BOSTON Public Schools
Focus on Children

**Increasing Inclusive Practices in the
Boston Public Schools**

June 2013

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1. Background and Objectives

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) is committed to meeting the needs of all students, including students with special needs, and supports their right to be educated in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). Based on research from experts such as Dr. Tom Hehir of Harvard University, input from parents and staff, and the federal and state laws and regulations requiring students with disabilities to be educated with their non-disabled peers, the District has made a commitment to increase inclusive settings and opportunities for students with disabilities. Any such change in a student's program or "placement" is required to occur through the IEP process, with participation of the student's Team, including parents, and only when it is appropriate for the individual student. Many students with special needs will continue to require substantially separate programs to meet their individual needs.

Given the wide range of student needs in an urban district like BPS, a wide range of services and programming is necessary to serve our diverse special education population. The Boston Public Schools currently has a broad range of services, but the District also recognizes the need to expand its inclusive opportunities and programs to shift away from the past practice of placing more than 40% of its students with disabilities in substantially separate classrooms. According to DESE statistics, the district serves 10,900 students with special needs, and approximately 43% of these students are currently educated primarily in substantially separate classrooms, meaning they receive their services outside of the general education setting for more than 60% of the school day.

An inclusive environment, either full or partial, is a less restrictive setting than substantially separate placements, which only serve students with disabilities. An inclusive model classroom or program teaches students with special needs in the same general education classrooms with general education students and added supports. Congress enacted the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and revisions thereto to ensure students with special needs are not excluded from the general education classroom and that children with disabilities are educated in the "least restrictive environment." Inclusive practices benefit all students. It provides general education students with opportunities to support and socialize with their disabled peers, and to learn about varying abilities and strengths that need to be understood and appreciated. Students with disabilities perform better academically and gain more social and functional skills when they are educated with their non-disabled peers.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20U.S.C.&1400,et.seq, the Federal Law which governs special education, places a high priority on inclusive practices by mandating the least restrictive environment for students with special needs. Specifically, the law states:

 "In General - To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities are educated with children who are not disabled and special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aid and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Part B. Section 612 (5) (A))"

Based on research such as Dr. Tom Hehir's "Students with disabilities in Boston Public Schools" and "Review of Special Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts", students with

special needs, especially those with mild to moderate special needs, achieve at higher levels in standardized testing such as the MCAS when effectively taught in an inclusive setting. Other research has shown that students with significant cognitive disabilities also benefit greatly from inclusive practices.

For reference, "full inclusion" students are those who spend greater than 80% of their time in a general education classroom. Those in "partial inclusion" are defined as students who spend not more than 60% of their time outside of the general education classroom. Lastly, those who spend more than 60% of their time not in a general education classroom or the entire day in a special education classroom are defined as being taught in "substantially separate" classrooms.

Over the years some individual schools within BPS have embraced inclusive practices. These schools have often made the decision to do so of their own volition, and they have managed the transition as an individual school, as opposed to being part of a larger, strategic, district-wide effort. The district is committed to expanding inclusive practices in a thoughtful and systemic manner, both supporting existing inclusive schools and expanding inclusion across the district.

One sign of the district's commitment to expanding inclusive practices is that the School Committee charged the district leadership to expand inclusive practices across Boston Public Schools. Specifically, the school committee requested that district leadership to:

1. **Change the pipeline: Increase the number of students recommended for inclusive settings.** This requires that the district issue new guidelines for determining special education placements, clarifying that substantially separate classroom are the exception, not the norm. The district must also train special education coordinators on guidelines, inclusive practices, and new inclusive programs. Additionally, the district must put in place accountability systems to monitor the percentage of students recommended for inclusive settings.

2. **Build capacity: Increase the number of schools offering inclusive practices for students with disabilities.** The district is charged with expanding the number of schools providing full and partial inclusive settings. Further, it is proposed that EECs/ELCs early childhood programs support fully inclusive settings. And lastly, the district leadership has been charged with expanding inclusive practices in SWD Overlay clusters with few existing inclusive options.

This work is not starting from scratch, but rather builds upon the previous work including the Academic Achievement Framework (AAF), tiered support efforts, Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS), and the Inclusion Task Force, as well as the knowledge, wisdom, and experience of the network of inclusive schools in the district.

This report was a collective effort. In March 2013, two related committees were assembled to create a carefully thought out transition plan to successfully expand inclusive practices in the Boston public schools. Both committees met numerous times throughout the development of the plan.

The "working committee" consisted of experienced BPS principals, teachers, and administrators. Members of this committee drafted a vision for inclusive practices in BPS; discovered and

articulated key interdependencies with other departments (i.e. logistical considerations in moving towards more inclusive settings); and identified the district supports and school based prerequisites for successful inclusive practices in BPS. They created draft plans, which were in turn reviewed, revised and finalized by a project "steering committee." The steering committee was composed of parent leader representatives, central office administrators, a School Committee member, principals and others. See "Appendix 1: Participants in Plan Development" for committee membership.

Throughout the process, the leaders of many inclusive schools in the district also provided valuable insight. Specifically, team members met with principals from EECs/ELCs (Baldwin Pilot ELC, East Boston EEC, ECC at Fifield, Ellison/Parks EE, Haynes EEC, West Zone ELC), as well as the Holmes and Haley. A survey was conducted regarding staffing models and existing inclusion practices in schools currently in the inclusive network. Survey results supported the key components of the inclusion expansion plan outlined in this report.

A focus group of sixteen parents of students in the BPS community were also engaged. Parents of students in general education settings, inclusive settings, and substantially separate classrooms came together to provide important perspectives on successful inclusive practices. Their concerns and hopes aligned well with those of the working and steering committees.

This strategic plan for expanding inclusive practices was a true team effort with significant participation by the ELL, enrollment, capital planning and facilities department.

National, state and like district data all indicate that BPS can expand inclusive opportunities. In BPS 32.1% of students with disabilities are in fully inclusive settings, compared to 63% of students with disabilities in Massachusetts. Based on national data, nearly 85% of students with disabilities are educated in full or partial inclusion settings, while in Boston the figure is only 57%.

A local comparison reveals that Boston lags both Springfield and Worcester in inclusive practices. Specifically, Boston educates over 42% of its students with disabilities in substantially separate classroom while Springfield has roughly 32% and Worcester only 15%.

Figure 1: Enrollment of Students with Special Needs

(As of 03/01/2013)
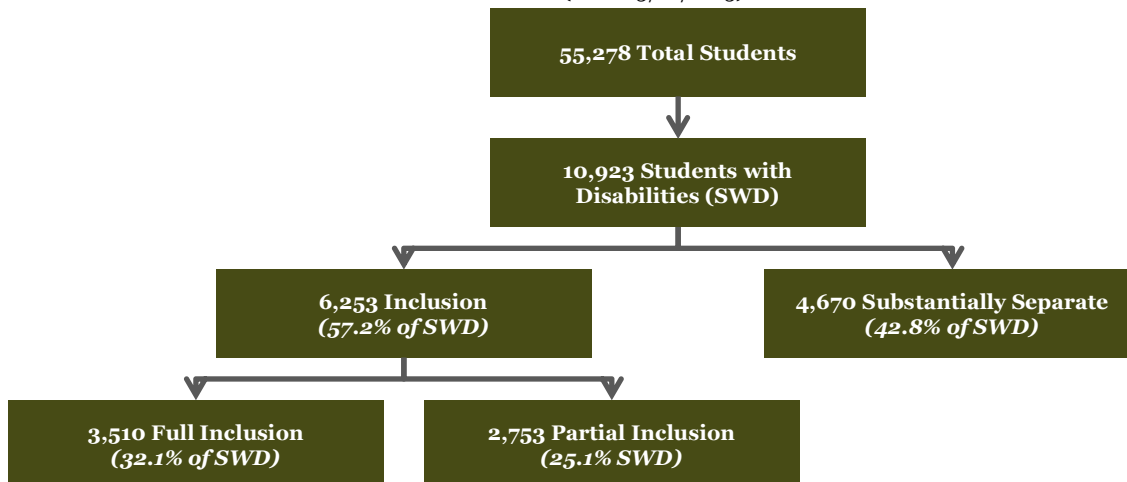
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2. Executive Summary

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) is committed to meeting the needs of all students, including students with special needs, and supports their right to be educated in the "least restrictive environment" (LRE). Based on research from experts such as Dr. Tom Hehir of Harvard University, input from parents and staff, and the federal and state laws and regulations requiring students with disabilities to be educated with their non-disabled peers, the District has made a commitment to increase inclusive settings and opportunities for students with disabilities. Any such change in a student's program or "placement" is required to occur through the IEP process, with participation of the student's Team, including parents, and only when it is appropriate for the individual student. Many students with special needs will continue to require substantially separate programs to meet their individual needs

Based on research such as Dr. Tom Hehir's "Students with disabilities in Boston Public Schools" and "Review of Special Education in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts", students with special needs, especially those with mild to moderate special needs, achieve at higher levels in standardized testing such as the MCAS when effectively taught in an inclusive setting. Other research has shown that students with significant cognitive disabilities also benefit greatly from inclusive settings.

