

Recommendations of the Boston School Committee
Inclusion Task Force

Submitted to the Boston School Committee
January 14, 2015

Introduction

In the fall of 2013, the Boston School Committee formed an Inclusion Task Force with a mandate to draft recommendations for increasing quality inclusion opportunities in the Boston Public schools. Ultimately, whether or not and how students with disabilities are included in general education will depend on the recommendations of their IEP (Individualized Education Program) teams. It will also depend on the extent to which BPS is successful in developing and supporting a sufficient number of quality inclusive classrooms and schools.

In 2004, the Boston Public Schools Comprehensive Achievement Gap Plan stated that Boston “has major, persistent gaps in achievement and performance between students based on race, ethnicity, language and disability.” Now, over a decade later, achievement gaps persist as stated in a presentation to the School Committee from the Equity Office in November, 2014 “elimination of the achievement and opportunity gaps for Black and Latino students in BPS is our collective responsibility and shared goal.” The Inclusion Task Force shares this goal and believes firmly that culturally relevant teaching and learning must also be part of successful models of inclusion. This includes differentiated instruction that meets the needs of students’ learning styles and also responds to the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of all our students. BPS must strive to foster a school environment that is responsive to all students without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability.

We hold the following beliefs:

- Inclusion is a civil right and should be the first consideration for all students with disabilities.
- The overall percentages of students with disabilities who learn in inclusive classrooms in the BPS should be at least as high as the percentage of students with disabilities who learn in inclusive classrooms across Massachusetts.
- All students with IEPs should have equal access to quality inclusion opportunities without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability.
- Quality inclusion should be developed and supported in collaboration with the development and support of quality general education.
- Quality inclusion is good educational practice which benefits all.

The Inclusion Task Force final report is divided into 4 sections:

1. List of past and present BPS Inclusion Task Force members
2. A) Data comparing overall percentage of placement categories of BPS students with disabilities to placement categories of Massachusetts students with disabilities.
B) Data showing percentage of placement categories of BPS students with disabilities who are served in inclusive classrooms by sub-group categories. An analysis of subgroup categories, race, ELL status and gender, documents the need for Boston Public Schools to address achievement gap inequities.
3. Recommendations for Increasing Inclusion Options in Boston Public Schools.
4. Recommendations for Ensuring Quality Inclusion Options that will be aligned with the Recommendations from School Quality Working Group.

Boston School Committee Inclusion Task Force Members
September 2013 – January 2015

Dr. William Henderson* – Co-Chair; Retired Principal, Patrick O’Hearn Elementary School
#Mary Tamer* – Co-Chair; Former Member, Boston School Committee; Parent, Boston Public Schools
†Michael Loconto* – Member, Boston School Committee; Parent, Boston Public Schools
Regina Robinson – Board Member, BPS Special Education Parent Advisory Council; Parent, Boston Public Schools; Member, Boston School Committee
Natalie Ake – Principal, Dr. Catherine Ellison/Rosa Parks Early Education School
Jean-Dominique Herve Anoh – Headmaster, Mary Lyon Pilot High School
†Aixa Borrero-Sanchez – Supervisor, Support Services, BPS Office of Special Education and Student Services
#Raul Garcia – Inclusion Teacher, Boston Arts Academy
†Marjorie Crosby – Occupational Therapist, BPS Office of Special Education and Student Services
Carolyn Kain – Chair, BPS Special Education Parent Advisory Council; Parent, Boston Public Schools
#Patricia Lampron – Principal, Dr. William Henderson Inclusion Elementary School
Dianne Lescinskas – Director, Project B.I.N.D., Boston Boys and Girls Club Dorchester; Board Member, BPS Special Education Parent Advisory Parent Advisory Council; Parent, Boston Public Schools
Lindsa McIntyre – Headmaster, Jeremiah E. Burke High School
Marvin Mitchell – Special Education Administrator, Joseph P. Manning School
Jerry Mogul – Executive Director, Massachusetts Advocates for Children
Eileen Nash – Deputy Superintendent of Individualized Learning, BPS Office of Special Education and Student Services
Elaine Ng – Parent, Boston Public Schools; Strategic Planning Director, BPS Office of Special Education and Student Services
#Maria Paiewonsky – Transition Specialist, Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston
Janet Palmer-Owens – Retired Academic Superintendent and Principal, Samuel W. Mason Elementary School
#Ed Powell – Executive Director, StreetSafe Boston
Richard Robison – Executive Director – Federation for Children with Special Needs
Dr. Zachary Rossetti – Assistant Professor of Special Education, School of Education, Boston University
†Jacquelyne Sedgwick – Certified Teacher, Special and Regular Educations, Ohrenberger School
Dr. Maria de Lourdes Serpa – Professor of Literacy, Graduate School of Education, Lesley University

