BuildBPS Update 1

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Presentation to Boston School Committee
December 6, 2017
Grade Configurations Agenda

- Review of Theory of Action
- Overview of BuildBPS
- BuildBPS Project Categories
- Overview of Current Configurations
- Vision for the District
- Why Reconfigure?
- Considerations for K-6 / 7-12
- Policy Proposal
Theory of Action

North star

Our graduates are college, career, and life ready

BPS students are the citizens, leaders, scholars, entrepreneurs, advocates, and innovators of tomorrow.

As a city and a district, we must ensure that 100% of students are prepared for college, career, and life in the 21st century.

To prepare our students, we guarantee that they are reading by third grade, participating in rigorous, enriching, and inclusive programming during their elementary years, and focusing their high school years on rigorous academic that meet college readiness standards as well as high-quality career technical education that prepare them for their lives after graduation.

Mission

Close opportunity and achievement gaps

Every student, in every classroom, in every school of the BPS system must have the same opportunity to achieve the greatness within them.

Closing opportunity and achievement gaps is the district’s driving priority. It is the catalyst for the hard work we are doing to attack the structures, practices, and mindsets that perpetuate our system’s marginalization of students.

Values

Equity, Coherence, Innovation

Our values guide all of our actions, as a district and as individuals. These inspire our decisions, from our day-to-day behaviors to the bigger choices to propel the district towards a new future.

Equity: Eliminate system bias and provide authentic learning opportunities for all students.

Coherence: Unify our goals for teaching and learning while supporting individualized approaches to delivery, and build collaborative, caring, and efficient ways to deliver resources to students, families, teachers, and staff.

Innovation: Build a culture of change that generates new solutions at every level of BPS from classrooms to schools to the central office.

System vision

Distra as a classroom

We model our district on the classroom we want to see. At each level, our people and our system learn from each other and from outside forces – and adapt.

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How we get there

Transform learning

To close achievement gaps, our students must be challenged, engaged, and honored as who they are in their learning. Our students are taught to communicate, collaborate, and to think critically, creatively, and flexibly - essential 21st century skills. We bring the cultural and linguistic experiences of our students into our teaching and connect the work our students do in school to the rest of their lives.

Priorities

Instructional coherence

Goal: bring coherence to instructional practices through the Essentials for Instructional Equity.

Prioritize adult learning

Goal: prioritize adult learning through a personalized approach for principals and teacher leaders.

District reconfiguration

Goal: provide predictability for families and minimize transitions for students.

School as unit of change

BPS believes school leaders with the right supports and systems will propel their schools and communities forward.

We do this by transforming learning, giving our principals well-researched instructional guidance and resources, and partnering with them to introduce new models of teaching and learning. We do this by creating system sustainability that ensure our principals have stability and logic from which to plan. We do this by building a system in which intelligence is shared.
Our North Star

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How will Build BPS help us achieve this objective?

- **21st century learning spaces.** Most of BPS’s buildings were constructed before World War II, when education looked and felt different. Today’s best classrooms support students in learning in different modes with flexible, technology-embedded spaces for solo work, team work, projects, and presentations.

- **Reduced transitions for families.** BPS’s 26 grade configurations make it difficult to navigate the system. We will reduce the number of grade configurations with the goal of making the system more predictable for families and requiring fewer transitions for students.

- **Robust programing.** The configuration of Special Education and English Language Learner programs across schools contributes to challenges in access and navigation through BPS. Current configurations can require students to travel excessively or to change schools to access the appropriate program.

- **Viable schools.** Enrollment, program configurations, and grade configurations all contribute to the financial viability of a school. Schools with classrooms that are not at capacity struggle to provide their students with rich programs and are challenged to make their budgets work. BPS must invest additional money into supporting such schools.
All BuildBPS project proposals will fall into one of the four categories below.

**New Builds and Acquisitions**
Projects in this category include the building of new schools, with a focus on utilizing our partnership with the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority). It also includes acquiring existing spaces and buildings.

