



BOSTON Public Schools

Focus on Children

Developing a Strategic Vision for the Boston Public Schools



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The City of Boston

Martin J. Walsh, *Mayor*

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Executive Summary

Boston Public Schools, the birthplace of American public education, is at a critical point in its history. The election of Mayor Martin Walsh ushered in new city leadership for the first time in 20 years: the Mayor has appointed a new citywide Chief of Education and the Boston School Committee has begun a search for a district Superintendent to guide the district in the coming years. Meanwhile, against this political backdrop, the district has embarked on some of the more meaningful reforms in recent history. In the last five years the district has implemented a funding model in which students are funded equitably regardless of which school they attend, has introduced a new student assignment process that ensures families are able to attend a top-choice school near their home, and, most recently, is undertaking significant efforts to ensure all students are taught by highly effective teachers. As a result, BPS has seen gains in a number of areas. For example, the number of BPS students participating in AP tests has increased at a higher rate than the State average, and BPS' 4-year graduation rate has witnessed a jump since 2010

Yet despite these steps forward, the district continues to face crucial challenges that cannot be ignored, and the district has much more that it seeks to accomplish. For instance, the percentage of BPS students proficient or higher, across subjects, continues to lag well behind the Massachusetts state average, and BPS's achievement gaps persist across all subjects. Furthermore, the number of struggling students is likely to grow while federal and state funding will likely decrease in the years ahead.¹ The External Advisory Committee process, a Mayoral and School Committee-facilitated community engagement process in 2012 and 2013, confirmed that Boston residents have been looking for a strong and coherent response to these issues.

It was with these challenges in mind that the Boston School Committee (BSC) embarked on a strategic planning process in the Spring of 2013. The BSC recognized the need for a clear roadmap that could guide the district forward in the midst of these shifting political and financial landscapes. Beginning in January of 2014, the BSC and Boston Public Schools' (BPS) leadership conducted a series of open meetings to discuss aspirations and priorities for the district – these conversations were facilitated by The District Management Council (DMC), a Boston-based education research and consulting firm². The group engaged in a thoughtful and honest dialogue around what district change is needed and how that change will occur. It was critical to the BSC that the



More Boston Public School students are graduating than ever before.



¹ (1) Fordham Institute, "Shifting Trends in Special Education," 2011; (2) Department of Education NCES; (3) Condition of Education, 2011 based on data from the US Census Bureau; (4) Department of Education NCES.

² The District Management Council partners with public school districts to improve student outcomes, operational efficiency, and resource allocation.

district’s final aspirations and priorities reflect the desires, wishes, and concerns of the diverse community. The School Committee worked to solicit community input by visiting multiple neighborhoods across the city and engaging parents, community leaders, public officials, school employees, students, and others in a robust dialogue around draft aspirations and priorities. The community engagement was not limited to roundtable sessions and community meetings; the BSC also communicated digitally, inviting residents to share feedback via email, Twitter, and other social media outlets. This plan has been shaped by the diverse group of 200+ constituents who shared their voice during the process.

Together these community-wide conversations formed the foundation for the following vision of where the district should be in five years:

<u>Aspirations</u>	<u>Priority Area</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Improved student outcomes: BPS will graduate all students as life-long learners and engaged global citizens, well-prepared for post-secondary pathways. Improved school quality: BPS will be a district of all high-performing schools, eliminating both the opportunity gap and the achievement gap. Strong district leadership/high-quality, action-oriented teachers & staff: BPS will recruit, hire, develop, support, and retain highly effective, culturally proficient school and district leaders, teachers, and staff who are held accountable for improving student outcomes. Effective resource allocation: BPS will make effective and equitable use of all available resources. Greater community investment: BPS will strengthen student, family, and community investment to enable student success. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> BPS will provide rigorous, effective, and engaging curriculum, instruction, and enrichment. Special focus will be given to the following areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Literacy and numeracy, particularly in early and transition years, to build a strong foundation for academic success across all subject areas and across all grades. College readiness and/or career preparedness. BPS will continue to foster an environment of high expectations combined with targeted interventions and support in order to meet the learning needs of all students. BPS will provide equitable access to quality facilities and highly effective programs. BPS will implement strategies to ensure every school will have highly effective school leaders, teachers, and staff. The workforce will reflect the rich diversity of the students BPS serves. BPS will continue to increase school autonomy and support to schools while also strengthening clear systems of accountability for both central office and schools. BPS will empower, support, and hold accountable school leaders, teachers, and staff to effectively engage with families, partners, and the community to foster shared responsibility for student achievement.

The School Committee and BPS understand that expressing a strategy is only the first step in the broader strategic planning process. The critical next step of implementation involves the difficult task of translating the aspirations and priorities into tangible actions. Measurable goals have been established that will allow the BSC, the district, and the broader community to measure progress against each priority and increase transparency into district success. Additionally, BPS is in the process of identifying high-impact initiatives they believe will ensure the vision laid out in this document is achieved. These critical initiatives will help the district prioritize resources and will move the strategic vision from a document that sits on the shelf to concrete actions that drive student learning and achievement.

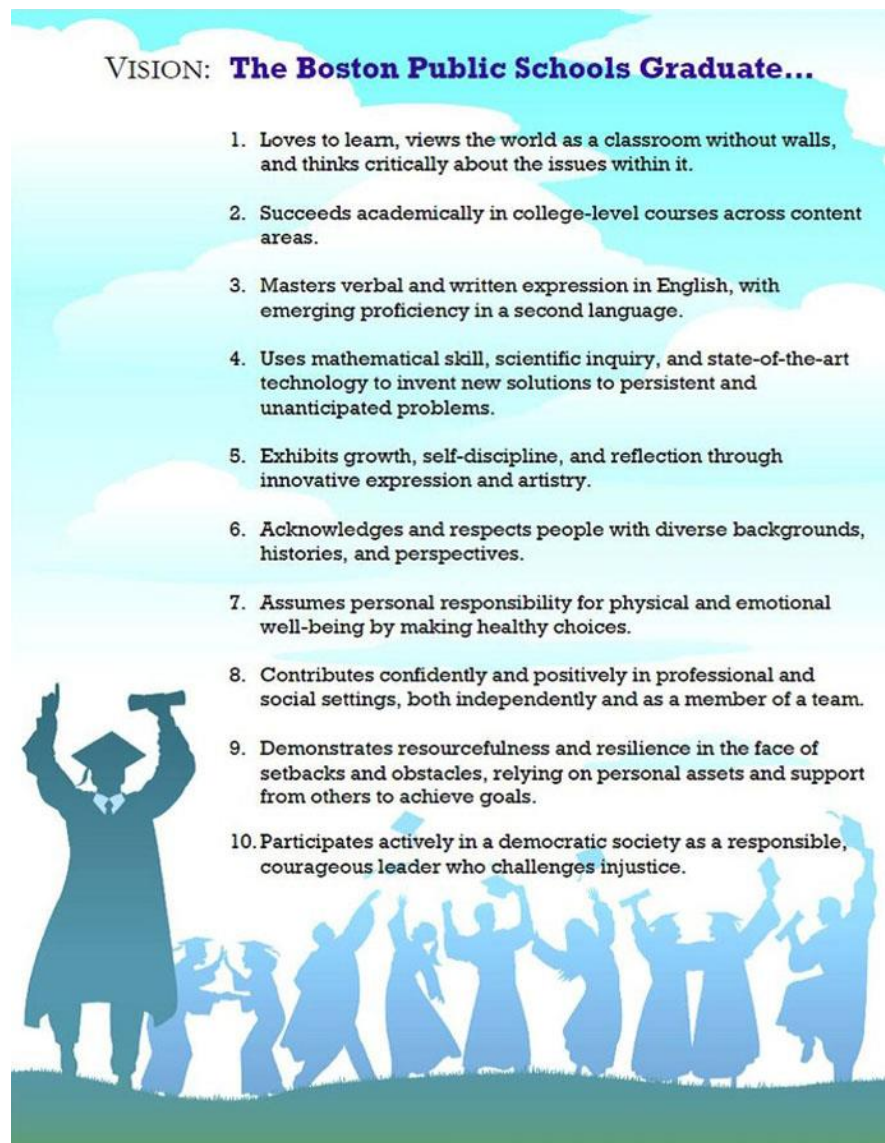
The remainder of this document will outline the final aspirations and priorities (as well as the rationale behind each), the district's theory of action, and the measurable goals of the district. Together, these form a broad vision for the district that reaffirms BPS' commitment to transforming the lives of all Boston children by ensuring each BPS student graduates as a responsible and courageous 21st century leader prepared for post-secondary pathways.

