



Office of the Superintendent

Dr. Drew Echelson, Acting Superintendent
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
2300 Washington Street, 5th Floor
Roxbury, Massachusetts 02119

860-916-6015

dechelson@bostonpublicschools.org
www.bostonpublicschools.org

To: Boston Public Schools School Committee Members
From: Acting Superintendent Dr. Drew Echelson
Date: August 29, 2022
Re: Boston Public Schools SY22-23 Opening

This memo is an overview of tonight's School Year 2022-2023 Back-to-School presentation to the School Committee. Our update will help the members understand the plans we have in place for a strong start to the school year for Boston Public Schools (BPS) students, families and staff.

While we believe we will have a solid first day, our largest concerns remain around staffing and transportation but we are moving in the right direction. We will update you on our progress and plans in these areas in this presentation. We will also update you on:

- **Staffing**
- **Transportation**
- **Food and Nutrition Services**
- **Facilities**
- **COVID-19 Planning and Preparation**
- **Student Assignment**
- **Outreach and Engagement**
- **Academics**

Because this presentation contains updates on a wide variety of departments' ongoing work to prepare for the successful opening of schools, each department will include key equity considerations and strategies in their detailed department reports in the future rather than combining those efforts into a single equity impact statement.

Staffing

Bus drivers and monitors, food service workers and some paraprofessionals remain the top positions we need to fill. We are working to incentivize bus driver and bus monitor positions and making contingency plans to ensure students assigned monitors receive the necessary services.

Hiring secondary science teachers and ESL teachers has also been challenging. Please note that several schools are currently carrying the vast majority of teacher vacancies, but the district is working closely with these schools to hire the staff needed for the first day of school.

Transportation

We continue to leverage our Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Drivers Union, which provides new opportunities to better serve our students. We are working around the clock with our partners at the City and MBTA to collaborate and minimize disruption during the state's unprecedented Orange Line closure, and we continue to improve operational efficiencies that will help get our students to school safely and on time. The BPS Transportation team continues to work on routing and bus assignments, customer service staffing, and bus yard preparations.

Food and Nutrition Services

Our presentation will include an update on our new vendor, City Fresh Foods, as well as a report on our plans for the delivery of school meals amid ongoing staffing shortages.

Facilities

To ensure a successful school year, each of our school facilities must be safe and welcoming. This summer, our schools have undergone deep cleaning and disinfection as well as numerous interior and exterior improvements. We also completed several school renovation projects, expansions and other upgrades that include indoor and outdoor spaces such as bathrooms, entryways, parking lots and playgrounds.

Student Assignment/Outreach and Engagement

We will review our current student assignment numbers and outreach efforts and update you on the district's August peak registration. As of August 24, a total of 50,980 students were enrolled in BPS schools. This number will fluctuate as students continue to register or withdraw. The formal enrollment total will be available on October 1st.

We also continue to call families on waitlists for schools with open seats. Family and community outreach efforts are outgoing and include promoting student registration. The new BPS Helpline is up and running and Early Childhood's annual Countdown to Kindergarten program is fully underway with 30 neighborhood events and the citywide Celebration on Tuesday, August 30.

BPS is also hosting two Back-to-School virtual community meetings to provide families with an opportunity to meet the new Superintendent and learn more about how we are readying schools for all our students. The meetings are scheduled for Thursday, September 1 at 6:00 pm and Saturday, September 10 at 10:00 am.

COVID-19 Planning and Preparation

A cross functional team of BPS and Boston Public Health Commission representatives meets three days a week to ensure we are on track with all of our COVID-19 planning for the start of school. Our planning includes student and staff testing, weekly distribution of take home tests, symptomatic testing, vaccine clinics and education, and our masking policy. We are also focusing on ensuring schools have proper air quality and ventilation and operating air purifiers and air quality sensors.

Academics

Our nine school regions and school superintendents are ready to welcome students back to the classroom and provide supports to our educators with an Equitable Literacy Instructional Focus. We are also putting supports in place for students with disabilities and multilingual learners. We have established a temporary satellite Newcomer Assessment and Counseling Center site in East Boston and we are currently updating our Special Education Policy and Procedural Manual. The new collective bargaining agreement with the Boston Teachers Union allows us to move forward aggressively and thoughtfully with our inclusion work. We will report out on the establishment of our first cohort of 20-25 schools who will create inclusion plans for their schools and the Cross Functional Inclusion Teams which will address systemic barriers to our system becoming more inclusive at their individual schools.