**Capital Repairs**
Projects in this category include investments in the form of repairs to our existing buildings. Projects will typically involve repairing a single system and will also include ARP (accelerated repair projects) through the MSBA.

**System Wide Initiatives**
Projects in this category include investments that can be made across all schools in the district. This includes the 21st century schools fund, transforming school kitchens, and other initiatives that will take place district-wide.

**Renovations and Reconfigurations**
Projects in this category include investments in the form of renovations to existing buildings, creating 21st century schools. Projects will also include grade reconfigurations which these renovations help enable.
20 Current Grade Configurations

BPS Grade Configurations SY17-18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Configurations</th>
<th># of Schools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K0-12</td>
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<td>7 to 12</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 to 12</td>
<td>25</td>
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We envision a district in which students make only one transition during their BPS journey.

We currently have 20 grade configurations...

Focus on reconfigurations with current building stock...

Over the next 5-10 years we will reduce our configurations...

Build and renovate buildings to fit vision.

... so that BPS has predominantly four grade configurations (K-6/7-12, K-8/9-12)
Why Reconfigure?

- Research has shown that transitions can be detrimental to student achievement.
- In particular, research has shown that placement of middle grades (6-8) in stand-alone programs has a negative effect on student achievement.
- Reconfiguration would allow us to limit the number of planned transitions for students throughout their BPS education.
Why Reconfigure?

- Mixed configurations lead to uneven enrollments with some classes under capacity
- Classes that are sufficiently enrolled generate enough funds to pay for more than a teacher
- Classes that are below 87% enrolled do not generate enough funds to cover their costs
- If we reconfigure to make sure all classes are full then all students can realize the benefits of the WSF (this is more financially sustainable model and concentrates resources more equitably for students)
In order to run a full grade-level program in a middle school grade, a school requires a minimum of four sections in the grade level. This allows desirable programming and teacher collaboration time. With current enrollment patterns and the mix of grade configurations, it is challenging to maintain this concentration in middle and K-8 schools. Of BPS schools, one current K-8 school has four sections of eighth graders. 16 have two sections of eighth graders. 15 have one section of eighth graders.
Why Reconfigure?

4 Increase Predictability for Families

- Students often have widely varied paths through BPS that are not always transparent when they begin
- Many families opt out of BPS in 4th-6th grade and reconfiguration for coherence could make the district a more attractive option to families

5 Capacity

- There are not enough schools to serve current BPS elementary students close to home in Hyde Park, Mattapan, the southern half of Dorchester, Roslindale, or West Roxbury and demand is projected to increase
- Yet we have over 1200 excess seats in grades 6-8 and are in second year of a forecasted 4 year decline in high school enrollment
- Taken together: this means we have a mismatch of current school buildings and student geographic distribution
- Reconfiguration can help alleviate this challenge by adjusting schools to meet the specific needs we have within the district
Considerations to increase # of K-6 / 7-12 Schools

K-6 / 7-12 improves access to high quality middle school programming

- In order to run a full grade-level program in a middle grade, a school requires a minimum of four sections in the grade level
- K-6 / 7-12 allows us to use excess capacity in high school facilities and to create concentrated sixth-eighth grade programs that can sustain vibrant teaching and learning communities

There are more opportunities to convert to K-6 than to K-8 due to:

- Building stock often not sizable enough for K-8
- We need more space at elementary level and have more excess space at the secondary level to leverage, so K-6/7-12 configurations provide potential benefits sooner to more students
- As we invest and make long-term changes, we aim to establish 21st century learning environments, which needing more space (and therefore harder to do in a K-8)
Policy Proposal

Boston Public Schools will become primarily a K-6/7-12 and K-8/9-12 system, offering BPS students educational experiences that require only one transition for most students (while still offering them the choice a portfolio of various options).
Appendix: Selected Reconfiguration Research