Boston Public Schools' Strategic Vision

Boston Public Schools understand that in today's increasingly globalized, 21st century economy, our students must be nurtured to be critical thinkers, analytical problem solvers, and strong communicators. It is our mission that all BPS graduates have a love for learning and view the world as a classroom without walls. BPS believes that, with effective teaching and high-functioning systems, all students can achieve this vision regardless of native language, gender, disability, family income, sexual orientation, or race. The following elements of the strategic vision, taken together, reflect the district's plan to ensure that *all* Boston students graduate as confident and courageous 21st century leaders.

A. Vision of a BPS Graduate

The vision of a BPS graduate was set forth in the district's 2010 Acceleration Agenda and has since acted as a guiding definition of success for all graduates of Boston Public Schools.



B. Aspirations

The aspirations below illustrate what the organization strives to look like in the future. Together, these set a bold vision for district success.

1 BPS will graduate all students as life-long learners and engaged global citizens, well-prepared for post-secondary pathways.

In addition to continuing to increase the graduation rate across the district, BPS is focused on improving the outcomes of students *after* graduation.

With the inclusion of the term “post-secondary pathways,” Boston Public Schools aims to expand the definition of post-graduate student success. BPS is committed to helping students build the 21st century knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in whatever path they choose, whether college *or* career.

2 BPS will be a district of all high-performing schools, eliminating both the opportunity gap and the achievement gap.

BPS recognizes the ways in which race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, community wealth, familial situation, and other factors perpetuate lower education attainment for certain groups of students, and is fully committed to eliminating the achievement gap that persists across the district.³ Boston believes that a lever for addressing this is to focus on the opportunity gap: the disparity in access to quality education resources needed for all children to be academically successful.⁴ BPS will work diligently to eliminate this opportunity disparity both within and across schools. The district cannot allow pockets of high performance to define the success of the district. Rather, BPS must urgently address our most struggling schools and our most struggling student populations in order to close achievement gaps across Boston, and ensure each and every student has the opportunity for post-secondary success.

3 BPS will recruit, hire, develop, support and retain highly effective, culturally proficient school and district leaders, teachers, and staff who are held accountable for improving student outcomes.

As research has repeatedly demonstrated, effective educators drive better outcomes for students. With this in mind, the district will continue to push bold leadership and talent development initiatives that create the proper conditions for attracting, nurturing, and retaining the highest caliber talent. In particular, the district will place heavy emphasis on recruiting culturally proficient staff, meaning individuals who demonstrate the skills and knowledge to effectively serve students from diverse cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds. The district will also continue to improve the timeliness and quality of district support to school-level staff in an effort to continuously foster an environment of mutual accountability between schools and the central office.

³ <http://edglossary.org/opportunity-gap/>

⁴ <http://www.otlcampaign.org/issues/opportunity-gap>

4

BPS will make effective and equitable use of all available resources.

Boston Public Schools has made great strides toward equitable resource allocation with the implementation of a weighted student funding formula, which ensures that all students are funded equitably, regardless of which school they attend. Boston will build on this work by continuing to emphasize equitability. “Equitable” does not necessarily mean the same for all, but rather that resources (dollars, time, and people) are allocated based on student need. For example, a student with a disability may be allocated a higher dollar amount than a student in general education due to differing needs.

5

BPS will strengthen student, family, and community investment to enable student success.

Driving sustainable change requires the combined efforts of an entire community. The district envisions a system in which each BPS school is deeply embedded in and responsive to the needs of the immediate surrounding community. This community-centered education will ensure that 1) the social and moral context of the community is deeply integrated in the cultural fabric of the school, and 2) schools provide their students with access to the full wealth of education and civic resources available in the city. This collective community investment will allow all students to better apply what they’re learning to the world around them and to connect their studies to personal, real-life scenarios. Together, strong family and community engagement will ultimately help drive student success across a number of different outcome measures.

C. Theory of Action

A theory of action is a set of beliefs and underlying assumptions about what drives improved student performance. BPS' theory of action is a guide to achieving the desired results – eliminating all achievement gaps and realizing the vision of a BPS graduate. The theory of action outlined below will create a clear pathway from the aspirations to the instructional activities that are eventually implemented in each school. Developing BPS' theory of action was a cross-functional effort that involved extensive conversations between the district leadership team, central office departments, and school-level stakeholders around the root cause of district issues.

If we have effective educators in every classroom and in every school who believe that all students can learn and who are bolstered by culturally-relevant and engaging learning resources; and if we respect and value diversity and believe that the entire BPS community is accountable to student learning – then we will ensure the conditions for success exist in every school to eliminate achievement and opportunity gaps, and we will realize the vision of a BPS graduate for every student.

Schools are the unit of change for this work. Principals/headmasters and their teams are leaders of this change. The role of central office is to work with schools to provide support, build capacity, develop systems that facilitate organization learning and increase efficiencies, and remove barriers. Through collaborative effort and mutual accountability, we will foster coherence across the district and school goals in our collective obligation to the students we serve.

This theory of action communicates to the Boston community exactly what BPS is trying to accomplish and how they intend to achieve that – it solidifies an agreement among all district and community stakeholders about what defines district success and what it will take for BPS to get there.

D. Priorities and Measurable Goals

While the aspirations are bold definitions of success, the priorities are detailed depictions of the key areas of focus that will allow the district to achieve these aspirations. Furthermore, these priorities will guide the district in a more strategic use of resources and efforts. They were developed by the BSC in conjunction with district leadership and reflect the sentiments and opinions heard during the community engagement process.