† members from September 2014 – January 2015 # members from September 2013 – June 2014

Recommendations for Increasing Inclusive Options in Boston Public Schools

1. Assure that placement in inclusive classrooms with appropriate services and supports will be the first consideration for all special education students at every IEP team meeting.
2. Ensure that students with any category of disability from early childhood through grade 8 whose IEP teams recommend inclusion have access to quality inclusive classrooms in all geographic areas of the city using the new assignment system with sped overlays. (An exception should be made for deaf students whose IEP teams recommend a cluster placement with ASL).
3. Ensure that BPS offers more quality, inclusion options in high schools for students with disabilities regardless of the category of their disability.
4. Ensure that early childhood students with disabilities be enrolled in inclusive classrooms at a percentage at least as high as the percentage of early childhood students with disabilities enrolled in inclusive classrooms across the state and as a first consideration for special education services
5. Recommend how to align the roll-out of the BPS Inclusion Plan in a realistic and fiscally responsible manner that includes a thorough and methodical approach and that does not decrease the Student's Weighted Student Formula for students with disabilities moving from a substantially separate classroom to partial or full inclusion.
6. Create learning communities among schools, within schools and/or among staff (e.g., teachers, principals, special education coordinators, related service providers) that can share best practices in Inclusion.
7. Identify and publicize inclusion options in the BPS for families, staff, and the larger community.

Inclusion Task Force

Recommendations for Ensuring Quality Inclusion Options Aligned with the School Quality Working Group Framework

Domain	Outcome	Sample Indicators
Student Performance	1. Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have a voice in their education through participation in IEP meetings, especially during the transition process and the development of their transition plans for ages 14-22.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting minutes reflect student participation.• IEPs and Transition Planning Forms include student’s goals.• Training and support for effective participation and self-advocacy in IEP meetings provided to both students and their families.
	2. Students with IEPs demonstrate academic growth towards mastery of grade level content and/or vocational and life skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growth toward all IEP goals.• For students who take alternate assessments, growth on state-approved alternate assessment.• For students ages 14-22, growth on achievement of transition goals as indicated by use of individualized transition assessments.

Domain	Outcome	Sample Indicators
Teaching and Learning	3. General and special educators share responsibility to teach and support all students with IEPs without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School teams plan for differentiation of instruction and the use of flexible grouping of students within and between classrooms for effective instruction of a range of learners based on current abilities (below, at, or above grade level). • School-wide adoption of Universal Design for Learning to plan a curriculum that is accessible to and considers all learners from the beginning. • School-wide approach to implement multi-tiered classroom management and positive behavioral supports for all students. • School-wide approach to facilitate positive interactions among students with and without disabilities, and educate students by promoting disability awareness, including the contributions of persons with disabilities. • Teachers and staff use language focused on the individual and not the disability. • Teachers and staff demonstrate evidence of holding high expectations for all students.
	4. Students with IEPs, without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability, start and remain in general education classrooms as appropriate and determined by the IEP team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased collaboration and role flexibility by general and special education teachers, practitioners (e.g., therapists, counselors), specialists, and paraprofessionals to keep struggling students engaged in school. • Increase of integrated related services provided in general education classrooms based on child need and where appropriate as determined by the IEP team. • Use of a range of individualized and appropriate accommodations, specialized instruction, and other special education services and supports (e.g., Braille, ABA, OT) to promote participation in the general education curriculum.
	5. Every service-related decision about every student with an IEP is based on data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools use universal screening tools to identify students needing additional supports, and consider language needs for ELLs with disabilities and communication needs for students with disabilities who do not speak. • General and special educators monitor student progress and

		<p>plan academic, social-emotional, and behavioral strategies across areas of need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School teams continuously and frequently monitor student progress in reading, writing, and math, and implement evidence-based interventions related to areas of need (i.e., tiered).• Teachers consistently collect behavioral data, conduct Functional Behavior Assessments (FBA) for students with challenging behaviors, and develop Behavior Intervention Plans based on the FBAs.• School teams will use transition assessment data to design IEP goals and services that support the student's post-secondary transition goals as specified in the Transition Planning Form.
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Domain	Outcome	Sample Indicators
Family, Community, and Culture	6. All families have opportunities to participate in all school activities and educational decisions for their children and actively collaborate with their children’s teachers and team members, including during the IEP process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All materials provided in native language and are culturally appropriate and sensitive. • Proficient interpreters at all team meetings when needed. • Schools systematically provide families with instructional information, student progress data, progress reports, district evaluations, and other relevant information. • Schools educate families about inclusive education, recognizing cultural differences related to understanding the concept and philosophy of inclusion, as well as special education policy and practice. • The district will provide families information about inclusion and other special education options across the city. This should also be available at IEP meetings.

