



Frequently Asked Questions

Mattahunt Elementary School Transition

Q: What has been decided about the future of the Mattahunt Elementary School?

A: On November 16, 2016, the Boston School Committee approved Superintendent Chang's recommendation that the Mattahunt Elementary School be closed at the end of the current school year (June 30, 2017) and immediately be replaced by a new school in the same facility (July 1, 2017).

Q: Why was the Mattahunt recommended for closure?

A: In September 2016, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) placed the Mattahunt in "Level 4 - Under Review" status based on its determination that the school has not made enough rapid improvement after being designated as Level 4 status in 2012. Despite continued efforts to turn the Mattahunt around, including ongoing monitoring and additional investments over several years, the school has persistently underperformed, and it has fallen into the first (lowest) percentile of elementary schools statewide. As a result, the Commissioner of Education has required the BPS to develop a plan for the school. If the BPS had not moved forward with the Superintendent's proposal, the school would have been at greater risk of state takeover and could have been managed by an external operator with no local oversight.

Q: What community process took place to inform the decision?

A: The district hosted a number of meetings to inform and engage parents, staff, and community members about the proposal prior to the vote. These activities built on prior community engagement work done since 2013 with the Mattahunt school and community.

Q: What will be housed in the facility after the Mattahunt is closed?

A: The building will be turned into a full-service early elementary school serving students from pre-kindergarten (K0 and K1) to first grade, with the option to expand to older grades in future years. This new school will:

- Serve as a model of excellence in early childhood education
- Specialize in providing trauma-sensitive practices
- Offer culturally and linguistically proficient programming for the Haitian community, including at least one “dual language” classroom in Haitian Creole and English, beginning in K1, as well as Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) in Haitian Creole in K2 and Grade 1, and
- Provide students an extended school day and school year

A design team composed of district officials, administrators, teachers, parents, community members and partners has begun to develop a complete proposal for the new school to submit to the Superintendent and School Committee. The proposal will include many details about both the academic and operational aspects of the school.

Q: Why not open a full K-5 elementary school instead of an early childhood center?

A: The BPS believes that by focusing on the early grades, we will create the foundation for success, building on the the strengths of the BPS early childhood program. By taking deliberate and strategic steps, we will ensure success for the students and the school. The district also maintains the option to expand the school’s structure beyond first grade in future years.

Q: Where will current Mattahunt students go to school next year?

A: All families (K0 - 5) will choose a new school through the school choice transfer process. Current Mattahunt students in grades K0-K2 will have the highest priority for the new school and are guaranteed a seat. BPS will ensure that students in grades K0 - 4 transition to a higher performing school or a school of their choice. In some cases, BPS may open additional classrooms at other schools, depending on the choices indicated by current Mattahunt families, as well as space availability. BPS has been providing information sessions and registration support at the Mattahunt, and many families already have registered. Students currently in grade 5 will participate in the regular school choice process for grade 6.

Q: What can be done to keep classrooms of kids together at a new school?

A: The home-based assignment policy creates a personalized choice list for every student based on their home address. This prohibits the district from assigning students to schools by class.

Q: What are the considerations for students who have disabilities and those who are English Language Learners?

A: As with regular education students, all current English Language Learners and students with disabilities who are in K0, K1 or K2 this year can be placed at the new school next year. For ELL and special education students in grades 1-4, we recognize that transitions for these students are critically important to their success. BPS staff will work directly with families of these students to create a transition plan based on their home cluster that makes sense for each individual student.

BPS will maintain a program for students with autism at the new school along with inclusion programming. The BPS will also have programming for English learners, including a dual-language program in English and Haitian Creole beginning with one K1 classroom, as well as Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) in Haitian Creole for K2 and Grade 1.

Q: What will happen to my child who has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) and many services offered to him or her? Will the services remain the same?

A: The IEP is what determines the services a child requires to gain access to the curriculum. Therefore, the services follow the student and services outlined in the IEP will be delivered at the school he or she attends.

Q: What are the considerations for students who came from a school that was previously closed or Level 4?

A: The BPS is working on a plan to provide additional supports to Mattahunt students and families who were placed in the Mattahunt after a prior school closure. The BPS welcomes your feedback on how to better support families and students in this category, engagement@bostonpublicschools.org.

Q: Will any current services provided to students in grades K0 - Grade 1 be cut?

A: No.

Q: Will there be tutoring support for grades 2-5?

A: Every student will have the opportunity to participate in an academic summer transition program. Many students will also participate in acceleration academies during the February and April vacations.

Q: What is the plan to address the social emotional needs of current Mattahunt students?

A: The district has assigned Social Emotional Learning Liaisons to support the Mattahunt team.

Q: What will happen to the teachers at the Mattahunt?

A: Any educator interested in teaching in the new early education center at the site next year may apply for a position. Teachers in the older grades, and any teacher who would prefer a new assignment, may apply for positions at other Boston Public Schools. The BPS, in partnership with the Boston Teachers Union, is providing support for Mattahunt teachers as they seek a new position.

Q: Will the faculty be composed entirely of teachers new to the school?

A: No. Every teaching position in the new school will be open posted, and teachers will be selected through a screening and interview process based on the core competencies for BPS educators. Current teachers, educators with experience in other BPS schools, experienced educators from other districts, as well as new teachers will be encouraged to apply.

Q: How can I receive updates on the process to close the existing school and open the new school?

A: We will post updates at <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/mattahunt>. If you left an email address on the sign-in sheet at any of the community meetings, you will receive an email update. Questions and feedback are also welcome via email at engagement@bostonpublicschools.org, or at the school.