The BSC, in partnership with the district, developed measurable goals which are specific, quantifiable, and related to district priorities – they will ensure BSC is able to monitor district progress, will help district- and school level-stakeholders adjust course as necessary, and will provide the community with more transparency into district success. Potential metrics were chosen by identifying the ultimate desired outcomes, assessing data-tracking needs of all stakeholders, and reviewing metrics used in peer districts.⁵ The list of potential



metrics was then refined using a systematic process that ensured that all final metrics were in alignment with other measurement systems the district currently uses such as the state accountability system (so that the district is not tracking an excessive amount of conflicting data). These goals will form a comprehensive tool for tracking and improving performance and will allow the district to ensure all of its employees are working towards achieving the aspirations and priorities.

⁵ This list of metrics may continue to grow or evolve as new or alternate metrics are developed.

Priorities

1

BPS will provide rigorous, effective, and engaging curriculum, instruction, and enrichment. Special focus will be given to the following areas:

- a. Literacy and numeracy, particularly in early and transition years, to build a strong foundation for academic success across all subject areas and across all grades.**
- b. College readiness and/or career preparedness.**

Teaching and learning are at the heart of everything BPS does. To ensure effective teaching and learning, the district will focus on providing curriculum and instruction that are rigorous and set high expectations for all students. In addition to rigor, the district will focus on providing an engaging, student-centered classroom experience, as student engagement is a strong predictor of student success.



Special focus will be given to early literacy and 8th grade numeracy as research shows that developing literacy and numeracy skills by these important transition years provides a very important foundation for students' academic careers. For instance, students who are not proficient readers in third grade are four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than proficient readers. That statistic becomes more sobering when poverty is factored in – a child living in poverty who is unable to read by the third grade is 13 times less likely to graduate on time compared to reading-proficient, affluent peers.⁶ Therefore, the district will place renewed focus on creative and innovative ways to improve both literacy and numeracy in early and transition years. This focus is not meant to place a higher value on literacy or numeracy over other subjects. Rather it reflects BPS' belief that success in all subjects relies on a foundation of strong reading and math skills.

Lastly, our global, 21st century economy demands that students leave high school prepared for college and the work world. This requires a blend of traditional content knowledge skills and expertise as well as behaviors and attitudes that are crucial to post-graduate performance. BPS students must develop critical skills such as perseverance, leadership, curiosity, grit, etc. In today's increasingly complex and global world, BPS is fully devoted to ensuring that all students graduate prepared for both college *and* career.

⁶ http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2011/04/the_disquieting_side_effect_of.html

Measurable Goals⁷ - Here is how we will measure our progress:

Measurable Goal 1	% of students proficient or advanced in 3 rd grade Reading
Measurable Goal 2	% of students proficient or advanced in 8 th grade Math
Measurable Goal 3	Composite Performance Index (CPI) across grades and subjects
Measurable Goal 4	Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP) across grades and subjects
Measurable Goal 5	Average daily attendance
Measurable Goal 6	4 year unadjusted graduation rate
Measurable Goal 7	% of students enrolled in college within 16 months of graduation
Measurable Goal 8	Average student climate survey response on student engagement & enthusiasm for learning

2 **BPS will continue to foster an environment of high expectations combined with targeted interventions and support in order to meet the learning needs of all students.**

BPS is a richly diverse district that is comprised of many different types of students with varying, unique needs. While BPS views this diversity in cultures, languages, ethnicities, and genders as an asset, *not* a challenge, the district also recognizes that it must do more to close the achievement gap across our student populations. In particular, Boston Public Schools has a special responsibility to young Black and Latino males. According to the recent report “*Opportunity and Equity:*



Enrollment and Outcomes of Black and Latino Males in Boston Public Schools,” Black and Latino populations made up approximately 77.8% of the total male student enrollment in School Year 2012. The report indicates that male students are more likely to be identified as having special needs than their female peers, and are more likely to drop out of school as compared to their White and Asian male peers.⁸ It is critical that the district close all achievements gaps, particularly with an eye to this population. And while there have been positive changes in attendance and suspension rate gaps, BPS still has room to grow in eliminating inequities across the district. In order to address this, BPS will focus on two critical levers:

⁷ The district is currently considering various “career readiness” related metrics for potential future inclusion.

⁸ <http://annenberginstitute.org/publication/opportunity-and-equity-enrollment-and-outcomes-black-and-latino-males-boston-public-scho>

- BPS will continue to establish a culture of high expectations across schools; BPS firmly believes that all students can learn and will raise academic expectations, and thus academic performance, for every single BPS student.
- BPS will continue to individualize instruction and to provide hyper-targeted interventions so that all BPS students are receiving the specific types of support they need to yield rapid improvement.

Measurable Goals - Here is how we will measure our progress:

Measurable Goal 1	Size of Math/ELA/Science proficiency gap between Black and Hispanic students and their White and Asian Peers (across all grades) ⁹
Measurable Goal 2	Size of Math/ELA/Science proficiency gap between ELL students and their general education peers (across all grades) ¹⁰
Measurable Goal 3	Size of Math/ELA/Science proficiency gap between Special Education students and their General Education peers (across all grades) ¹¹
Measurable Goal 4	Median Student Growth Percentile on the ELL Access test for students that are ELD levels 1, 2, and 3
Measurable Goal 5	% of students enrolled in 8th grade Algebra I
Measurable Goal 6	% of eligible students enrolled in AP classes ¹²
Measurable Goal 7	Average student and teacher climate survey response on whether school demonstrates a culture of high achievement

⁹ This excludes students in resource rooms and ELD levels 1, 2 and 3

¹⁰ This excludes students in resource rooms and ELD levels 1, 2 and 3

¹¹ This excludes students in resource rooms and ELD levels 1, 2 and 3

¹² "Eligible" is defined as a score of 45 or higher on either the math or reading section of the PSAT

3 BPS will provide equitable access to quality facilities and highly effective programs.

BPS will provide strategic stewardship of all resources – the district will ensure that dollars are spent on students, programs and, schools that need it most. The district will, as transparently and as effectively as possible, provide access to facilities and programs to ensure the long-term stability of all schools and ensure all students are

offered enrichment opportunities that foster well-rounded, community-minded graduates. This could include, for example, expanding access to Advanced Placement courses or other programs that help students think critically about the world around them.



Measurable Goals - Here is how we will measure our progress:

Measurable Goal 1	Average score on new facilities condition index ¹³
Measurable Goal 2	% of families that receive at least one of their top three choices in the student assignment process

¹³ New facilities index will be completed in Summer of 2015

4

BPS will implement strategies to ensure every school will have highly effective school leaders, teachers, and staff. The workforce will reflect the rich diversity of the students BPS serves.

The district will ensure that all BPS students are taught by the very best principals, teachers, and staff. The district will do this by continuing efforts to systemically transform Boston’s human capital system. The district will strive to hire highly effective and culturally proficient teachers by 1) clearly explaining Boston’s benefits and making Boston a magnet for highly effective teachers and leaders, 2) simplifying hiring practices, and 3) providing principals the autonomy to hire the teachers who are right for their schools. Additionally, we will retain our talent by implementing initiatives to support and develop leaders, teachers, and staff through methods such as a robust professional development system, an improved teacher evaluation system, and more.