The Boston Public Schools' vision for inclusive settings is comprised of eight key pillars. These pillars include committed leadership, a welcoming and supportive school climate, thoughtful planning and flexible staffing, utilizing general education curriculum and assessments, maximizing quality opportunities for inclusive practices, strengthening family and community engagement, providing a continuum of inclusive practices, and special education services including specially designed instruction connected to and reinforcing the general education curriculum.

While inclusive practices will look different from school to school, success will have many common elements. For instance, all students will be taught the same curriculum with grade level standards or with modified content and exposure to content, through universal design. Data will be used on an ongoing basis to pinpoint specific student strengths and needs. Students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning and interests will be recognized and reacted against responsively. Flexible pacing to address learner variance will be used, while ensuring that a full year's content is mastered. A multi-sensory teaching approach will be used to explain content. Small groups and stations that allow for targeted instruction (often flexibly grouping students with similar needs) will be leveraged in instruction. Teachers will check for understanding frequently without overloading students (such as modifying assignments with fewer but targeted homework questions). Finally, technology will assist in providing targeted and differentiated instruction.

The district intends to expand inclusive practices as fast as possible, but no faster than it can do it well. Several strategies shape the plan for expanding inclusive practices, but these strategies broadly align to two key approaches: first, ensure that IEPs for students initially referred to special education are provided inclusive settings when appropriate, and second, shift through the re-evaluation process students currently in substantially separate programs to inclusive settings, when appropriate.

By utilizing these approaches, the district can, in the best case scenario, reduce the number of students in substantially separate classrooms by half over the next five years. This represents a shift of over 2,500 students. Roughly 80% of all students with IEPs would be in either full or partial inclusive settings. At a minimum the district has set a target of newly identifying 1,600 students to participate in inclusive settings over the next five years.

A shift of this magnitude will require considerable repurposing of existing classrooms and the addition of many new inclusive schools. As students served in inclusive classrooms move up to middle school or other higher grades, the district must ensure an inclusive pathway in each region. Currently, this is not the case. With this new expansion plan, there will be inclusive options in each cluster that ensure a K-12 pathway. However, these new inclusive schools cannot yet be named for two reasons. First, naming the schools is contingent upon finalizing the Master Facilities Plan, which will be complete by fall 2013. Second, before they are announced, the schools must be prepared and must demonstrate the preconditions required for successful inclusive practices as outlined in this report.

As inclusive practices are expanded, the district is committed to providing a good deal of support.   The central office has prepared a robust professional development schedule intending to reach all stakeholders who will directly interact with students with disabilities and affect their IEPs. Beyond formal PD sessions, the district will provide support in a variety of means including allowing teachers to visit classrooms of high performing inclusive teachers, watching videos of best practice staff, and embedding support during the school day from inclusive setting specialists.

While planning, preparing and training for increasing inclusive practices is of utmost importance, execution of the plan will influence the lives of many BPS students. As a result, the implementation of the overall plan will be monitored closely using a series of accountability systems.

Expanding inclusive practices and changing the culture of the Boston Public Schools district takes great commitment and time. Several implementation challenges were identified during the planning process. Perhaps the most challenging obstacle to increasing inclusive practices in BPS is the availability of physical space for more inclusive classrooms. This will be addressed in the Master Facilities Plan.

3. Defining Success

3A: Effective Inclusive Practices

Gaining agreement on what successful inclusive practices would look like in the district was a critical first step for both the working group and steering committee. With the help of both experts in the field and in district examples of effective inclusive practices, a consensus emerged that given the wide ranging needs of students, the unique cultures of individual schools, and physical design of buildings there is no one right answer to defining successful inclusive practices. Inclusive settings will look different from school to school, but will have many common elements, including:

1. Teaching nearly all students the same curriculum with grade level standards or with modified content and exposure to content, but through universal design

2. Using ongoing data and special education evaluations to pinpoint specific student strengths and needs

3. Recognizing students' varying abilities, background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning and interests, and reacting both proactively and responsively

4. Using flexible pacing and considering student needs with working memory and processing speed to address learner variance with modified instruction and modified content when appropriate

5. Explaining content using multi-sensory teaching, implementing accommodations and modifications, and specially designed instruction targeted on individual learning needs

6. Creating small groups and using stations that allow for targeted instruction (often flexibly grouping students with similar needs)

7. Checking for understanding frequently to ensure students are accessing information and encoding it; Reducing volume and pace where appropriate for in-class work and homework demands (employing fewer but targeted homework questions, for example)

8. Using technology to assist in providing targeted and differentiated instruction with AT and AAV evaluations, training for staff in the use of technology, and direct instruction of students on the effective use of technology to support and enhance their performance

Good for All Students

These effective practices for teaching students with disabilities are also highly effective practices for all students as well. As such, inclusive classrooms should embrace many of the same best teaching practices of universal design used in every classroom and school.

Expanding inclusive practices benefits both students with and without special needs. For example, Dr. Tom Hehir's 2012 study for the state of Massachusetts revealed that students with disabilities who spend more have more instruction with their typically developing peers, on average, earn higher scores on the MCAS than similar students who spend much of their time in substantially-separate classes. Additionally, general education students in inclusive classrooms learn about disabilities and their impact on their disabled peers, participate in group learning

experiences, expand their own interpersonal skills, establish friendships and become better prepared for the future when interacting with students with a range of disabilities and abilities. Indeed, many regular education students become peer models and peer tutors to their disabled peers, which allows them to develop leadership skills and demonstrate more of their own personal independence.

A thoughtful review of the list of effective inclusive teaching practices reveals a key insight: good teaching is good teaching. By faithfully implementing the district's general education strategies in literacy, Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) and the Academic Achievement Framework (AAF, also known as Multi-Tiered Intervention or RTI), schools will also help reduce referral rates to special education, as well as support students with special needs. As schools meet the needs of students with disabilities in an inclusive setting, they are also meeting the varying needs of students without disabilities who also benefit from the same strategies. This is truly a win-win situation.

For inclusive practices to expand and flourish in the district, the effort will take broad participation and extend well beyond the special education department. District leadership, student assignment, facilities, enrollment, ELL, early childhood, curriculum and instruction and all departments across BPS must work together effectively and in a coordinated effort. This work has been an excellent example of such cross-departmental cooperation and collaboration.

A School District's approach to expanding inclusive practices must look beyond individual schools and consider District needs, such as thoughtful feeder pathways in neighborhoods, networks and clusters of the city in conjunction with the new student assignment process that will be implemented in September 2014. Additionally, as inclusive practices expands, some students with special needs will still require services in substantially separate classrooms, and some inclusive schools will still need to have some substantially separate classrooms to service those students. The District will continue to need to provide a full range of programming options, and continue to provide smaller learning spaces, pullout services for academics and ancillary services, and separate classrooms in order to meet the needs of all students.

The BPS Vision for Inclusive Practices

As the Boston Public Schools expands the opportunities for students with disabilities to be in inclusive schools and classrooms, the district will build on current successes and recent studies. This guiding vision for inclusive practices is based on lessons learned in the district. The vision for inclusive practices includes eight key pillars:

1. Committed leadership at the District and school level for inclusive practices

2. Welcoming and supportive school climate

3. Thoughtful planning and flexible staffing that is responsive to student needs

4. Utilizing general education curriculum and assessments, and universal design to make content accessible to all students with accommodations and modifications

5. Maximizing quality opportunities for inclusive practices by demonstrating that each child's needs are being met and proving that inclusive settings are an educational experience and not a place

6. Strengthening family and community engagement to educate all families of the requirements for and benefits of inclusive settings for all students

7. Providing a continuum of inclusive practices from K0 – Grade 12

8. Special education services including specially designed instruction connected to and reinforcing the general education curriculum

1. **Committed leadership.** Successful inclusive practices require active, strong leadership.

School leaders must embrace and value inclusive practices. They must set high expectations for themselves, their staff and all students. Since expanding inclusive practices can be challenging, school leaders must possess strong leadership skills, drive and passion. With these qualities comes the creativity, strength and foundation to succeed.

Leadership at the district level regarding inclusive practices is also critical. School Committee members, the Superintendent, Network Assistant Superintendents (NAS) and Department Heads must also actively support inclusive practices.

2. **Welcoming and supportive school climate.** Successful inclusive practices require more than just one strong leader; the entire school community must share the commitment and support it.

In a successful inclusive model, all staff, including general education staff, shares responsibility for student success, including students with disabilities. Teachers must seek to actively work collaboratively – both in the classroom, and beyond the classroom. They much teach and embrace "differences" and different learning styles.

Fundamentally, teachers must believe that all students – including students with special needs – can achieve at high levels. Teachers and staff must be flexible in their practices and in their approach, and frequently adapt to students' needs. They must have a "we can make this work" attitude.

As inclusive practices expand to all schools, all staff, including support staff (school secretaries, therapists, lunch monitors, custodians), that interacts with students before and after schools hours, outside the classroom and during lunch must have similar supportive attitudes toward inclusive practices.

Successful inclusive schools find a delicate balance when setting expectations and managing behavior. Schools and classrooms have well established and consistent routines and structures. They also set a clear, structured and consistent approach to problematic behavior. Positive behavioral supports proactively set and manage expectations for student behavior. Situational behavior is managed, coupled with a focus on prevention with established interventions and supports based on individual students' IEPs.

