

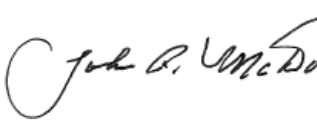
BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee

FROM: John P. McDonough
Interim Superintendent 

DATE: September 17, 2014

SUBJECT: Recommendation on School Quality Framework

After 16 months, 40 meetings and extensive engagement with community members, academic experts and the BPS team, the School Quality Working Group has developed and is recommending a comprehensive school quality framework for use in the Boston Public Schools. This is a Comprehensive Quality Measure structure as envisioned by the External Advisory Committee on School Choice. If approved by the Boston School Committee, it would replace the current MCAS Tier structure in the Home-Based school choice plan.

The School Quality Working Group system uses *Quality Tiers* on a 1-4 scale as its Comprehensive Quality Measure. The Tiers attempt to quantify several factors, including student performance; teaching and learning; family, community and culture; leadership and collaboration; and proficiency and growth.

Parents expressed a strong desire for a Quality Tier, rather than an MCAS Tier, during the engagement process that led to our Home-Based school choice plan. The general feeling was that school quality should be measured by “more than just test scores.” We believe that the School Quality Working Group has developed a revolutionary, data-driven system that can do just that.

We fully support the Quality Tier framework that has been developed by the Working Group and recommend the School Committee adopt them. Our recommendation is that the Boston School Committee adopt this Tier framework this fall and commit to implementing them for the 2016-17 school choice process, which begins about one year from now. This timeline would allow BPS to accomplish the following:

- Launch an extensive community awareness project to help families understand the Quality Tiers and see how they differ from MCAS Tiers, which includes sharing the Quality Tiers for schools this year to support the awareness and understanding
- Engage with school leaders, teachers and staff to understand the metrics that support the Quality Tiers, to enable additional focus on these critical areas both at the District and school level
- Conduct a neighborhood analysis to understand impact for families and schools and their communities
- Determine whether additional modifications to framework are needed based on neighborhood impact analysis and school-level review
- Align with the FY16 budget process and 2015-16 academic planning, so BPS can design investments and budgetary strategies to support schools as they adapt and improve core practices to raise school quality in line with the metrics, and
- Develop a community monitoring framework to support ongoing engagement around the Quality Tiers so we can ensure equitable, accurate, consistent measurement and implementation across the District.

We request the opportunity to come back to the School Committee to share our communication and engagement strategy in January 2015, which coincides with the start of the school registration period for the 2015-16 school year.

We believe the Quality Tiers represent a significant shift toward a Home-Based school choice system that is based on quality as families have told us they perceive it. These Tiers are significantly driven by academic data, but test scores are far from the only measure of quality. The core advantage in the Quality Tier system is that schools – including school leaders, teachers, parents and the public - will be able to see strengths and weaknesses on a clear, consistent, predictable scale that empowers them to take action in specific ways that will raise outcomes for all students. We also believe that families, school leaders, and school communities need time to understand the new School Quality Framework and Quality Tiers, as well as time to prepare for the transition to a new framework.

Regardless of what changes we make to our Tier measurement process, we will continue to use the state's accountability Level structure to inform and drive our own academic plans for schools. The Quality Tiers, if adopted, would provide a powerful additional set of information we can use to close achievement gaps and improve school quality across the city.

We are grateful to the School Quality Working Group for dedicating countless hours to this project. We are pleased to present the results of their effort to the Boston School Committee for consideration.