Measurable Goals - Here is how we will measure our progress:

Measurable Goal 1	Average student climate survey response on teacher effectiveness
Measurable Goal 2	Teacher retention rate for proficient and exemplary teachers
Measurable Goal 3	Demographics of teachers (% of minority teachers)
Measurable Goal 4	% of teachers that are rated proficient/exemplary and have a median SGP above 50 ¹⁴
Measurable Goal 5	Demographics of workforce (% of minority staff members)
Measurable Goal 6	Percentage of “proficient or advanced” principals/headmasters based on yearly evaluations

¹⁴ Metric is under further consideration to ensure data is reliable and representative of full BPS teaching force

5

BPS will continue to increase school autonomy and support to schools while also strengthening clear systems of accountability for both central office and schools.

BPS understands that the most critical work in the district happens in our classrooms; principals must be provided both the empowerment and tools to drive improvement in their schools. In support of this belief, the district has recently instituted the Network Model, a district organizational structure that increases autonomy and accountability across the district while streamlining central office support services



to schools. BPS will build on this work by continuing to expand autonomy to more schools across the district as appropriate. In tandem with increased school autonomy, it is imperative that the district develop a robust and comprehensive accountability system that can be used to 1) measure the performance of schools across the district's portfolio and 2) measure the performance of central office in supporting the staff who are doing the critical, on-the-ground work with students.

Measurable Goals - Here is how we will measure our progress:

Measurable Goal 1	School satisfaction with central office services ¹⁵
Measurable Goal 2	% of school leadership teams that feel they have sufficient autonomy and are empowered to make critical school based decisions ¹⁶

¹⁵ Precise composition of the metric is currently being finalized; data is not currently collected by the district

¹⁶ Precise composition of the metric is currently being finalized; data is not currently collected by the district

6

BPS will empower, support, and hold accountable school leaders, teachers, and staff to effectively engage with families, partners, and the community to foster shared responsibility for student achievement.

In order to build schools that are strongly embedded in and supported by the community, the district will continue developing the tools to support schools as well as hold them accountable as they foster broad community investment in the success of their students. This investment can come in many forms, including engagement with parents, program development with non-profit providers, and ongoing discussions with the business community, among others. It is

important that each and every school incorporate parent voice and take advantage of the wealth of opportunities that Boston has to offer its students. Lastly, the responsibility of community engagement extends beyond the school leader – it should be a joint effort on the part of all teachers and staff.



Measurable Goals - Here is how we will measure our progress:

Measurable Goal 1	Average parent climate survey response on whether school promotes inclusion of all students, families, and community
Measurable Goal 2	Average Family Engagement Index score

E. Conclusion

As John Adams famously wrote in the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, adopted in 1780, “Wisdom and knowledge, as well as virtue, diffused generally among the body of the people being necessary for the preservation of their rights and liberties...it shall be the duty of legislatures and magistrates, in all future periods of this commonwealth, to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them.”¹⁷ As the Constitution highlights, equal education is a critical lever for creating a good and just society. And now, in this time of shifting demographics, increased social disparity, and fierce economic pressures, it is more important than ever that Boston Public Schools be a champion of the change we seek for Boston, but also, more broadly, for the nation. There is perhaps not a more opportune time than now to drive the type of bold and innovative education reform on which Boston’s future depends. New mayoral leadership, a new Chief of Education, and an ongoing superintendent search all signal a citywide commitment to tackle the challenges still facing Boston Public Schools.

The vision contained in these pages will be the district’s roadmap for this important work over the coming years. Together, the aspirations, priorities, and measurable goals define a clear and cohesive 5-year plan with tangible benchmarks for all of us in the Boston Public Schools to strive for. This vision will guide all decision-making and resource allocation across the district so that we can remain intensely focused on delivering a high quality learning experience to all of our students.

This urgent work will not be easy – increasingly complex student needs and dwindling budgets may cause skeptics to doubt that real change is possible. In light of these challenges, the district will need help and support along the way. The success of this vision rests on the community’s collective shoulders. The BSC began sharing this plan as a draft with our parents, community members, and employees early in 2014. These stakeholder voices have been incredibly influential in the development of this vision and, it will be critical that the same stakeholders remain engaged and committed to the plan’s success as we move into implementation.

Together, the district, the School Committee, the Mayor’s Office, and the entire city of Boston can use this plan this to ensure we honor a very important promise: that every single Boston student, regardless of color, creed, or socioeconomic status, graduates as a life-long learner, an engaged global citizen, and a courageous 21st century leader.

¹⁷ <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/Constitution>

Appendices

A. Process Overview

The strategic vision was formulated through a rigorous, nearly 18-month process. The Boston School Committee engaged The District Management Council (DMC) to help shape and facilitate the work. The process consisted of three major phases: (I) Needs Assessment; (II) Development of the Strategic Vision; and (III) Community Engagement & Finalization of Strategic Vision.

I. Needs Assessment

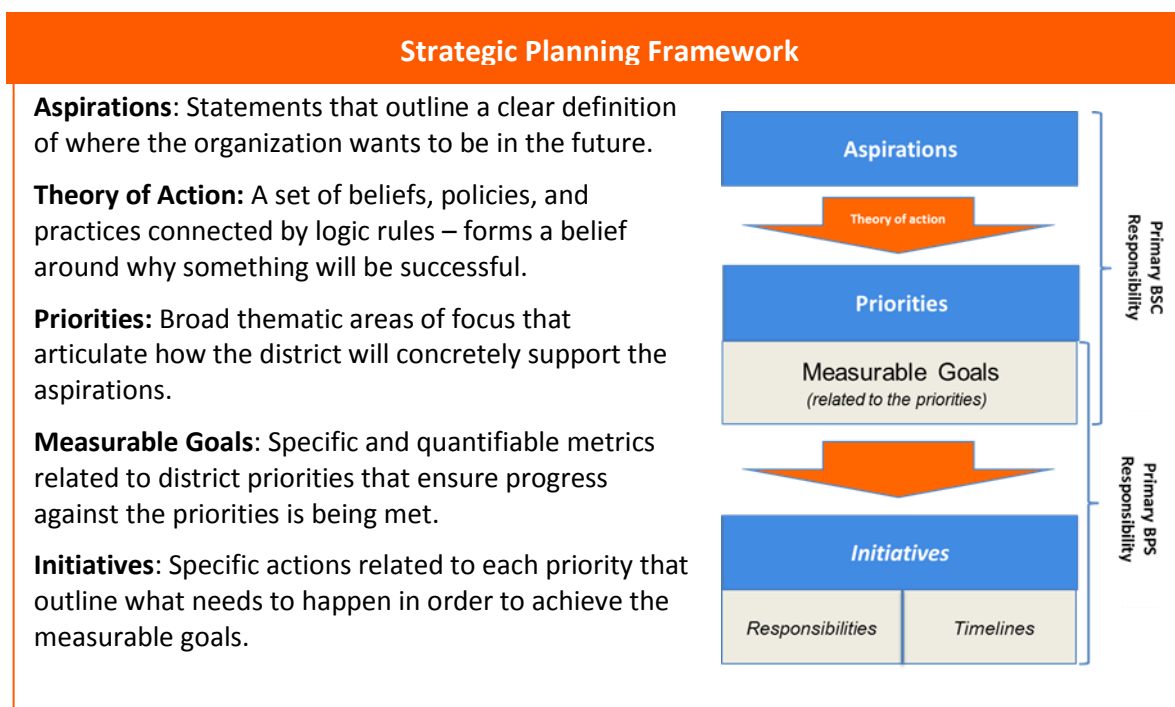
The first phase of the process involved an extensive analysis of the current state of the Boston Public Schools. This thorough examination of past performance enabled the BSC to determine what demands BPS currently fulfills and what deficiencies need to be addressed. This assessment was conducted through several key activities:

