Develop a menu of options based on the landscape analysis to share with schools, students, and families.
- iii. Establish career pathway models for alternative education, students with disabilities, English Learners and SLIFE students that respond to the scale of school programs and student needs. Pilot implementation of models during SY20-21 to illuminate promising practices.
- iv. Ensure appropriate scaffolds are implemented for students to access career connected learning opportunities.

CCR Staffing and Leadership Models

c. Short-Term

- i. Continue monthly CCR working group meetings with opportunities for additional focus and discussion groups to advance the CCR Framework development and other pieces of work.

d. Mid-term

- i. Based on national models, establish a BPS Office of College and Career Readiness with a cabinet level-position to lead new and existing work to drive improvement and highlight the priority of career learning as part of college and career readiness.
- ii. Create CCR staffing and resource allocation models at the school level to support the implementation of career connected learning activities, reflecting the role of a MyCAP Career Development Lead and/or Work-based Learning Coordinator job description
 1. Identify one or more individuals who will fulfill the CCR liaison role at each school and provide professional development and technical support from central office, including MyCAP training as well as the identification and implementation of Career Development experiences.
 2. Prioritize training and supports for school-based educator teams to
 3. leverage college and career readiness resources and strategies.

Align and Communicate Pathways

- iii. Mid-term

1. Ensure district and school communication about career pathways and CCR programs of study so that staff, families and students understand the options that are available.
 2. Enhance the secondary school choice process for students and families to include information about career pathways and CCR programs of study.
 3. Develop a communication plan and strategy that will result in the integration of career learning in daily school and district practice
- iv. Long-term
1. Align college and career readiness from early grades through secondary school informed by labor market demand and availability of industry partners to support work-based learning.

Accountability for Career Learning

a. Short-term

- i. Release an Internship Guide to school leaders to inform structure of school-driven internships and work based learning.

B. Mid-term

- ii. Identify data collection systems to track work-based learning in Aspen.
- iii. Include student career connected learning in measurement and accountability approaches, such as the School Quality Framework and Performance Meter.

b. Long-term

- i. Investigate opportunities to connect existing data systems of youth employment with district data systems.
- ii. Determine credit-bearing nature of career related activities and align with district work on graduation requirements.
- iii. Develop a system of metrics to track student growth and outcomes.

Section V: Path Forward

The working group provided an important catalyst in identifying key needs in college and career readiness as well as defining next steps based on the input from a diversity of stakeholders. Beyond the findings previously outlined, work in this area can be furthered by providing additional opportunities for input from key stakeholders, such as students, families, and school staff leading the partnership work. Strategies for gathering this input are detailed below:

- Stakeholder Engagement: In the upcoming school year, members of the CPWG would like to engage more students and recent alumni to better understand the aspects of the college and career readiness programs that are/were most helpful to them in their next steps. In particular, it would be beneficial to hear from students with a range of experiences including those that participated exclusively

in the general education curriculum as well as those participated in a career pathway (e.g. CTE, early college, etc).

- Framework Development and Release: The proposed resource would be relevant to students and families, schools, and partners. As it is developed and released it is important to continue to engage these groups to gain feedback on the information needed and best means for communication.
- Professional Networking and Collaboration Spaces: Staff that oversee the connection of students to work-based learning and who coordinate partners and colleagues inside and outside of the school building are seeking ways to network with their colleagues in similar positions. The creation of a forum at least once a semester for staff in these positions, including Work Based Learning Coordinators and Partnership Coordinators, to convene would facilitate the capacity building, collaboration, and information sharing necessary to make school level career learning sustainable and accessible to all students.

MEMORANDUM

To: Laura Perille, Interim Superintendent
Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Superintendent-Designee

From: Tommy Welch, Academic Superintendent
David Fisher, Data Analyst, Office of Secondary Schools

Re: Progress and Findings from Early Warning Indicators and On-Track Data Design
(EWI-OTD) Working Group

Date: June 12, 2019

Section I: Opening

The Early Warning Indicators (EWI) & On-Track Data (OTD) Working Group has pursued a BPS where all students know what it means to be on track, and where schools know how to support their individual paths to graduation.