3. **Thoughtful planning and flexible staffing.** Just as there are many ways of providing effective instruction in an inclusive classroom, the Boston Public Schools has had success with a number of different staffing models.

The district utilizes a weighted student funding (WSF) formula where the dollars follow the students and more dollars follow students with greater needs. This allows schools to have some autonomy in how they staff their schools. Current weighted student funding is sufficient to support the expansion of inclusion utilizing a variety of staffing models and provides the control at the school level to staff based of student needs within the WSF system.

The current Weighted Student Funding plan has proven that it is a capable funding mechanism for supporting multiple models for inclusive settings in the district. It is important to note, however, that the culture, climate, and pedagogy are as critical as the number of adults in a classroom. In all cases, instruction must be tailored to student needs and small group work is important. Some inclusive class sizes have a smaller class size, but not always. The model must be based on the student population.

The district currently has a wide range of staffing models used in inclusive settings. Some opt for more school wide support, while others put more adults in each classroom. Some common staffing models identified in the survey on inclusive schools include: two dually certified teachers; one regular education teacher and one special education teacher; and a dual certified teacher, a dual certified teacher with a paraprofessional working together. Some schools have a school wide inclusive specialist or a strand specialist. The vast majority of new classrooms within BPS will have a dual certified teacher, one paraprofessional, and a reduced class size. When specific needs of children indicate a different staffing plan is required, then of course, it will be provided.

4. Utilizing general education curriculum and assessments: Building on the AAF framework and multi-tiered system of supports, effective general education efforts will also serve students with special needs well.

Highly effective practices for teaching students without disabilities are also typically highly effective practices for students with mild to moderate disabilities as well. As such, inclusive classrooms should embrace many similar teaching practices for all students in the room or school.

Instruction and assessment will focus on grade level materials. The goal is to provide supports to students to master grade level material, not to lower the expectations. Some students with disabilities will be able to access and master the same grade level content and they need to be provided with the opportunity to do so with appropriate accommodations and modifications, while other students will require a modified content of the curriculum with exposure to grade level material.

5. Maximizing quality opportunities for inclusive settings: For many students, fully inclusive settings is appropriate to meet their individual needs and provides the best option to achieve their individual potential. Some other students, however, may be best served with partial inclusive settings instead. Schools should maximize opportunities for all students, even for students who require substantially separate classrooms (who may benefit from inclusive practices during unstructured or less rigorous academic times such as art, music, assemblies, lunch or recess).

Schools and buildings can include both inclusive practices and substantially separate programs. Indeed, doing so may increase the opportunities for students in substantially separate classrooms to gradually transition to inclusive settings.

6. Strengthening family and community engagement: Parents are valued partners in strengthening and expanding inclusive practices. Inclusive practices are unlikely to be successful without buy-in and ongoing support from parents.

Parents of students with disabilities understand the importance of and benefits gained from inclusive settings and as Team members participate in determining the appropriate setting for their child. However, it is equally as important to ensure buy-in and support from general education families, and educate them on the benefits of inclusion for their children.

7. Providing a continuum of inclusive practices: Just as there is no one "right" IEP, there are multiple models for inclusive practices. As the district shifts to increase inclusive opportunities, schools will continue to use a variety of structures in which they support students with special needs and general education students. Some schools will move to 100% inclusive settings, while others will offer a range of inclusive opportunities. Some schools will choose to concentrate on serving one or few specific disabilities at first, or they may decide to serve all students with a very wide range of disabilities:
Some schools will implement a "100% inclusive setting" model.
Several schools in BPS already operate under this structure, in which all classrooms in the school are fully inclusive and the school only offers inclusive settings, without any substantially separate.

Alternatively, some schools will be inclusive schools that still offer a range of placement options for students with special needs, including substantially separate settings.
Based on feedback from current schools that operate under this model, there are several benefits to offering a continuum of placement options. Having both ends of the inclusive practices spectrum in one school allows schools to provide a smooth transition for students who can spend part of their day in inclusive settings, while still having specialized, substantially separate support some or most of the time.

Schools may either concentrate on serving one or few specific disabilities, or they may serve a very wide range of disabilities.
While several schools in BPS do serve all disabilities, others have found there are benefits to starting their transition to greater inclusive practices by concentrating on a narrower set of needs. This focus allows school to create specific outside partnerships to support the disability in which they concentrate. As principals said, "It would be great if an agency was able to partner with a school to provide these services so all the kids in the school were with the same agency." Additionally school wide supports and professional development can be targeted to ensure the knowledge and expertise exists to effectively serve the school's population.

School culture and experience suggest that some schools will be more ready to serve specific disabilities. In particular, schools find that serving emotional and behavioral disabilities requires intense concentration, partnerships, and specific skill sets throughout the school. For example, one school leader responded that it would be difficult to implement inclusive practices

with students with emotional disabilities, while another principal said that "it is doable with students with emotional impairments with the right culture and supports."

Also, as teachers transition to serving more students with special needs in the general education setting, if concentrating on specific disabilities, they can focus on the pedagogy and professional development specific to serving a smaller number of disabilities, allowing them to more quickly master new strategies.

8. Special education services including specially designed instruction connected to and reinforcing the general education curriculum.

Students with special needs in an inclusive setting receive the majority of their instruction from general education teachers along with their nondisabled peers. They also receive specially designed instruction via special education that allows them to master the grade level content (or is modified for students with significant intellectual disabilities)

3B: Lessons Learned from Existing Inclusive Schools

In the past, increases in inclusive opportunities in the district have often come from "school based" efforts. This plan represents a more district wide approach to expanding inclusive practices, but builds off the successes and lessons learned from the existing inclusive schools. There are many examples of effective inclusive practices in Boston. Schools that have already transitioned to inclusive settings did so in order to better serve their students, address specific needs of particular groups of students, and/or to increase achievement for all students. In doing so, they helped to identify best practices. Currently, a wide variety of inclusive models and success stories can be found within BPS.

Specifically, 26 schools make up the Inclusive Schools Network, and at least 6 additional schools have implemented inclusive practices. These 32 schools represent a wide spectrum of inclusive models. The 32 schools with inclusive practices today demonstrate many different staffing models. Some of the 32 schools specialize in serving specific disabilities, while others serve all disabilities. A few of the schools have all inclusive classrooms, while others offer a spectrum of options including substantially separate options or inclusive strands.

Given this history, shifting to greater inclusive practices within BPS should be considered as building on existing successes and expanding those throughout the District.

Based on the agreed upon vision and learning from past success in the district, expanding inclusive practices requires 7 key preconditions:

1. **School leaders** embrace the inclusive settings philosophy as a positive setting for all students, and communicates this commitment to staff, parents, and community members
2. **School-wide staff** (including itinerants, paraprofessionals, lunch staff, bus monitors, secretaries, custodians, and others) embrace inclusive practices and are committed to teaching and serving all students

3. **School culture** appreciates differences and embeds inclusive practices throughout school activities, both in the classroom and beyond. The school culture must balance flexibility with stability; students, staff, parents, and leaders adapt to serve specific student needs, while providing clear structure and high behavioral and academic expectations for all students.

4. **Parents and students**, both general education and special education, also embrace inclusive settings for   students with special needs in the general education setting and appreciate the benefits of inclusive practices for all students.

5. **Time to prepare,** particularly if a school is not yet ready to successfully expand inclusive practices.

6. **Physical space** is available to accommodate more inclusive classrooms in the school (Many substantially separate classrooms are too small to be used for inclusive classrooms)

7. **Inclusive specialists** provide embedded school-based support for teachers (e.g., autism expert supporting many teachers and classrooms).

3C: Guiding Principles for Inclusive Practices

The Federal Law-Individuals with Disabilities Act, 20U.S.C. &1400, et.seq, does not have a legal definition of the word "inclusion". The concept of "least restrictive environment" is the legal foundation for inclusive practices. Therefore:

 "In General - To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities are educated with children who are not disabled and special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aid and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily (Part B. Section 612 (5) (A))"

Our new guidelines for placement "clarifies substantially separate settings as the exception verses the norm". As we continue to implement the guidelines for placement based on IDEA's requirement for the least restrictive environment, the general education classroom in the school must be the first placement option considered for each student with special needs during a Team meeting before a more restrictive placement is considered. The focus should be to identify if the student with a disability can be educated satisfactorily with appropriate supports, aids, and interventions within the general education classroom in the school the student would attend if not disabled. This placement should be considered first because it is the least restrictive placement for that student. The student should participate in a fully inclusive program, if the team identifies that IEP services can be provided satisfactorily in the environment with appropriate provisions of supports and aids in the least restrictive placement for the student which will maximize opportunities for interaction with non-disabled peers. Only if this is not feasible to accommodate a students' level of need, should a partial or substantially separate setting be considered.

The development of an IEP ultimately leads to the identification of appropriate supports, services and goals which then helps the Team determine the appropriate placement of a student with disabilities in the type and location of the educational setting. This setting will in turn either set him or her up for success and enable to reach individual potential, or unnecessarily restrict and unintentionally slow the student's long-term success.

Research has shown that most students in inclusive settings perform better than they would if placed in substantially separate classrooms. Given this evidence of the benefits of inclusive settings and the legal mandate for the least restrictive environment or every child with special needs, it is critical that the district place an emphasis on recommending students for inclusive settings, whenever it is appropriate. This must be done for new IEPs written going forward, and for existing IEPs that are revisited annually.