- Reviewed the work of the **External Advisory Committee (EAC)**, whose community conversations in 2012-2013 identified key areas for improvement and formed a solid foundation from which to create a coherent and long-term strategic vision;
- Conducted comprehensive and rigorous **performance analysis** of BPS schools over the past five years, examining student achievement, college readiness, and culture and climate data across grades and school types in order to identify the areas most in need of urgent attention; and
- BSC members **agreed on objectives for strategic planning** to crystalize the need for a strategic vision

These activities are described in greater detail in Appendix C: Needs Assessment.

II. Development of the Strategic Vision

The BSC worked with DMC to adopt a framework¹⁸ from which to develop the strategic vision. The framework ensured the use of a common vocabulary and delineated clear roles and responsibilities. The framework includes five interconnected elements.



This framework also defines responsibility for each of the elements. In keeping with governance best practices, the School Committee was charged with the responsibility of articulating the high-level vision for the district, and the district (BPS) with determining and executing the plan.

With baseline quantitative and qualitative data and a visioning framework in place, the BSC embarked on the process of developing the strategic vision itself. Their mandate was to create a clear and actionable strategy for the district that could become BPS' "north star" around which all resources and efforts are aligned. They focused on articulating a very clear and concise strategy to ensure the district is able to translate this strategy into the work of all functions of the district. During this phase, the School Committee held numerous open meetings in which they discussed the future of the district and drafted a first version of the aspirations and priorities to share with the broader community.

III. Community Engagement & Finalization of Strategic Vision

The BSC launched extensive community engagement efforts that included social media and electronic outreach as well as a series of six roundtable events¹⁹ across the city to solicit input from community stakeholders. Based on these discussions, the committee refined the aspirations and priorities to better reflect the voice of the community and, on April 30, 2014, voted to approve those elements of the vision. (The community engagement process is described in greater detail in Appendix D).

¹⁸ Strategic Planning Framework developed by The District Management Council

¹⁹ See Appendix D for detail on community engagement sessions

B. About Boston Public Schools – Fast Facts



Boston Public Schools at a Glance

2014-2015

Published by the BPS Communications Office | October 2014

OUR MISSION

As the birthplace of public education in this nation, the Boston Public Schools is committed to transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools. We partner with the community, families, and students to develop in every learner the knowledge, skill, and character to excel in college, career, and life.

SCHOOLS & STUDENTS

There are 128 schools in the BPS:

- 5 early education schools (K–grade 1 or grade 3)
- 43 elementary schools (K–5)
- 31 elementary & middle schools (K–8)
- 7 middle schools (6–8)
- 4 middle & high schools (6–12)
- 1 K-12 school
- 24 high schools (9–12)
- 3 “exam” schools (7–12)
- 8 special education schools
- 2 alternative (at-risk) programs

Of these:

- 20 are pilot schools, created to be models of educational innovation with more flexibility and autonomy
- 6 are Horace Mann charter schools funded by the BPS
- 8 are Innovation Schools, a model created by Mass. education reform legislation based on BPS pilot schools

SY2015 enrollment is 57,230 (about 230 more than SY2014), including:

28,550	students in pre-kindergarten-grade 5
10,990	students in grades 6-8
17,690	students in grades 9-12

Student demographics:

41%	Hispanic	8%	Asian
36%	Black	1%	Other/multiracial
13%	White		

78% of students are low income.

Students who don't attend the BPS (April 2014):

Of the **77,200** (est.) school-age children living in Boston, about **20,100** (26%) do not attend Boston public schools.

They are:

45%	Black	4%	Asian
32%	White	3%	Other
17%	Hispanic		

Of these students:

5,270	go to parochial schools
4,090	go to private schools
3,050	go to suburban schools through METCO
7,100	go to public charter schools
480	are placed by the BPS Special Education Dept. in non-BPS schools and programs
120	are home schooled

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

Dr. Carol R. Johnson retired in June 2013 after serving six years as superintendent. John P. McDonough, the district's chief financial officer, was appointed interim superintendent.

In February 2014, Mayor Martin J. Walsh and the Boston School Committee announced the formation of a Superintendent Search Committee. It includes teachers, current and former school administrators, parents, and leaders from the higher education, business and philanthropy communities. The Search Committee will:

- Host community meetings to solicit public input on the job description for the new superintendent;
- Vet and narrow the pool of possible candidates presented by the search firm; and
- Recommend three finalists for the new superintendent.

Finalists will be interviewed by the Boston School Committee and Mayor Walsh, and will participate in community/stakeholder forums.

The School Committee appointed consultants Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) to undertake the search.

STAFF

The 2014-2015 BPS budget (general fund) includes **8,587** staff positions (FTE), a decrease of 158 positions from SY2014. Here is a comparison of budgeted positions:

SY2015	SY2014
4,528	4,592 teachers
1,233	1,339 aides
561	554 administrators
559	532 support
1,706	1,727 custodians, secretaries, part time

Demographics:	Black	White	Hisp.	Asian	Other
Teachers	21%	62%	10%	6%	1%
Principals	38%	48%	11%	3%	0%
Central Office	32%	47%	13%	9%	0%

Qualifications of BPS Teachers (SY2014):

95.7% are licensed in their teaching assignment (97.6% statewide)

76.7% of core academic classes are taught by teachers who are highly qualified (95.9% statewide)

THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE

The BPS is governed by a 7-member **School Committee**, appointed by the Mayor from among nominees recommended by a broad-based Nominating Committee. Members serve 4-year terms. Current members and term expiration dates are:

Michael D. O'Neill, Chairperson	1/2/17
Claudio Martinez, Vice-chairperson	1/4/16
Meg Campbell	1/4/16
Hardin Coleman	1/1/18
Rev. Gregory Groover Sr.	1/5/15
Michael Loconto	1/1/18
To be named	1/5/15

VISION OF THE BPS GRADUATE

- Loves to learn, views the world as a classroom without walls, and thinks critically about the issues within it.
- Succeeds academically in college-level courses across content areas.
- Masters verbal and written expression in English, with emerging proficiency in a second language.
- Uses mathematical skill, scientific inquiry, and state-of-the-art technology to invent new solutions to persistent and unanticipated problems.
- Exhibits growth, self-discipline and reflection through innovative expression and artistry.
- Acknowledges and respects people with diverse backgrounds, histories, and perspectives.
- Assumes personal responsibility for physical and emotional well-being by making healthy choices.
- Contributes confidently and positively in professional and social settings, both independently and as a member of a team.
- Demonstrates resourcefulness and resilience in the face of setbacks and obstacles, relying on personal assets and support from others to achieve goals.
- Participates actively in a democratic society as a responsible, courageous leader who challenges injustice.