Domain	Outcome	Sample Indicators
Student Access and Opportunities	7. All students with IEPs, without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability, participate with appropriate services and supports in the general education curriculum and the life of the school, including all activities offered to their nondisabled peers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams document that each student's IEP addresses the individual student's access to general curriculum through accommodations and/or modifications and based on the student's current level of performance.
	8. All students with IEPs, without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability, participate with appropriate services and supports in district and state assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The IEP for students with disabilities includes accommodations to participate in state wide assessments or, if appropriate, an alternate assessment aligned with curriculum frameworks.
	9. All students with IEPs, without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability, have opportunities to interact with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate and with appropriate services and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams document how each student with an IEP will have access to non-disabled peers in the general education classroom, specials, and unstructured times of the school day such as lunch and recess. Teams document that each student's inclusive opportunities are maximized based on the individual student's abilities and needs as determined by the IEP team, and that appropriate services and supports required to be successful and to increase the student's access to inclusion are provided.

Domain	Outcome	Sample Indicators
Leadership and Collaboration	10. Leadership sets a vision that promotes increased inclusive opportunities with appropriate services and supports for all students with IEPs without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shift to more inclusive opportunities becomes part of the entire school and district structure. There is a district wide commitment to educate all students in the least restrictive environment with appropriate services and supports based on their own individual needs and the settings across their day for academic, social-emotional, and behavioral development. • All stakeholders understand that inclusion is inherently culturally responsive and applies to all students with disabilities without regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability. • All schools describe their inclusive practices annually in the “school profile books” and through multiple forms of communication at the school and district level, including at Family Resource Centers. • All schools support the transition of students with disabilities into inclusive settings and include the family in this transition (e.g., collaboration, education). • Parents, staff, and students, when appropriate, are involved in planning for and supporting the inclusive practices at the school level.
	11. School leadership identifies and supports key personnel to promote inclusive efforts, including teachers, practitioners, staff, families, and the wider community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members of the staff are recognized as active members of a successful inclusive school community. • Roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals are designed to support inclusive education and include professional development opportunities during the school day to the extent possible. • Maximize the use of inclusion support staff. • Prioritize flexible planning time for general and special education teachers, practitioners, paraprofessionals, and staff. • Evaluate successful practices, programs, and policies already in place and provide opportunities for all schools to learn from and access them to replicate their successes. • Evaluate successful practices, programs, and policies outside of the district and provide opportunities for all schools to

		learn from and access them to replicate their successes.
	12. Increase the number of BPS teachers who will have certification in special education as well as in primary, elementary, or subject areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize hiring new teachers who have certification in both general and special education as well as in other content areas. • Prioritize hiring new teachers who commit to earning additional certification in special education before receiving permanent status. • In collaboration with local universities, offer creative opportunities for existing BPS teachers to earn special education certification at reduced rates while continuing their work.
	13. Increase the number of BPS teachers who will have the linguistic capacity and cultural sensitivity to teach all students with IEPs regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender or linguistic ability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize hiring bilingual and culturally competent teachers.