Charge Questions:

1. What are the current work streams in BPS, devoted to identifying and responding to EWIs?
2. How has data access and utilization changed under the new data dashboard pilot? What is the current utilization of the attendance and enrollment data dashboards?
3. How can BPS learn from the current data dashboard pilot as we plan for a sustainable, long-term, and comprehensive data dashboard solution?
4. What supports need to be in place for headmasters and school staff to effectively implement EWIs at their schools?
5. How best can BPS consolidate all current EWI work streams, in order to best serve students?

This working group has directly answered questions 1-3, and questions 4-5 will be our focus in the upcoming school year. Our findings emphasize areas where we have already established consensus and clarity, where we are ready to attach specific suggestions with clear timetables. We suggest the path forward be two-fold: reviewing the findings and continuing to convene this working group to address larger questions.

We expect to support the working group's path forward, focusing on the question: How can BPS continue to expand EWI practices across all secondary schools? The new [EWI definition](#) details what this means, emphasizing how educators can use data to develop tiered student supports.

Working Group Membership:

- Kevin Brill, Headmaster, Greater Egleston High School
- Dr. Renee McCall, Headmaster, Excel High School
- Gene Roundtree, Headmaster, Snowden International High School
- Jillian Kelton, Director of Student Services, TechBoston Academy
- Cindie Neilson, Assistant Superintendent, Special Education
- René Boundreau, Director of Early Warning Indicator Systems, Office of Opportunity Gaps
- Vera Johnson, Director, Newcomers Assessment & Counseling Center
- Monica Hogan, Director of Analytics, Office of Data and Accountability

- Samuel Zuckert, Systems Manager, Welcome Services
- Eric Hankwitz, Applications Director, Office of Informational and Instructional Technology
- Dan Anderson, Executive Director, Strategy
- Miriam Rubin, Acting Director, School-Community Partnership

Section II: Working Group Process & Community Engagement

Working Group Process:

The working group standardized BPS definitions for what it means to be on-track to graduate, and what an EWI system is. The group then used this shared understanding to inform three subgroups, focusing on: professional development and school leaders, professional development and school counselors/student support staff, and data tools. Each subgroup developed proposals, which the whole working group has endorsed. These proposals make up the findings of this memo.

We also recognized that this is ongoing work, and prioritized the most timely items for this school year. Section V describes our findings with regard to carving out the path forward, to continue supporting EWI practices district-wide.

Community Feedback:

Over 40 stakeholders formally contributed to this working group, directly shaping new definitions and findings at the center of the group's work. This included students, teachers, headmasters, and central office staff. Group facilitators gathered feedback through meetings, surveys, and a conversation co-sponsored with the Boston Student Advisory Council.

Section III: Key Definitions and Learnings

Proposed Definitions:

The working group formalized district-wide definitions for key concepts that BPS has not previously made standard: 1) what it means to be on-track or off-track in BPS, and 2) Early Warning Indicator Systems. Common definitions will help educators to identify when a student is or is not on-track to graduation, and will help the central office to coordinate its support to schools. The definitions are detailed in the [Appendix](#).

Key Learnings:

- School staff express concerns that BPS is not fully modeling data-informed practices at the district level. The short-term findings outline ways in which BPS could immediately model a more coordinated approach to EWI and on-track systems.
- School staff suggest that BPS use elements of the new on-track definition for the grade assignment process, supplementing the age-chart (the age chart is currently the only consideration for grade assignment). Specifically, school staff found that BPS might want to consider credits earned as a factor in grade assignment. The on-track definition could provide credit thresholds for this purpose.
- There are multiple programs and processes through which schools currently use data to inform student supports, and there is an opportunity to increase coordination. The Office of Opportunity Gaps has developed two strong models for this work, through district-run EWI

meetings and an external partnership with Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR). Many schools have developed their own processes. Several central office departments also support aspects of the work.