CONTACTING BPS

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communications@bostonpublicschools.org	
Superintendent	617-635-9050
School Committee	617-635-9014
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The Boston Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, disability, sex/gender, gender identity, religious beliefs, national origin, ancestry, retaliation, sexual orientation, genetics or military status and does not tolerate any form of intimidation, threat, coercion and/or harassment.

In 1989, in a non-binding referendum, residents voted to replace the 13-member elected School Committee with an appointed committee. In 1991, the state legislature approved Boston's home rule petition establishing the 7-member, Mayor-appointed committee. The appointed committee took office in January 1992. In a 1996 referendum, residents voted overwhelmingly to retain the appointed committee.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

About 11,260 students ages 3-21 with disabilities (20% of total enrollment) are enrolled in special education programs in BPS schools, including:

- 58% with mild to moderate special needs who spend at least 60% of the school day in general education classrooms
- 42% with more severe special needs who spend at least 60% of the school day in "substantially separate" classrooms or special BPS schools

In addition, 445 students are enrolled in out-of-district programs, and 353 non-BPS students receive some special education services in BPS schools.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Among BPS students:

25,370 (44%) speak a language other than English as their first language.

16,600 (29%) are Limited English Proficient (LEP) or English Language Learners (ELL)

9,970 (60%) of ELL students were born in the US

All ELL students receive English language support from highly qualified teachers of English. Approximate ELL enrollment by program, grades K-12, is:

- 5,450 language-specific Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) programs
- 9,990 general education SEI programs
- 900 two-way programs: Students whose first language is Spanish and whose first language is English learn together in both languages
- 270 high intensity literacy programs for students with interrupted formal education (SIFE)

ELL students speak more than 84 different languages as their home language. The top nine first languages spoken are Spanish, Haitian creole, Cape Verdean creole, Chinese, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Somali, Arabic, and French.

BPS students come from 142 different countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

CLASS SIZES

Class size limits are set in the contract with the Boston Teachers' Union. Level 3 and 4 high-needs schools have a lower maximum class size in general education classrooms for grades 6 and 9.

As reported by the Mass. Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education, the average BPS class size in SY2013 was 17.7 students. The state average is 18.8. Average class size is calculated by dividing the total number of students in classes by the total number of classes.

HISTORY: FIRST IN THE U. S.

- Boston Latin School: first public school, 1635
- Mather: first public elementary school, 1639
- BPS: first public school system, 1647
- English High: first public high school, 1821
- Horace Mann School for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing: first public day school for the deaf, 1869

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & OUTCOMES

Mass. Comprehensive Assessment System

(MCAS). On the 2014 statewide tests, the % of students who performed at Proficient or higher levels and % change from 2013 were:

Grade	Test	BPS	% Change	State	% Change
3	Read	36%	+4%	57%	0%
3	Math	53%	+6%	68%	+2%
4	ELA	31%	+2%	54%	+1%
4	Math	38%	+7%	52%	0%
5	ELA	41%	-4%	64%	-2%
5	Math	41%	-1%	61%	0%
5	Sci/Tech	22%	+2%	53%	+2%
6	ELA	44%	+1%	68%	+1%
6	Math	38%	-5%	60%	-1%
7	ELA	52%	0%	72%	0%
7	Math	34%	-2%	50%	-2%
8	ELA	63%	+5%	79%	+1%
8	Math	37%	0%	52%	-3%
8	Sci/Tech	15%	+1%	42%	+3%
10	ELA	76%	-3%	90%	-1%
10	Math	64%	0%	79%	-1%
10	Sci/Tech	47%	-2%	71%	0%

MCAS Competency Determination (CD). As of Spring 2014, 54% of the class of 2016 earned CD by performing at Proficient or higher in both ELA and Math and at Needs Improvement or higher in Science—a 1% drop over the class of 2015 and a 15% increase over the class of 2010.

SAT Results. Average scores on the SAT Reasoning test for test-takers in the class of 2014 were:

	BPS	Mass.
Critical reading	431	507
Mathematics	464	523
Writing	430	498

Advanced Placement Performance. In 2013-2014, BPS students took 4,717 AP tests. Most colleges give credits for scores of 3 and above.

	BPS	Mass.
% scores of 1-2	48.6%	31.6%
% scores of 3-5	51.4%	68.4%

BUDGET, SALARIES & PER PUPIL COSTS

FY2015 Gen. Fund: \$974,928,600 (+4% from FY2014)

Salaries	\$ 635,021,049	65%
Benefits	\$ 125,082,035	13%
Transportation	\$ 95,134,240	10%
Purchased Services	\$ 61,124,734	6%
Property Services	\$ 39,552,533	4%
Supplies	\$ 5,455,388	<1%
Equipment	\$ 4,023,254	<1%
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,215,079	<1%
Reserve	\$ 7,318,388	1%

Weighted student funding. Beginning in FY2012, BPS allocates funds to schools based on projected enrollment and the needs of individual students enrolled. In this system, dollars follow students, no matter what school they attend. Weights are based on target class size and average teacher salary. Students are given higher weights and are allocated additional funds if they meet additional criteria: high risk at grade 9, poverty, ELL, special education (sped), or vocational education.

FY2013 Per Pupil Expenditure:

Regular ed.	ELL ed.	Mod sped (.3)	Sub sep sped (.4)	Private placements	Average (all students)
\$11,855	\$15,653	\$20,705	\$32,955	\$71,048	\$15,227

Classes of 2012 & 2013 Graduation Rates:

Outcome	2012	2013
Graduated in 4 years	65.9%	65.9%
Still in school	15.2%	16.9%
Non-grad completers	0.8%	0.8%
GED	2.1%	1.6%
Dropped out	15.9%	14.7%
Expelled	0.1%	0.1%

The **annual dropout rate** for grades 9-12 in 2012-2013 was 4.5%. This represents a 1.9 point decrease and 391 fewer students from the previous year. This is the lowest rate the district has ever seen.

After High School. In a survey of the Class of 2013 about post-graduation plans, 3,452 students reported the following intentions at the end of the school year:

Plan	% of District	% of State
4-Year College	49%	58%
2-Year College	16%	23%
Other Post-Secondary	1%	2%
Work	5%	7%
Military	1%	2%
Other or unknown	29%	7%

SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT

Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, a new "home-based" student assignment plan for K-grade 8 replaces the three-zone plan created in 1988. The plan offers families all the choices within a mile of home, plus additional choices to assure their list includes at least four high-quality schools, plus citywide schools and schools with programs for which they are eligible (such as AWC). It maintains sibling priority, a feature of the zone-based plan. Preliminary results for the first round of kindergarten assignments as of March 31, 2014:

- 73% of K2 applicants received one of their top three school choices, and 47% received their first choice. Historically, about 72% of families typically received one of their top three choices under the zone-based plan.
- 64% of K1 applicants received one of their top three choices, up from 58% in 2013-2014.
- The average distance a new K2 student will travel to school has dropped from 1.09 miles to 0.9 miles. For K1, the average distance has dropped from 1.15 miles to 0.95 miles.

