

# BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members  
Boston School Committee

FROM: John P. McDonough  
Interim Superintendent

DATE: October 15, 2014

SUBJECT: School Choice Implementation Update

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The October 15<sup>th</sup> presentation on School Choice presents an update of initial results for the first year under the home-based student assignment plan. The analyses were conducted by BPS and SEII (MIT).

The first year of results show that families are prioritizing Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools more than previous years. This may be due to BPS using the MCAS Tier quality metric for the first time last year. It demonstrates that the Home-Based system is assisting families in making more informed decisions.

However, BPS also recognizes that the MCAS tier metric is not necessarily reflective of what families are looking for in a school. Some neighborhoods and racial groups made choices that may have relied on other variables: principal quality, teacher quality, before/after school programs, distance to school, or start time. It is an indicator that the Quality Tier system, to be implemented for the 16-17 process, may indeed be a better reflection of the perception of actual school quality. By implementing in a phased-in approach, BPS has the opportunity to inform families about the new tier system before full implementation.

The Home-Based system is delivering on its primary goal: increasing access to quality schools for families with the lowest access in the past. It is also delivering on a secondary goal: Helping educate families about the quality of the schools they are selecting. It is interesting that there are clear trends in the MCAS Tier selection process within certain demographic and geographic groups.

We are also proposing to merge Clusters F & G together in the ELL Overlay to become identical to the SWD Overlay for a vote on November 5<sup>th</sup>. For this year, the process was more complicated for students who live in Cluster F or G that are English Language Learners with

disabilities. The students with disabilities had access to programs across Clusters F & G. However, the English Language Learning students only had access to programs that were in their cluster or on their Home-Based school list. If merged, English Language Learners would have access to more SEI programs. Cluster F & G have the smallest population of English Language Learners and combining them makes their total number much closer to other clusters.

For school choice 2015-2016 BPS is making upgrades to the Discover BPS website in response to this data and what we heard from the first year's experience.

This presentation is another step in providing the community with analysis on Home-Based for the first year and showing the enhancements that BPS has made for SY 15/16 to assist in students making school choice decisions.