Emphasizing inclusive settings in IEPs requires two key changes in the IEP development process.

Firstly, various IEP team members will need to shift their existing and longstanding mindset when writing IEPs that substantially separate is the first and only consideration.
This is particularly important when the first IEPs for a student is written as initial placement drives future placement determinations. This will be a major shift from past practice. IEP teams will need to more consciously consider and recommend inclusive settings where appropriate.

Secondly, IEPs should be written in a way that reflects the diversity of approaches to inclusive practices in the district and the wide range of student needs.
Currently, the limited knowledge of some members of IEP teams about what programs and settings are available across the district may contribute to incorrect or overly restrictive placement recommendations. It is critical to not limit a student to a single school or inclusive model.

The district's professional development plan will actively address these needs and the districts accountability and monitoring plan will ensure that these changes are taking place.

4. Expansion Plans

4A: Strategies to Increase Inclusive Practices

The district intends to expand inclusive practices as fast as possible, but no faster than it can do it well. The committee sought to balance a desire to expand inclusive opportunities as quickly as possible, but move no faster than schools would be ready to implement well and no quicker than central office can provide the needed support. The committee recommends applying the guiding principles to expand inclusive opportunities in phases over five years, which will increase the number of students educated in inclusive settings by over 2,500 students.

Several strategies shaped the plan for expanding inclusive practices. These are:

1. Expand inclusive practices at the earliest grades and continue to expand as the children move through the higher grades.

2. Add inclusive classrooms within inclusive schools to meet needs to students already in inclusive settings as they move to higher grades.

3. Increase the number of schools adopting inclusive practices to ensure a K-12 pathway.

4. Review IEPs of all students with disabilities in substantially separate classrooms and assess if appropriate to shift placement into partial or full inclusive settings.

5. Utilize all existing inclusive seats that are available in schools that can demonstrate their ability to successfully support additional students.

6. Create additional inclusive schools at all levels to expand district-wide availability of inclusive classrooms that are consistent with the SPED overlay adopted by the School Committee.

7. Expand partially inclusive opportunities for students not yet ready for fully inclusive settings, including unstructured times with necessary supports.

1. Expand inclusive practices at the earliest grades and continue to expand as the children move through the higher grades.

Expanding inclusive practices seats at all Early Learning Centers (ELCs) and Early Education Centers (EECs) allows more students with disabilities to begin their education in an inclusive setting right from the start of their education. In addition, schools that begin in grade K2 can also ensure that most students with special needs entering the BPS system in grade K2 are included in general education classrooms from the start.

Starting students in inclusive classrooms from the beginning, has many benefits including meeting the LRE requirement. Firstly, starting education in inclusive settings for appropriate students right as they enter the BPS system, (i.e., start with K0, K1 or K2) doesn't displace existing students in the general education classrooms. Secondly, it is easier for younger students with disabilities to integrate successfully into an inclusive environment since younger children learn primarily through play. It is more challenging for students who have spent significant number of years in the substantially separate classrooms to transition into inclusion. Thirdly,

starting inclusive settings "bottom up" will give enough time for schools serving higher grade levels to prepare adequately for the growth of students with special needs in inclusive classrooms in future years. This bottom up conversion allows some middle schools and high schools time to modify school culture and institute appropriate professional development for staff to best serve students with special needs in an inclusive setting.

Over time, this strategy of starting with the earliest grades will have great impact for expanding inclusive practices.

2. Add inclusive classrooms within inclusive schools to meet needs of students already in inclusive settings as they move to higher grades.

It is critically important that as children enter inclusive classrooms that they are assured an uninterrupted inclusive pathway through grade 12. This will allow children with special needs to maintain friendships as they move up with their fellow students. Survey results from inclusive network principals indicate that there are fewer inclusive classrooms as grade levels rise. Inclusive schools will need to ensure availability of inclusive settings at all levels served in the school.

3. Increase the number of schools adopting inclusive practices to ensure a K-12 pathway.

As students served in inclusive classrooms move up to middle school or other higher grades, the district must ensure an inclusive pathway in each cluster and at every grade level. Currently, this is not the case.

Today, 6 of the 14 elementary schools in the inclusive network do not feed into an inclusive middle school. There is an immediate need to increase the number of available inclusive options for students transitioning from elementary to middle schools to ensure a continuum for students transitioning from one school level to another. The students with disabilities assignment overlay is pictured on the following page.

With this new expansion plan, there will be inclusive options in each cluster that ensure a K-12 pathway. However, these schools cannot yet be named for two reasons. Firstly, naming the schools is contingent upon finalizing the Master Facilities Plan, which will be complete in time for fall 2013 only. Secondly, before they are announced, the schools must be prepared and they must demonstrated the preconditions required for successful inclusive settings as detailed in this report.

Figure 2: Students with Disabilities Overlay
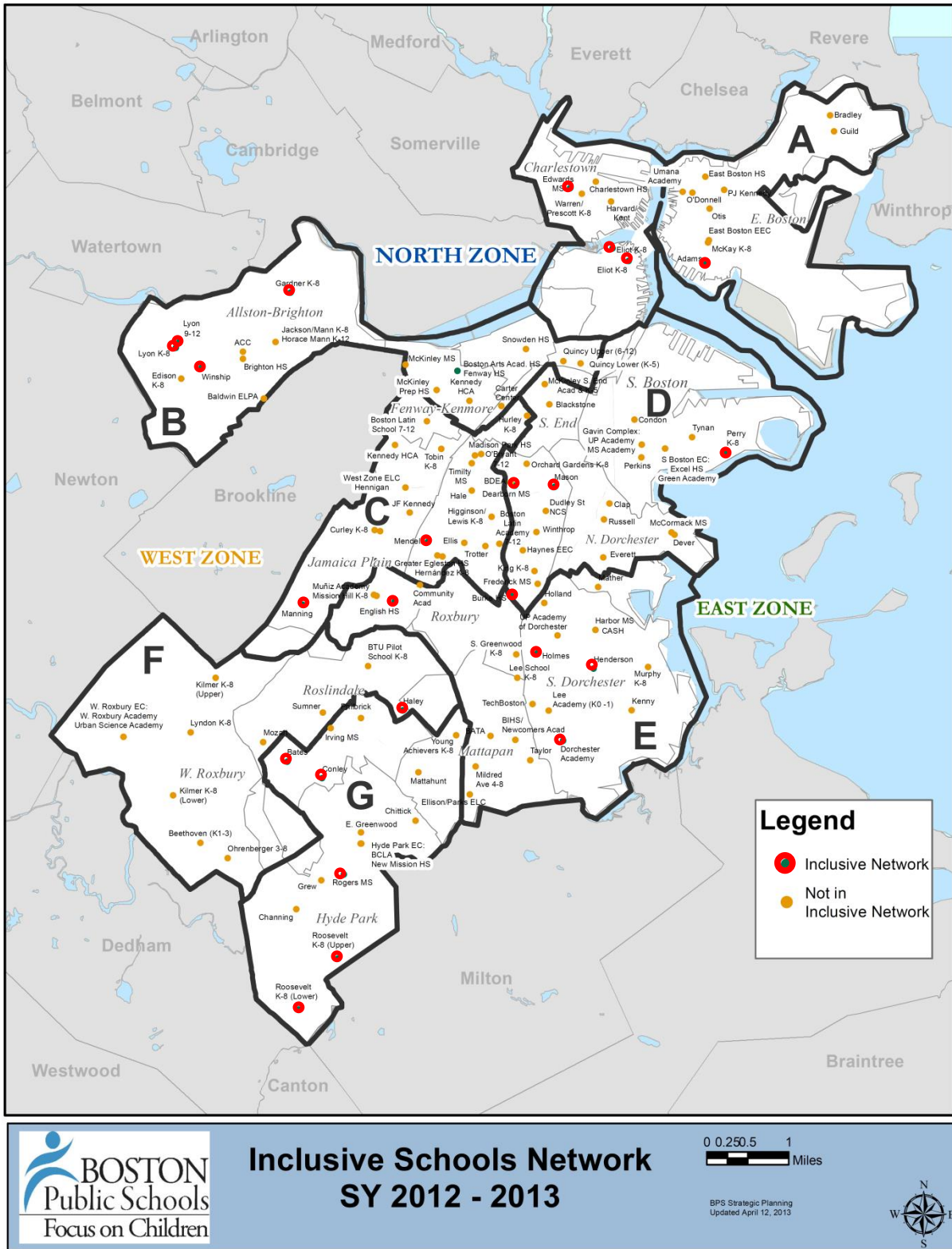
Source: Boston Public Schools Strategic Planning department

4. Review IEPs of all students with disabilities in substantially separate classrooms and assess if appropriate to shift placement into partial or full inclusive settings.

Many students with special needs currently in substantially separate classrooms may be better served in inclusive classrooms. Starting in 2013-14, schools will re-evaluate IEPs during annual or three-year re-evaluations to determine if students would be better served in a more inclusive setting. IEP teams should of course always keep in mind the best interest of the student and think critically about where he or she may be most successful. When appropriate, IEP Teams can transition students who already attend these schools in substantially separate classrooms to more inclusive opportunities and into inclusive classrooms within the same school. This will minimize disruption for the students who have their type of placement changed by their Team and maintain continuity of the school building and school personnel for the student.