FY2015 External Funds (est.): \$114,507,098

Includes formula grants (e.g. No Child Left Behind), reimbursement grants (National School Lunch, Impact Aid), and competitive grants (e.g. National Science Foundation). External funds have decreased by \$20,659,000 from FY2014 and by more than \$40 million from FY2013.

FY2015 Average Salaries:

Central administrators	\$143,921
Elementary school administrators	\$117,859
Middle school administrators	\$119,153
High school administrators	\$115,536
Professional support	\$93,675
Program support	\$91,756
Nurses	\$90,666
Librarians	\$89,443
Teachers (general education)	\$88,682
Secretaries/clerical staff	\$48,597
Custodians	\$49,422
School police officers	\$47,377
Substitute teachers, per diem	\$137-\$277

C. Needs Assessment

As outlined in Section 2 “Process Overview,” the first phase of the strategic visioning process involved an extensive needs analysis, with a particular focus on BPS’ performance over the past five years. This analysis was critical to ensuring that the BSC deeply understood the challenges and successes of the district and could quickly identify those areas that most urgently require change in the district. Additionally, this performance analysis established a baseline from which the BSC and the district can set goals.

Methodology of Needs Assessment

The BSC and DMC collected and analyzed both quantitative performance data as well as qualitative data from interviews:

Quantitative Performance Data	Qualitative Interviews
The team collected and coded publicly available data to analyze the overall performance and trajectory for BPS. DMC took an integrated look at performance by various relevant school groupings as determined by the state (e.g., Level 3, Level 4), by the district (e.g., high support schools, schools with differential autonomies), as well as charter and autonomous schools across the city (both in-district and the Commonwealth). The analysis looked at the following types of data: enrollment data, MCAS performance, college readiness, school climate data, and achievement gap data.	At the very beginning of the process, DMC interviewed each School Committee member individually to obtain each member’s ideas and opinions. The interview team did not share input from any committee member with any other members. During these interviews, each member was asked about what is working well in the district, the major issues preventing change in the district, and his/her expectations from the strategic visioning process. DMC then combined the individual inputs from all members with research and knowledge about successful strategic visions from other schools districts into one report that was presented to the full committee for its review and deliberation in an open meeting.

Key Takeaways from Needs Assessment

A sampling of the key takeaways from the analysis is outlined below. These takeaways ensured the BSC’s dialogue was grounded in fact-based research.

State Accountability Levels	MCAS Results	Achievement Gap
<p>Since 2010:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Two schools have been deemed Level 5 for the first time.The number of schools designated Level 4 has decreased.The number of Level 3 schools has remained relatively stagnant.The number of Level 2 schools has increased.The number of Level 1 schools has decreased.	<p>District progress (i.e. comparing 2013 and 2014 results) is most notable in grade 3 ELA; Grade 8 Math also witnessed a slight increase from 2013 to 2014. (For these grades, although the trajectory has been positive, the number of proficient or advanced students in BPS is still lower compared to the state).</p>	<p>Achievement gaps still persist among various subgroups.</p> <p>For example, there is a 24 point gap in third grade ELA between the district average and students with disabilities; there is an 10 point gap between the district average and English Language Learners; there is a 31 point gap between African American students and their White peers; and there is a 32 point gap between Hispanic students and their White peers.*</p> <p><i>*A percentage point gap was calculated by comparing students scoring ‘proficient or advanced’ across subgroups</i></p>