Appendix A: School Year 2014-15 Nature of Primary Disability by Race and Gender

	Number of Students	Intellectual	Sensory/Hard of Hearing or Deaf	Communication	Sensory/Vision Impairment or Blind	Emotional	Physical	Health	Specific Learning Disabilities	Sensory/Deaf and Blind	Multiple Disabilities	Autism	Neurological	Developmental Delay (ages 3-9 only)
Black Female	1423	14.5%	1.5%	12.4%	0.7%	13.6%	2.2%	3.2%	32.6%	0.1%	1.4%	6.0%	0.9%	10.8%
Black Male	3083	11.3%	0.8%	11.9%	0.2%	16.7%	1.5%	4.8%	25.8%	0.1%	0.8%	12.6%	1.0%	12.4%
Black Total	4506	12.3%	1.0%	12.1%	0.4%	15.8%	1.7%	4.3%	28.0%	0.1%	1.0%	10.5%	1.0%	11.9%
White Female	427	12.6%	3.0%	11.2%	1.2%	11.9%	3.3%	5.2%	25.5%	0.0%	0.7%	11.2%	1.6%	12.4%
White Male	970	5.1%	1.2%	14.4%	0.9%	10.6%	3.6%	6.3%	21.5%	0.0%	0.2%	20.4%	2.4%	13.3%
White Total	1397	7.4%	1.8%	13.5%	1.0%	11.0%	3.5%	5.9%	22.8%	0.0%	0.4%	17.6%	2.1%	13.0%
Asian Female	102	13.7%	3.9%	21.6%	1.0%	8.8%	3.9%	1.0%	14.7%	0.0%	2.0%	10.8%	2.0%	16.7%
Asian Male	280	7.1%	3.9%	25.7%	2.1%	3.2%	1.8%	4.6%	12.9%	0.0%	0.0%	26.1%	1.8%	10.7%
Asian Total	382	8.9%	3.9%	24.6%	1.8%	4.7%	2.4%	3.7%	13.4%	0.0%	0.5%	22.0%	1.8%	12.3%
Hispanic Female	1555	11.5%	1.5%	22.8%	0.5%	7.3%	1.2%	3.5%	34.4%	0.0%	0.8%	3.7%	1.1%	11.6%
Hispanic Male	2974	7.9%	0.8%	22.0%	0.1%	10.6%	1.9%	5.2%	27.4%	0.0%	0.6%	8.2%	0.7%	14.5%
Hispanic Total	4529	9.1%	1.1%	22.3%	0.2%	9.5%	1.7%	4.6%	29.8%	0.0%	0.7%	6.7%	0.8%	13.5%
Native Amer. Female	16	6.3%	0.0%	25.0%	0.0%	12.5%	6.3%	0.0%	31.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	12.5%
Native Amer. Male	24	20.8%	0.0%	20.8%	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	8.3%	29.2%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Native Amer. Total	40	15.0%	0.0%	22.5%	0.0%	12.5%	2.5%	5.0%	30.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.5%	0.0%	5.0%
Mixed/Other Female	14	7.1%	7.1%	14.3%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%	14.3%	35.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%
Mixed/Other Male	42	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	19.0%	4.8%	4.8%	19.0%	0.0%	0.0%	23.8%	0.0%	11.9%
Mixed/Other Total	56	1.8%	1.8%	16.1%	0.0%	16.1%	3.6%	7.1%	23.2%	0.0%	0.0%	17.9%	0.0%	12.5%
All Races Total	10910	10.2%	1.2%	17.0%	0.4%	12.2%	2.0%	4.6%	27.5%	0.0%	0.8%	10.2%	1.1%	12.7%

Appendix B: School Year 2014-15 Educational Environment by Race and Gender

	Number of Students	Full Inclusion	Partial Inclusion	Substantially Separate	Separate School
Black Female	1423	39.1%	16.0%	35.6%	9.4%
Black Male	3083	36.5%	13.9%	40.2%	9.3%
Black Total	4506	37.3%	14.6%	38.7%	9.3%
White Female	427	51.1%	14.5%	23.4%	11.0%
White Male	970	52.0%	13.0%	25.6%	9.5%
White Total	1397	51.7%	13.5%	24.9%	9.9%
Asian Female	102	35.3%	13.7%	37.3%	13.7%
Asian Male	280	41.4%	13.9%	38.9%	5.7%
Asian Total	382	39.8%	13.9%	38.5%	7.9%
Hispanic Female	1555	45.6%	18.3%	31.1%	5.0%
Hispanic Male	2974	42.9%	14.7%	37.4%	5.0%
Hispanic Total	4529	43.8%	15.9%	35.2%	5.0%
Native Amer. Female	16	56.3%	18.8%	18.8%	6.3%
Native Amer. Male	24	37.5%	12.5%	41.7%	8.3%
Native Amer. Total	40	45.0%	15.0%	32.5%	7.5%
Mixed/Other Female	14	64.3%	14.3%	14.3%	7.1%
Mixed/Other Male	42	61.9%	9.5%	19.0%	9.5%
Mixed/Other Total	56	62.5%	10.7%	17.9%	8.9%
All Races Total	10910	42.1%	15.0%	35.4%	7.6%

Appendix C: School Year 2014-15 ELL SWD Educational Environment by Race and Gender

	Total	Full Inclusion	Partial Inclusion	Substantially Separate	Separate School
Black Female	195	29.2%	19.5%	44.1%	7.2%
Black Male	420	33.1%	17.1%	45.2%	4.5%
Black Total	615	31.9%	17.9%	44.9%	5.4%
White Female	36	33.3%	19.4%	41.7%	5.6%
White Male	98	36.7%	22.4%	36.7%	4.1%
White Total	134	35.8%	21.6%	38.1%	4.5%
Asian Female	57	24.6%	12.3%	52.6%	10.5%
Asian Male	179	39.1%	14.0%	44.1%	2.8%
Asian Total	236	35.6%	13.6%	46.2%	4.7%
Hispanic Female	863	42.4%	18.9%	35.3%	3.4%
Hispanic Male	1636	41.7%	15.5%	39.1%	3.7%
Hispanic Total	2499	42.0%	16.6%	37.8%	3.6%
Native Amer. Female	3	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%
Native Amer. Male	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Native Amer. Total	3	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%
Mixed/Other Female	2	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%
Mixed/Other Male	5	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mixed/Other Total	7	71.4%	14.3%	0.0%	14.3%
All Races Total	3494	39.6%	16.8%	39.6%	4.0%