This strategy may be especially impactful at the earlier grade levels. Students with IEPs at the elementary level, for instance, may be more ready to enter into inclusive settings than students who are older. Older students with IEPs have often been in substantially separate classrooms longer, perhaps making it more difficult for them to be moved to inclusive classrooms. The needs of each individual student must be considered.

These conversions cannot all take place in year 1. Conversions can take place as and when the IEPs are reviewed and adequate physical space and other resources (trained teachers, other materials) are made available to support more students with special needs in the inclusive setting.

This strategy of revisiting IEPs with a focus for inclusive settings can first be employed by schools already in the inclusive network or those that already embrace inclusive practices. There are 26 schools in the inclusive network and at least 6 additional schools that have already embraced inclusive practices, all who are committed to expanding inclusive practices, and all already meet the prerequisites for successful inclusive settings.

The strategy of moving, when appropriate, students with special needs from substantially separate to inclusive classrooms first in the inclusive network schools will ensure that teachers in those schools are equipped and trained to provide instruction to students with special needs in an inclusive classroom.

As the inclusive network grows to include more schools, this strategy will be employed more broadly.

5. Utilize all existing inclusive seats that are available in schools that can demonstrate their ability to successfully support additional students.

Based on assignment rules and student mobility, sometimes existing inclusive seats are filled by students without special needs. Inclusive schools, working closely with the enrollment office, can ensure that existing vacant inclusive seats, or seats that open up in the future, go to students with disabilities.

A review of some inclusive schools showed capacity for more students in inclusive classrooms. The district will continue to target for assignment to fully inclusive classrooms current practices outlined below.

Figure 3: Proportions of Gen Ed : SWDs in Classrooms

Grade Level	Gen Ed Students : Special Ed Students
K0, K1	9 : 6
K2 – Grade 5	15 : 5
Grades 6 - 12	Class sizes vary, typically 2/3 gen ed, 1/3 special ed

Additionally, the district will shift appropriate students into inclusive classrooms when openings occur due to natural mobility of students.

6. Create additional inclusive schools at all levels to expand district-wide availability of inclusive classrooms that are consistent with the SPED overlay adopted by the School Committee.

As the district expands inclusive practices in the schools that already meet the prerequisites to successful inclusive practices (outlined earlier in this report), the district must also make efforts to expand the number of schools that can provide effective, successful inclusive practices.

This phased expansion of inclusive classrooms addresses two important realities. First, schools that are not yet well prepared to provide inclusive practices successfully shouldn't be forced to do so before the preconditions are in place. This is the very reason for clarifying preconditions. Second, the district cannot meet its goal of serving more students in inclusive settings, without expanding the number of inclusive schools. It is simply not mathematically feasible to serve all the students with special needs in only a very small pool of inclusive schools.

Eventually, most schools in the district will need to be inclusive schools to meet the needs of students with special needs in the least restrictive environment. Some schools will have more time to prepare than others but preparations must begin immediately. The exact number of additional schools required at each level, in each zone will be built into the facilities strategic plan due this fall.

7. Expand partial inclusive opportunities for students not yet ready for fully inclusive settings, including unstructured times with necessary supports.

Fully inclusive settings are not appropriate for all students with disabilities, and for students who have spent many years in substantially separate classrooms, partial inclusive settings may be a good first step. This will likely be a more appropriate approach at the high school level which has students with special needs who have spent their entire academic life in substantially separate classrooms.

Currently, there are a significant number of students in substantially separate educational settings at the high school level. Specifically, principal survey results indicated that there are

fewer inclusive classrooms as grade level rises. Since many high school students with IEPs have been in such separate settings for years – some since the K0/K1 level, BPS must be thoughtful in how best to provide inclusive settings for these students. In another urban district, for example, principals and central office staff reported that shifting large numbers of high school students to fully inclusive settings who had never been in inclusive settings lead to significant number of students dropping out, because they couldn't quickly adjust to the less restrictive environment.

While fully inclusive settings will remain the goal, for some high school students partial inclusive opportunities will be an appropriate first step. This would allow students who still require a substantially separate setting to interact with and be integrated with general education students during select times. Deciding when these students will be in an inclusive setting would be decided by the IEP Team on a case-by-case basis, with a heavy emphasis on trying to include them in academic settings based on his / her strengths. These types of partial inclusive opportunities should be accommodated in the transition services available at the high school level. Over time, there would be as many inclusive practices at the high school level as at any other levels as students move up through the grades.

4B: Five-year Targets

By utilizing the seven strategies outlined above the district can, in the best case scenario, reduce the number of students in substantially separate classrooms by half over the next five years. This represents a shift of over 2,500 students. Roughly 80% of all students with IEPs would have either full or partial inclusive settings. A shift of this magnitude will require considerable repurposing of existing classrooms and the addition of many new inclusive schools.

At a minimum the district has set a target of newly identifying 1,600 students to participate in inclusive settings over the next five years.

In each case approximately 700 students that historically would have been in substantially separate settings will be starting their education in the BPS schools in inclusive classrooms. The balance of the increase will come from shifting students currently in substantially separate classrooms to fully inclusive or partially inclusive settings. It is forecasted that the majority of students shifted to inclusive classrooms will be in fully inclusive classes, in line with the new district guidelines that makes inclusive settings the first placement considered by every IEP Team, including parents.

The district is committed to the best case scenario and will eventually achieve this goal, but it may take more than five years.

Figure 4: Total students in inclusive settings over five years
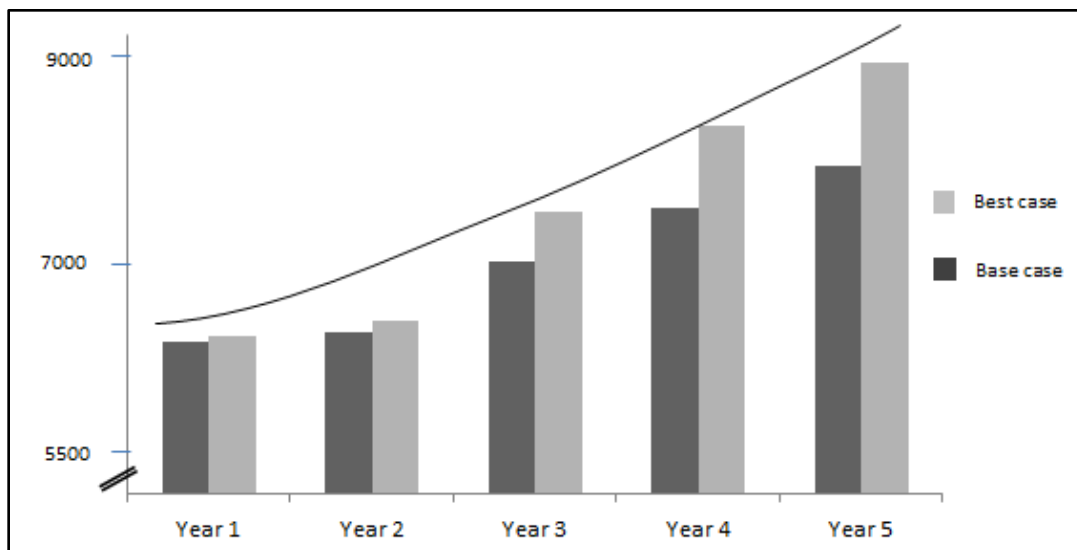
4C: Changes for 2013-2014

Expanding inclusive practices across the district is a significant change. A shift of this magnitude will require considerable repurposing of existing classrooms and the addition of many new inclusive schools. As students served in inclusive classrooms move up to middle school or other higher grades, the district must ensure an inclusive pathway in each region.

The 2013-2014 School Year will set the stage for a significant expansion of inclusive practices. Two schools that demonstrate the preconditions for successful inclusive practices outlined in this report will be selected.

District Support in 2013-2014

Principals and teachers must take the lead role in ensuring students with special needs learn, grow, socially and emotionally, and are welcomed, but the central office must also play an important supporting role.

The district can provide targeted and effective training to prepare principals, teachers and staff. As a result, the central office has prepared a robust professional development schedule for key stakeholders in expanding inclusive practices. The PD plan is comprehensive and seeks to reach all who will directly interact with students with disabilities and affect their IEPs.

A survey of principals of inclusive schools helped to drive contents of the PD plan. For instance, the survey indicates that professional development pertaining to specific disabilities, assistive technologies and managing disruption is critical for teachers. Allowing teachers from inclusive classrooms to network has also proven to be helpful.

The draft professional development schedule for this summer and SEE-14 is detailed below. Subsequent PD will be based on the feedback from participants and an assessment of needs next spring and based on lessons learned during SEE-14, and with input from principals, CUSSES, and other stakeholders. Elements of the PD plan may be included in the WISP.

This professional development will be integrated with and aligned to PD for core instruction. As stated earlier in the report most best practices for teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive setting are the same best practices for teaching all students.

Beyond formal PD sessions, the district will provide support in a variety of means including:
- Allowing teachers to visit classrooms of high performing inclusive teachers.
- Watching videos of best practice staff
- Embedded support during the school day for inclusive specialists.