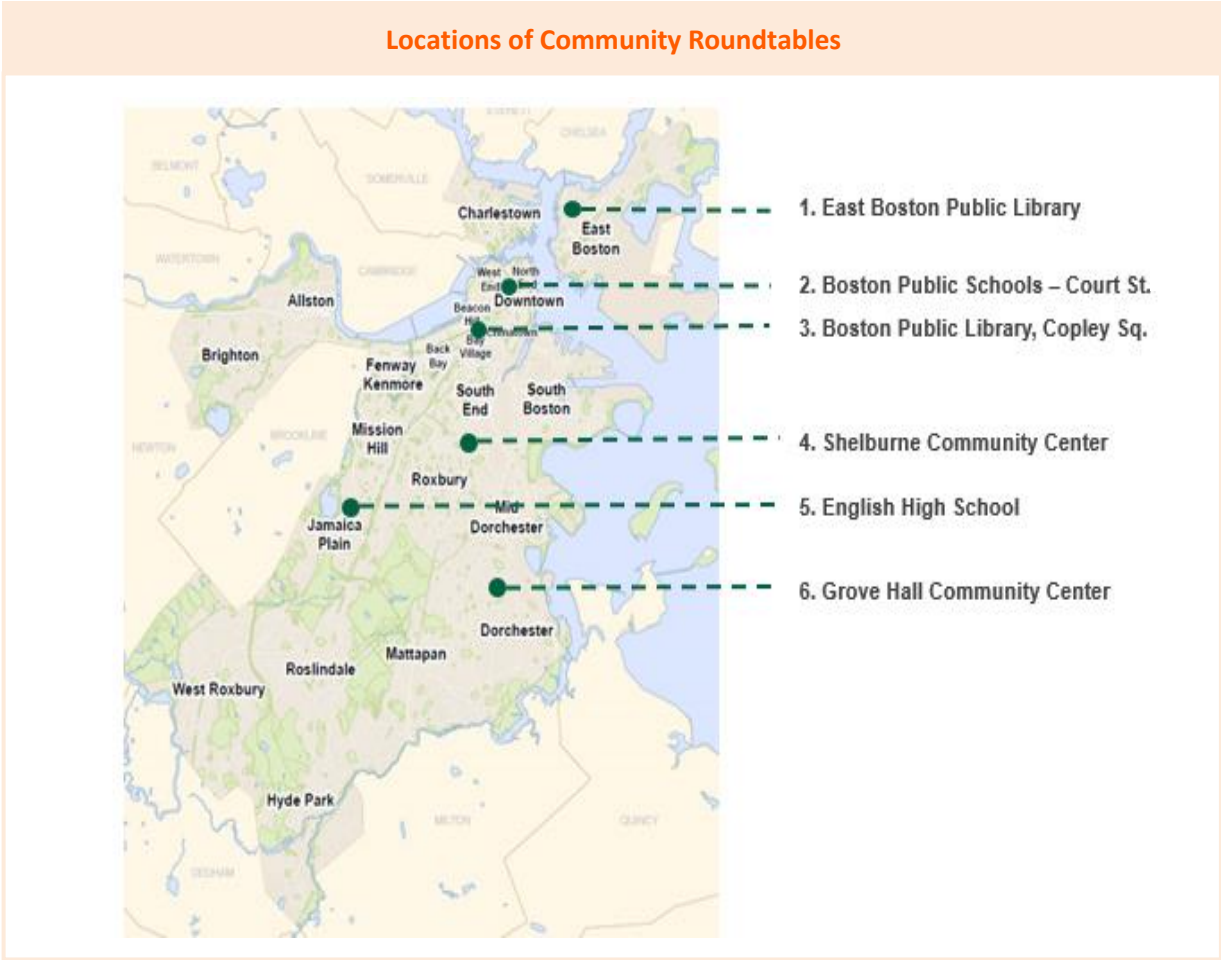
D. Community Engagement

The School Committee and Boston Public Schools exist to serve the community. Therefore, it was critical to the strategic vision process that the community had ongoing opportunities to reflect on the current challenges facing the district and to provide feedback on the aspirations and priorities initially proposed by the School Committee. The primary objective of the community engagement phase of the strategic visioning process was to ensure that the vision incorporated a diverse set of perspectives from across the community. Efforts were designed to solicit feedback that would help test whether the aspirations and priorities drafted by the School Committee were responsive to community needs, and whether the intent behind the aspirations and priorities was communicated effectively with the current language. Additionally, engaging the community helped to generate buy-in from a large set of stakeholders, with the goal of creating a united front behind the strategic vision moving forward.

To solicit a broad range of perspectives, the School Committee used multiple methods to share information about the strategic vision and to solicit feedback. These efforts took place between January and March 2014. Below is a summary of these efforts:

Website		
The School Committee posted a draft of the strategic vision aspirations and priorities, along with all relevant contextual documents on its website for public consumption. The website was updated to reflect progress throughout the process. In addition, the website was used to publicize the community roundtables (described below) and all other public meetings related to the strategic visioning process. Lastly, the website shared contact information that allowed the public to provide comments and feedback via email.		
Community Roundtables & Other Engagement Sessions		
From January to March 2014, the School Committee hosted six community roundtables (See below for a complete schedule and map of locations). Each community roundtable was attended by multiple School Committee members, along with representatives of The District Management Council. A wide range of BPS parents, community partners, education leaders, and other stakeholders were formally invited to each session so that they could provide input. Additionally, all members of the public were encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion along with the invited partners. The roundtables followed a predetermined protocol:		
Presentation of strategic vision: DMC facilitators and School Committee members opened each session by providing a brief overview of the strategic visioning process and framework, and presented the draft aspirations and priorities.	Discussion of prepared questions: Invited community organizations (along with members of the public) discussed a set of targeted questions about the draft aspirations and priorities.	Public comment: At the end of each session, space was allowed for the public to provide additional input about the draft aspirations and priorities.

The School Committee also held a roundtable with BPS leadership in order to get feedback on the strategic vision from a critical set of stakeholders who would be directly involved in implementing the strategic vision. And lastly, the BSC wove the strategic vision into many other pre-existing community meetings across the city (see second graphic below).



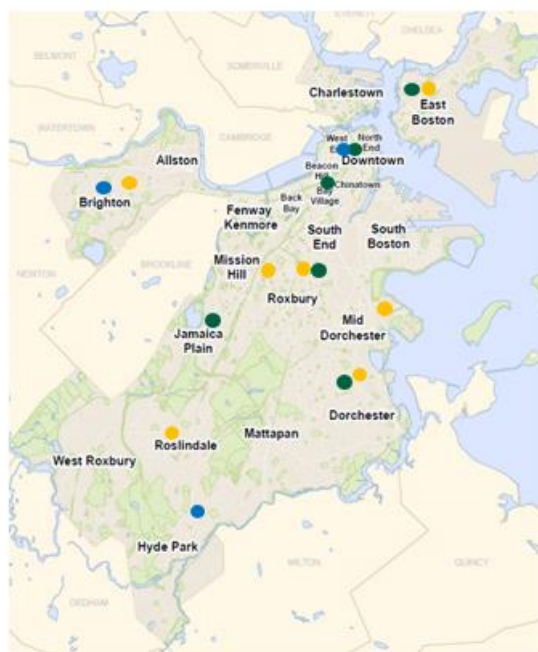
Invited Community Organizations

- *Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD)*
- *Associated Early Care and Education*
- *Barr Foundation*
- *Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM)*
- *Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston (BMA)*
- *Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center*
- *Boston Compact*
- *Boston Foundation*
- *Boston Higher Education Resource Center (HERC)*
- *Boston Leaders for Education*
- *Boston Parent Organizing Network*
- *Boston Special Education Advisory Council (SpedPac)*
- *Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)*
- *Boston Teachers Union (BTU)*
- *Boston United for Students*
- *College Bound Dorchester*
- *Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI)*
- *Edvestors*
- *English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force*
- *Freedom House*
- *Inclusion Task Force*
- *Massachusetts Advocates for Children*
- *NAACP*
- *Phillips Brooks House*
- *Project RIGHT*
- *Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST)*
- *South Boston en Acción*
- *Teachers 21*
- *Teach Plus*
- *Urban PRIDE*
- *Youth and Family Enrichment Services (YOFES)*
- *YWCA Boston*

Superintendent Search and Budget Hearings

In addition to the community engagement that was specifically focused on the strategic vision, the School Committee was simultaneously overseeing hearings to discuss a) next year's proposed budget and b) the current search process for a new BPS Superintendent. During all of these sessions, the School Committee referenced the strategic vision and explained the relevance and applicability of the vision to the issue at hand. These meetings provided separate forums during which the public could provide input and feedback. All of this feedback was gathered, and incorporated into the revision process at the conclusion of the community engagement efforts.

Locations of Other Community Sessions at which The Strategic Vision was Discussed



Note: Two Budget Hearing sessions were held at 26 Court St., Boston

Social and Print Media

Lastly, the School Committee worked with the Boston Public Schools Communications Office to utilize multiple social media channels to inform the public about the strategic visioning process. These included the BPS Twitter feed, the "BPS This Week" and monthly "Connections" newsletters, and email communications sent out to district staff. The School Committee also produced informational flyers in multiple languages that were distributed at community roundtables and made available at strategic locations throughout the district.

Results of Community Engagement Efforts

These multiple forums for dialogue generated very meaningful feedback from all parts of the city. The organizations invited to participate in the community roundtables – which included school leaders, educators, philanthropists, and community advocacy and activist organizations – provided perspectives from a wide range of the stakeholders who work in and with Boston Public Schools. All told, the School Committee received feedback from over 100 community partners and members of the public.

The School Committee took care to document all of the feedback and input provided by the community. These notes were then compiled to identify broad themes, which the School Committee incorporated into a revised draft of the strategic aspirations and priorities. In general, community members expressed support for the basic framework and the direction of the aspirations and priorities, but wanted to ensure that the language was as explicit and inclusive as possible. Much of the feedback centered on specific language and wording choice. For example, several participants urged that the aspiration that “BPS recruit, develop, and retain highly effective and culturally competent school and district leaders” be revised to state that BPS will “recruit, *hire*, develop and retain highly effective and culturally competent school leaders.” The School Committee took care to address such feedback to ensure that the final language conveyed its intended meaning while reflecting the needs and concerns of the community.

In general, community members expressed support for the basic framework and the direction of the aspirations and priorities, but wanted to ensure that the language was explicit and inclusive.