- 13 BPS secondary schools expressed interest in joining this year's data dashboard pilot. 8 of these schools fully participated, and had staff trained on the new platform.

Section IV: Preliminary Findings and Rationales

We organize findings below into three categories, corresponding to the subgroups which developed them:

Definitions

Short-Term Idea (Summer 2019)

- Finding 1: Adopt the working group's proposed (or further refined) common definitions for (1) what it means to be on track in BPS, and (2) what an Early Warning Indicator System (EWIS) is.
 - There is currently no common district definition for what it means to be on track for graduation. Consequently, counselors and educators experience challenges in identifying when students are or are not on-track. In turn, it becomes difficult to prioritize student supports.
 - Definitions can further a common understanding of key terms, supporting easeful collaboration amongst schools and the central office.
 - The new definition synthesizes multiple research studies and reports, and incorporates feedback from teachers, headmasters, students and central office staff.

Data Tools & Data Infrastructure

Short-Term Ideas

- Finding 1: Plan district-wide attendance letter campaign, for pilot in SY2019-2020, through partnership with InClassToday.
 - The goal is twofold: (1) to reduce chronic absenteeism by 10% or more (amongst schools included in the pilot), and (2) to significantly expand BPS' direct data-sharing with students and families. Schools currently run their own attendance letter processes, but these efforts are manual, time-consuming, and often inconsistent across schools.
 - Centralizing the work has an up-front cost, but gives time back to school-based staff who can then spend more hours deepening relationships with students and families.
 - InClassToday is a nonprofit organization that specializes in streamlining an optimized attendance letter process, working with major districts nationwide. Their published research, based on studies with tens of thousands of families, demonstrates expected reductions to chronic absenteeism of 10% or more.
 - *Potential Details:*
 - Partnering with a philanthropy to pilot this program. The cost can vary with scale, and we hope to secure support for SY2019-2020.
 - The working group conferred with the Department of Opportunity Youth, which leads attendance interventions district-wide, and the Chief Academic Officer to make this finding.

Mid-Term Ideas (SY2019-2020)

- Finding 1: Continue to improve data infrastructure, including renewal of data dashboard pilot for SY2019-2020.
 - The goal of pilot renewal would be to increase participation in the new data dashboard pilot, easing data access for teachers, counselors, and school leaders.
 - The Office of Data and Accountability (ODA) and the Office of Instructional and Information Technology (OIIT) piloted a new data dashboard in SY2018-2019. This pilot reached 13 secondary schools and there is room to further engage these school teams.
 - ODA and OIIT will also continue to develop data infrastructure that aligns with sector data standards. The two offices will continue to develop a new centralized database, the operational data store, which conforms to the Ed-Fi Data Standard, an open-source data standard supported by a national alliance of education agencies, and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.
 - BPS has already made a major budget investment in data visualization for the upcoming school year; ODA and OIIT will leverage these new resources.

Long-Term Ideas (SY2020-2021)

- Finding 1: Sustain district investment into data dashboard technology.
 - The district has made a \$200,000 new investment in a data visualization and EWI system technology for the upcoming school year.
 - Perhaps consider a partnership with an external vendor, to support continuation of the dashboard. The ongoing financial investment would allow BPS to increase the dashboard's usership and develop its features.
- Finding 2: Set budget for district investment in direct communication to students and families, regarding student progress to graduation.
 - Continue to expand BPS' direct data-sharing with students and families.
 - Create a permanent budget line for communicating student data directly to students and their families.
 - The finding regarding attendance letters begins this work, but requires district resources for long-term sustainability.
- Finding 3: In ongoing partnership with counselors, continue development of data tools that support broader professional development goals.
 - Evolve district data tools to more fully support the needs of counseling staff, and further counselors' understanding of how data can improve practice.
 - The district tools are already developed to a point that we can fully support baseline best practices across the district. The short- and mid-term focus should be training and utilization of existing tools.

Professional Learning

Short Term Ideas (Summer 2019)

- Finding 1: Include data dashboard workshop in August Leadership Institute, including updates about data infrastructure.
 - The workshop can increase school leaders' ease of access for data that they need to have at their fingertips.