Figure 5: PD Plan for Principals

Proposed Schedule	Details	Potential Providers
Principals Institute (Aug. 20-22)	*The conceptual framework and building capacity for inclusive practices	Tom Hehir, Harvard
Network Principal Meetings	Cultural competence	Office of Achievement Gap
PD during the school year	Universal Design for Learning	Ross Wilson's department
PD during the school year	Universal Design for Learning	David Rose-CAST
PD during the school year	Inclusive Environments in Schools	Bill Henderson, BPS Inclusion Specialist
PD during the school year	The conceptual framework and building capacity for inclusive practices	
Principals PD	Class Size Class composition Staffing Grouping Scheduling	Principals of the Lyon, Henderson, and Inclusive Schools Network Schools
Ongoing Principal PD	Language supports for Ells in inclusive settings	Eileen De Los Reyes, ODELL Maria Sera, Lesley
Ongoing Principal PD	Differentiated Instruction	Eileen De Los Reyes, ODELL Maria Sera, Lesley

Figure 6: PD Plan for Teachers

Proposed Schedule	Details	Potential Providers
Ongoing Teacher PD	Tiered interventions • Reading/Encoding Strategies • Comprehension Strategies • Metacognitive strategies • Culturally relevant strategies • Brain-based teaching strategies • Specially Designed Instruction • Supporting Inclusive Practices	Donna Lehr, BU
Early Childhood PD	BATTELLE Training OWL Building Blocks	BPS Staff
Ongoing School Based PD	PECKS, Kurzweil, Smart Boards, pads, Writing Tools, IntelliTools, BoardMaker	BPS Staff
Ongoing School Based PD	Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model • FBA/BIP • CPI • PBIS • Social Circles • Open Circle • Second Step • Boosts	Andria Amador, OSESS
Ongoing School Based PD	Integrated related services Augmented communication practices	Thelma Pierce, OSESS
Ongoing School Based PD	ABA methodology and services • DTT • PECS	ABA Department
Ongoing PD during the school year	Engagement, Planning	Office of Family and Student Engagement

Figure 7: PD Plan for Paraprofessionals

Proposed Schedule	Details	Potential Providers
Ongoing School Based PD	PECS, Kurzweil, SmartBoards, iPADs, Writing Tools, IntelliTools, BoardMaker	BPS Staff
Ongoing School Based PD	Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model • FBA/BIP • CPI • PBIS • Social Circles • Open Circle • Second Step • Boosts	Andria Amador, OSESS
Ongoing PD during the school year	Engagement, Planning	Office of Family and Student Engagement

Figure 8: PD Plan for COSESS

Proposed Schedule	Details	Potential Providers
COSESS (Sept. 3)	Least Restrictive Environment/Inclusive Practices Guidelines	Tom Hehir, Harvard Individualized Learning Central Office Staff
COSESS Monthly PD	Universal Design for Learning Overview	BPS Staff
COSESS Monthly PD	Inclusive Environments in Schools	
Ongoing Monthly COSESS PD	Inclusive Practices Class Size Class composition Staffing Grouping Scheduling	Office of Legal Advisors Individualized Learning Central Office Staff, Principals of the Lyon, Henderson, and Inclusive Schools Network Schools
COSESS Monthly PD	**Overview**, PECS, Kurzweil, SmartBoards, iPADs, Writing Tools, IntelliTools	BPS Staff
Ongoing School Based PD	Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model • FBA/BIP • CPI • PBIS • Social Circles • Open Circle • Second Step • Boosts	Andria Amador, OSESS
COSESS Monthly PD	Problem Solving	Parent Organization

Figure 9: PD Plan for Central Office

Proposed Schedule	Details	Potential Providers
COSESS (Sept. 3)	Least Restrictive Environment/Inclusive Practices Guidelines	Tom Hehir, Harvard Individualized Learning Central Office Staff
Network Principal Meetings	Cultural competence	Office of Achievement Gap
Principals PD	Class Size Class composition Staffing Grouping Scheduling	Principals of the Lyon, Henderson, and Inclusive Schools Network Schools
Ongoing School Based PD	Comprehensive Behavioral Health Model • FBA/BIP • CPI • PBIS • Social Circles • Open Circle • Second Step • Boosts	Andria Amador, OSESS
Ongoing PD during the school year	Engagement, Planning	Office of Family and Student Engagement

Beyond providing professional development, Central Office can help support inclusive practices in a number of other ways.

Firstly, ensuring expertise of inclusive specialists in schools and the sharing of that expertise will be helpful. This is especially impactful in the areas of supporting students with autism and emotional/behavioral needs.

Secondly, providing an effective core and tier 2 programs, materials, and professional development is important. Students with special needs will benefit from the same effective core instruction and tier 2 supports as their typical peers.

Thirdly, effective two way communication and outreach with parents of students with and without disabilities will eliminate confusion and increase transparency.

Fourthly, to increase the pipeline of students in inclusive classrooms, the way IEPs are developed and written will need to be refocused. Creating a system to ensure the initial IEPs reflect a greater preference for inclusive settings, when appropriate, will require district support. Additionally IEPs should be written in a way that reflects the diversity of approaches to inclusive practices in the district, not limiting a student to a single school or model.

Fifthly, the district will utilize the special education liaisons to support inclusive schools and outreach efforts.

Lastly, the district must plan, budget and support physical building renovations required as a part of the Master Facilities Plan.

4D: Financial Impact

Over the long run expanding inclusion is cost neutral, and should be slightly less costly than the status quo reliance on substantially separate classrooms. After transition costs, the shift to more inclusive practices could reduce annual operating costs by up to $3 million a year compared to current practices. Current weighted student funding formulas support a wide range of staffing plans for increased inclusive practices including building based inclusion experts or disability experts.

There are, however, a number of onetime costs associated with the expansion of more students taught in the general education classrooms. Student related costs such as desks, technology, and curriculum materials are covered by current weighted student funding allotments. Additionally, the extra costs associated with opening up more general education classrooms are offset by the reduction in substantially separate classrooms.

The cost of renovation facilities at this time is unknown and can range significantly. In schools with "A" size classrooms used for substantially separate classes or with underutilized general education classrooms, then there would be zero facilities costs. On the other hand, if A size rooms must be created from B size rooms, renovation costs will be incurred. The Master Facilities Plan will provide the data necessary to estimate the facilities costs.

Inherent in a plan to increase inclusive options is the reality that fewer students will be educated in substantially separate classrooms, and as such fewer substantially separate classrooms will be needed. In many schools the physical space of the former substantially separate rooms will be needed for new classrooms, and in other situations these former substantially separate classrooms can be repurposed.

As the need for substantially separate classrooms decrease, the district must reduce classrooms as needs are reduced, while assuring that a full continuum of substantially separate opportunities are available in each special education overlay region.

4E: Serving English Language Learners Who Also Have Disabilities

Many students with disabilities are also students who do not speak English as their first language. These students are entitled to both special education and ELL services. Historically, the district has at times struggled to coordinate these services. This plan was developed with input and cooperation from the ELL leadership to ensure a coherent and supportive approach to students with disabilities who are also English language learners.

Roughly 30% of all students with disabilities are also ELL students. Of these dual need students, about 70% are Spanish speakers. Put another way, of all students with disabilities, over 20% are Spanish speakers.

Figure 10:
ELL Students within overall SWD
Population

ELL SWD
- Spanish
Speakers
22%

ELL SWD
- All
Others
8%

Non-ELL
SWD
70%
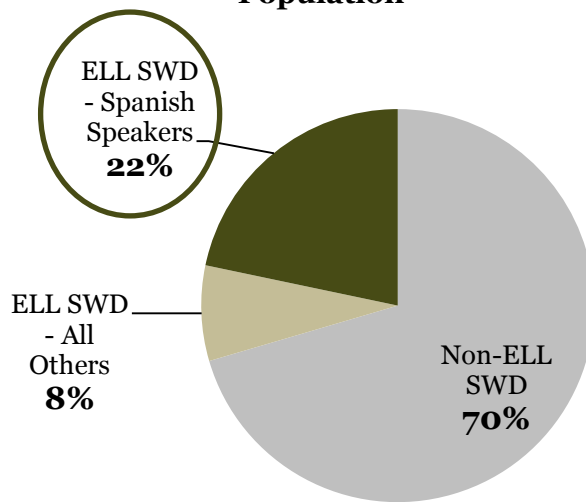
Source: *April 2013 data provided by OELL*

The "Successor Settlement Agreement" between the U.S. Department of Justice and the Boston Public Schools explicitly states that ELLSWD (ELL students with disabilities) are entitled to both Special Education and ELL services in a manner appropriate to each individual student's needs:

- "No ELL shall be denied ELL services solely due to the nature or severity of the student's disability, and no ELL shall be denied SPED services due to his or her ELL status"

- ELLSWD are entitled both ELL and SPED services

As the district expands inclusive practices for students with dual needs, there are a number of additional considerations for inclusive practices of ELL students above those for native English speakers with disabilities.

1. Utilizing SEI (language-specific) classrooms for inclusive settings of ELD1, 2, 3 students is the preferred setting

2. Ideal staffing for these classrooms is a 3-way certified teacher (SEI, general ed, and special ed). Teachers currently certified this way should be leveraged, while others will need to gain such certifications.

