

The Partnership Fund & School Support Funds

Financial resources for schools allocated using the Opportunity Index



February 2019

During school year 2018-2019, Boston Public Schools (BPS) introduced the **Opportunity Index**, a new tool for measuring student and school need. This composite index analyzes a range of indicators – including environmental factors from students’ home neighborhoods, as well as student-specific data – to provide a more nuanced account of the range of advantages and challenges that affect academic outcomes. The Opportunity Index score for each school ranges from 0.01 to 0.99, with higher numbers indicating a higher average level of student need.

The Opportunity Index enables the district to make decisions in a more equitable way, recognizing that schools with greater concentrations of high-need students require additional resources to close opportunity and achievement gaps. During the 2019-20 school year, the district will use the Opportunity Index on a pilot basis to determine the allocation of two particular sources of funding to schools: The Partnership Fund and School Support Funds.

The Partnership Fund

Historically, BPS has earmarked a pool of central office funds for nonprofit organizations to partner with a subset of schools across the district. In the past, central office leaders decided which partners were funded, how much funding they received, and which schools they served.

This approach presented several key challenges, including:

- District-funded partnerships had not been equitably distributed across schools based on student need.
- Schools had little to no voice in the selection of partners receiving district funding.
- Partners receiving funding were not selected based on consistent criteria.
- Schools and nonprofit organizations not receiving district partnership dollars were unable to access this funding.
- There was no transparent or open system for accessing partnership funds.

Beginning with the FY19 budget cycle, these dollars – now called The Partnership Fund – have been allocated more equitably using the Opportunity Index. Next year, the district will allocate approximately \$6 million to schools identified as serving the highest concentrations of student need. Specifically, schools with an Opportunity Index score greater than or equal to 0.56 will receive an allocation, based on student enrollment and level of need. Using their Partnership Fund dollars, schools will be empowered and held accountable to choose and fund one or more partners to provide services that best meet their needs of their school communities and advance their goals and priorities.

School Support Funds

In addition, the City of Boston has earmarked an additional pool of about \$5 million to allocate to schools. These funds, called School Support Funds, also will be allocated using the Opportunity Index. Schools with an Opportunity Index score greater than or equal to 0.35 will receive an allocation, based on student enrollment and level of need. School Support Funds are unrestricted funding awarded centrally to support schools’ academic goals and priorities.

NOTE: These two allocations are included in the Superintendent’s proposed FY20 budget, which is subject to the approval of the Boston School Committee and Boston City Council.

Updated February 1, 2019