- Headmasters in this working group finding a hands-on workshop. Participants would test using the dashboard to access key data points, and experiment with new types of analysis.
- BPS continues to invest in its data infrastructure, with plans to continue the current data dashboard pilot in the upcoming school year. In order for this work to be impactful, it is key for school leaders to understand the scope of improvements and how they and their peers can take advantage of new tools.
- There will always be room to improve data access and data governance, to ease school leaders' work; ALI is an opportunity to demonstrate the central office commitment to this work.

Mid-Term Ideas (SY2019-2020)

- Finding 1: Continue dialogue across schools and central office departments to support best practices for EWI systems and on-track data.
 - Continuing dialogues can further educators' knowledge and use of best practices, and develop coordinated support for these practices. These dialogues can also serve as a forum for headmasters, teachers and counselors to work and learn together.
 - This working group convened a panel of teachers and school counselors, to discuss how they use data to support students staying on track. This created co-learning for panelists, and helped central office staff to understand school-based perspectives.
 - This suggestion is purposefully open-ended in terms of process, but hopefully sufficiently clear in terms of purpose.
- Finding 2: In partnership with counselors, identify data tools which best align with school counseling frameworks and develop training for these tools.
 - The goal is to increase school counselors' ease of access for data that they need to have at their fingertips, and develop their understanding of how to use data to improve practice.
 - A framework to support and coordinate counselors across BPS.
 - This EWI-OTD and School Counseling Working Groups convened a joint team to assess all metrics which school counselors use. The team identified the best ways to access the metrics, and also mapped them to conceptual definitions for EWI systems and what it means to be on-track. Future work will build on this foundation.

Section V: Path Forward

The working group expects to continue meeting on a monthly basis. We will focus on convening educators and school leaders, with a smaller presence from central office staff. The work will center on a charge that goes beyond the scope of this report's findings: How can BPS continue to expand EWI practices across all secondary schools?

Certain BPS schools have been highly focused on implementing EWI processes, and have seen strong improvements in student outcomes. The working group will facilitate the sharing of best practices across schools, while continuing to support these practices from within the central office. This will include improvements to data tools and infrastructure, and close coordination with the school counselors and student support teams.

**Participants of High School Working Groups Student Town Hall
Co-Hosted with BSAC (Boston Student Advisory Council)
May 30, 2019**

BPS Working Group	Student Group #1	Student Group #2
MassCore Alignment and BPS Graduation Requirements	Ahria Ilyas Ahnu Zeiller Tiffany Lou Darian Motto Enyo Gakpo	Stanley Aneke Sophia Kenneally Jzantay Howard Kendra Allen-Gerald
School Guidance and Post-Secondary Support	Tommy Chen Ariel Lopez Kayla Arreaga Edelyn Valdez Aisha Clark	Alexis Gonzalez Evelyn Reyes Nashani Swain Xyra Mercer
Career Education and Pathways	Stanley Aneke Sophia Kenneally Jzantay Howard Kendra Allen-Gerald	Ebunoluwa Osinubi Fiona McManus Rain Twohads Majesty Jackson Marcus Mcneil
Alternative Education Design	Alexis Gonzalez Evelyn Reyes Nashani Swain Xyra Mercer	Elvis Rodriguez Rosario Naomi Baez Kunthary Williams Delany Meehan Melody Maduro

<p>Early Warning Indicators & On Track Data</p>	<p>Ebunoluwa Osinubi Fiona McManus Rain Twohads Majesty Jackson Marcus Mcneil</p>	<p>Ahria Ilyas Ahnu Zeiler Tiffany Lou Darian Motto Enyo Gakpo</p>
<p>Grade 7-12 School Design</p>	<p>Elvis Rodriguez Rosario Naomi Baez Kunthary Williams Delany Meehan Melody Maduro</p>	<p>Tommy Chen Ariel Lopez Kayla Arreaga Edelyn Valdez Aisha Clark</p>