   This suggests that district may need to expand the pathway program, which allows current staff to gain additional certifications.

3. Teachers (and paraprofessionals for classrooms of 21 to 25) in an inclusive SEI classroom should be language-specific, when possible.

4F: Monitoring Implementation

To ensure that the expansion of inclusive practices is executed as intended, the district will build accountability systems to monitor this work. Two different accountability systems will be used starting in September 2013.

 The first will be an accountability system for initial placement, ensuring that inclusive settings are the norm for students first referred to special education.

 The second will track overall placement of students with disabilities across the district and in each school.
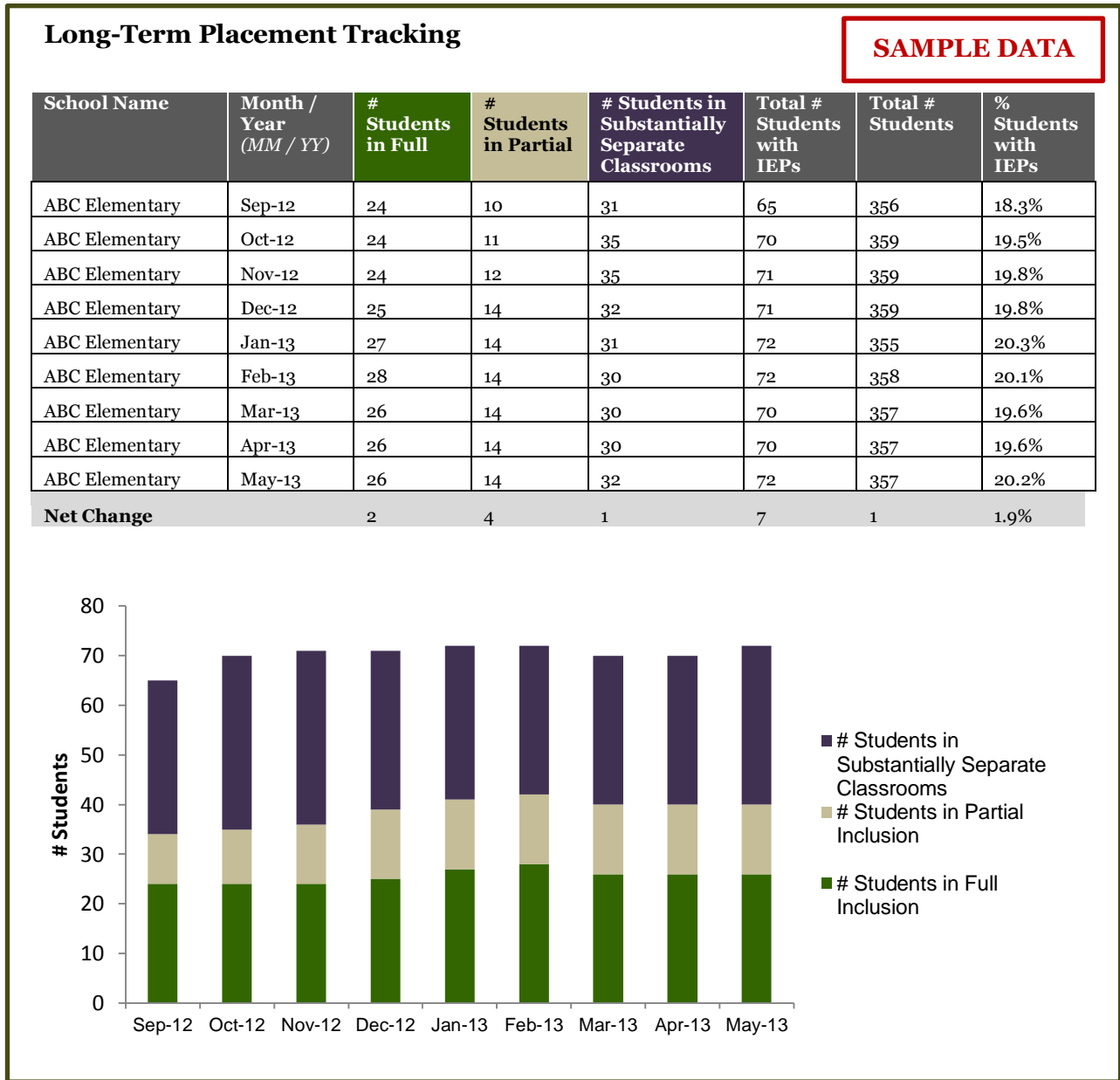
Both systems will track data on a monthly basis at the school and district level.

Figure 11: Accountability System #1 – Initial Placement of Students with IEPs

Initial Placement of Students with IEPs						SAMPLE DATA

# Students with New IEPs Placed in Full Inclusive Classrooms	4
# Students with New IEPs Placed in Partial Inclusive Settings	2
# Students with New IEPs Placed in Substantially Separate Classrooms	1

Month / Year *(MM / YY)*	School Name	Principal Name	SPED Coordinator	Student Name	Determination	Educational Setting *(Full, Partial, Substantially Separate)*
Sep – 13	DL elementary	Ms. Kim	Mr. Smith	Dan	Sensory impairment - hearing	Substantially Separate
Sep – 13	DL elementary	Ms. Kim	Mr. Smith	Tim	Specific learning disability	Full
Sep – 13	DL elementary	Ms. Kim	Mr. Smith	Jenna	Emotional impairment	Full
Nov – 13	DL elementary	Ms. Kim	Mr. Smith	Bob	Intellectual impairment - mild	Partial
Jan – 14	DL elementary	Ms. Kim	Mr. Smith	Ruth	Autism	Full
Feb – 14	DL elementary	Ms. Kim	Mr. Smith	Liz	Specific learning disability	Full
Mar – 14	DL elementary	Ms. Kim	Mr. Smith	Catie	Autism	Partial

Pictured: Sample monthly accountability system across schools. Sample data only.

Figure 12: Accountability System #2 – Long-Term Placement Tracking

Long-Term Placement Tracking

School Name	Month / Year *(MM / YY)*	# Students in Full	# Students in Partial	# Students in Substantially Separate Classrooms	Total # Students with IEPs	Total # Students	% Students with IEPs
ABC Elementary	Sep-12	24	10	31	65	356	18.3%
ABC Elementary	Oct-12	24	11	35	70	359	19.5%
ABC Elementary	Nov-12	24	12	35	71	359	19.8%
ABC Elementary	Dec-12	25	14	32	71	359	19.8%
ABC Elementary	Jan-13	27	14	31	72	355	20.3%
ABC Elementary	Feb-13	28	14	30	72	358	20.1%
ABC Elementary	Mar-13	26	14	30	70	357	19.6%
ABC Elementary	Apr-13	26	14	30	70	357	19.6%
ABC Elementary	May-13	26	14	32	72	357	20.2%
Net Change		2	4	1	7	1	1.9%

Pictured: Sample monthly accountability system for schools. Sample data only.

5. Challenges and Risks

5A: Physical Capacity Constraints

Perhaps the most challenging obstacle to increasing inclusive practices in BPS is the availability of physical space for more inclusive classrooms. As fewer students are in substantially separate classrooms and more are in general education classrooms, the district will need more general Ed rooms and fewer substantially separate classrooms. This is not a simple change. Depending on the building, inclusive practices could require more space or could yield extra space.

Substantially separate classrooms are either "A" or "B" sized classrooms. "A" classrooms are large (full size), while "B" classrooms are smaller and typically accommodate 8-10 students. As students with special needs move into inclusive classrooms, schools will need more A size classrooms.

As the example below shows, 3 non-inclusive classrooms, must become 5 inclusive rooms to support all the existing general education students, all 5 classes must be A sized. The need for more A size classrooms is driven by both the increase in the number of students served in the general education setting, and the smaller enrollment in each inclusive classrooms, typically 20 students total, down from 22 to 25 students.

Figure 13: Scenario 1 – Substantially separate classrooms are B sized classrooms
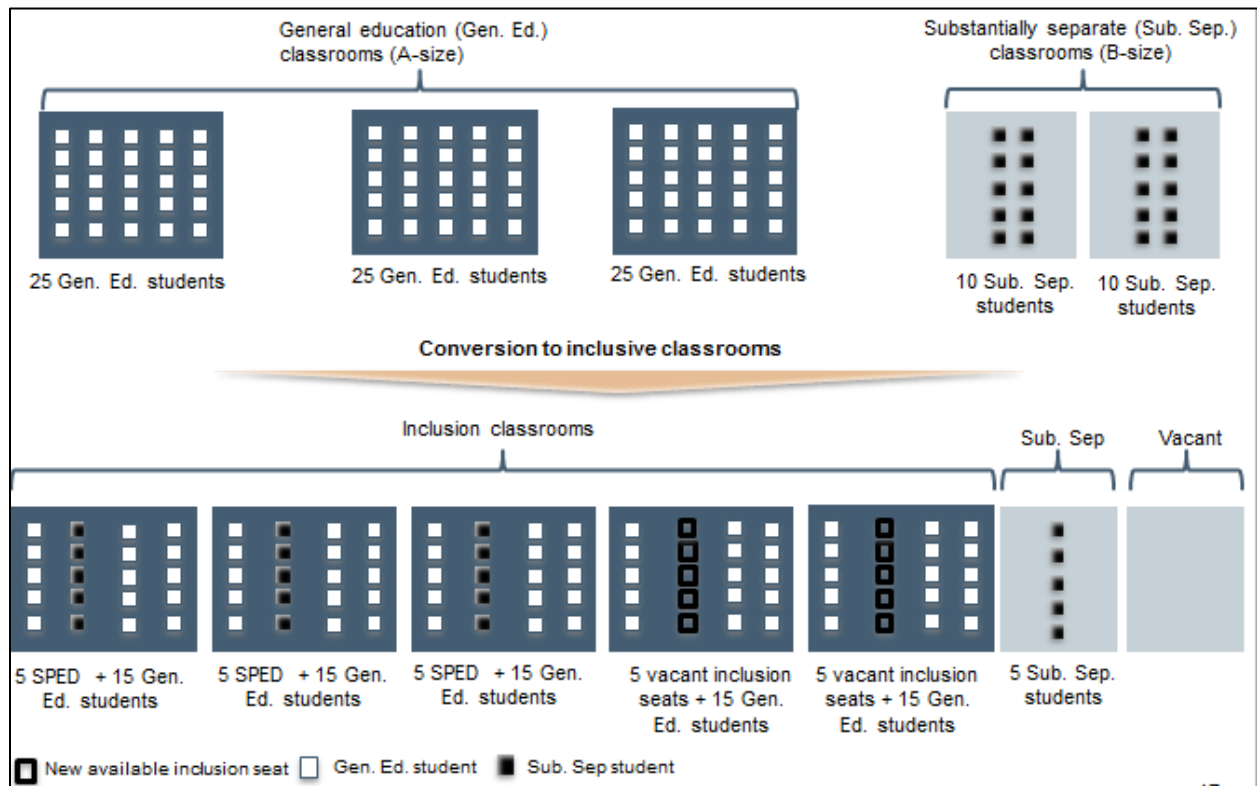
Converting an existing "A" size general education classroom to an inclusive classroom displaces 10 general education students, when a classroom is already at capacity. This requires additional classrooms in the school to accommodate the existing students enrolled in general education classrooms. This is "Scenario 1", depicted above.
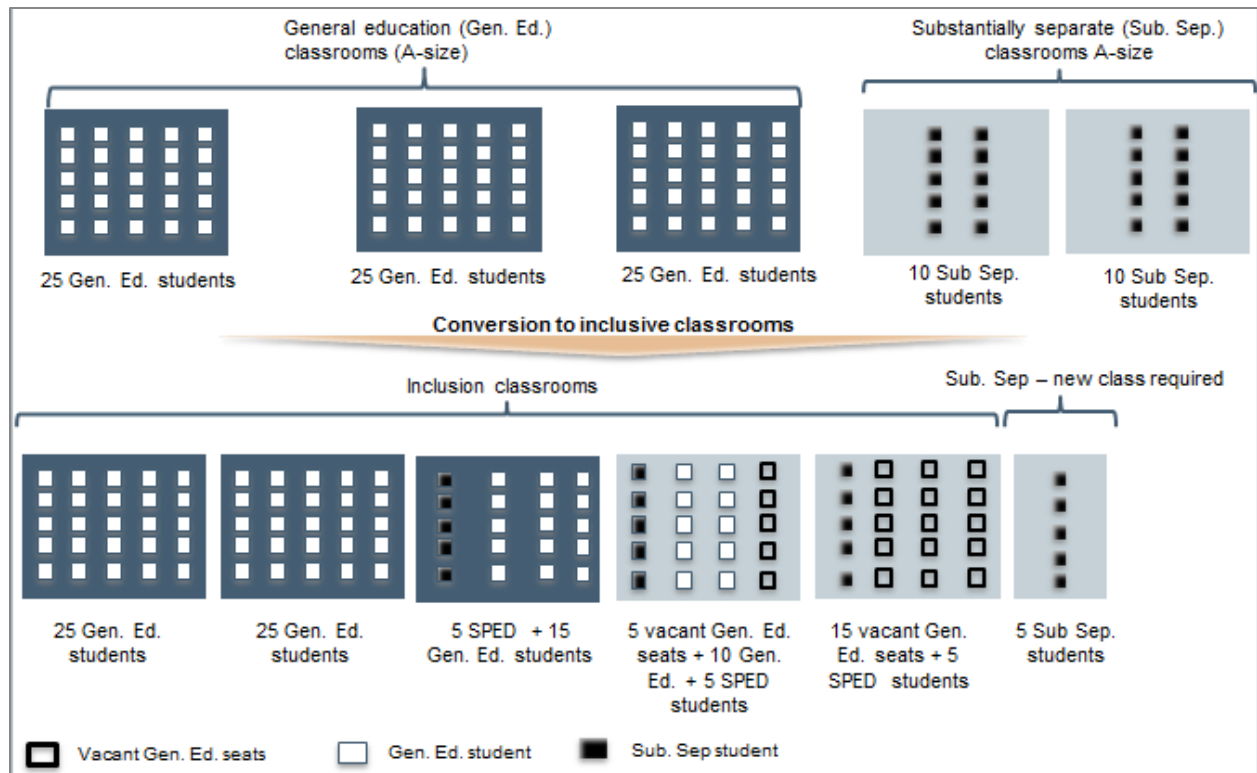
In the example, the substantially separate classes are in 2 B-sized classrooms and have 10 students each. There are 3 general education classes each with 25 students totaling 75 general education students.

With the move to inclusive settings, some students are moved from substantially separate to inclusive classrooms creating a need for 2 more A-sized classrooms to accommodate the already enrolled general education students (75 in total) and serving up to 25 students with special needs that were in substantially separate classrooms.

It is important to note than not only are students with special needs shifting to inclusive classrooms but the total class size of each A-size classroom is being reduced from 25 to 20 students. Also, not all students previously in substantially separate classrooms in this school will be moved to inclusive classrooms. This leads to the emptying of one B-sized classroom which cannot be used as an inclusive class room, and the need to maintain a B sized room.

Additional A- sized rooms can be created in schools by merging two "B" classrooms if two "B" classrooms share a wall or by constructing new A sized classrooms. Given that a significant crunch on space already exists at many schools (particularly at the K-2 level), the physical space for classroom is a significant challenge to expanding inclusive seats.

Figure 14: Scenario 2 – Substantially separate class conducted in "A" sized classrooms

A very different story exists if substantially separate classrooms are in A sized rooms.
If "A" size classrooms are currently being used as a substantially separate classroom, there is opportunity to add general education students to this room to make it inclusive and increasing capacity in the school.

In the example, substantially separate classes are conducted in 2 "A"- sized classrooms. There are 3 general education classes each with 25 students totaling 75 general education students. With the move to inclusive, some students are moved from substantially separate to inclusive classrooms. Students from one general education classroom are redistributed and placed in the A-sized classrooms that were earlier used as substantially separate classes. This leads to better utilization of physical space and adds up to 20 general education seats, but also requires finding one B size room for students not best served by full inclusive settings.

In summary, further study and analysis are required to determine the exact impacts of expanding inclusive practices across the district from a physical building standpoint. The Master Facilities Plan will address these more specifically. However, even at this stage, it is clear that there are 4 ways in which space constraints may manifest themselves for general education students:

1. **Increased available general education seats** when converting a substantially separate A classroom to an inclusive classroom. Each conversion will increase the number of general education seats available in a given school.

2. **Increased available general education seats** when converting two adjacent substantially separate B classrooms to one inclusive classroom. While this option also increases general education seats in a school.

3. **Decreased** if one substantially separate B classroom or two non-adjacent substantially separate B classrooms are no longer needed because some students are now in inclusive classrooms. The decrease is caused by two factors, students with disabilities will need seats in existing classrooms, and the total number of seats in a classroom may decrease.

4. **No Impact on available general education seats** if sufficient empty seats already existed in the school.

The Master Facilities Plan will identify the actual impact on a school by school basis. The goals and data from this report will be incorporated explicitly into the facilities strategic plan due in the fall.

Other physical constraints:

In addition to the need for physical space, physical accessibility of a building – from handicap ramps to necessary assistive technologies – can contribute to the physical constraints of a school building expanding inclusive practices.

The next step in order to begin resolving the capacity constraint issue is to ensure that the Master Facilities Plan incorporates this inclusive plan. It may require renovations to buildings including merging B classrooms and other changes to increase the number of A size classrooms.

5B: Other Challenges

Several other challenges and risks contribute to the overall complexity of expanding inclusive practices in the district. These include having a pipeline of supportive, knowledgeable, principals; sufficient dual and three way certified staff, and a sustained communication plan.

Pipeline of supportive, knowledgeable, experienced principals

Principal support and commitment for inclusive practices are critical to its success. Now that BPS is embarking upon a strategic plan to shift more students into inclusive classrooms, there will be a significant increase in the number of inclusive classrooms and, in the longer term, inclusive schools. School leaders will have to be not only supportive of inclusive practices, but possess the right knowledge and experience to drive this type of complex change and build a supportive culture. Survey results indicated that expanding inclusive practices is possible with "excellent staff" – and principals must have the knowledge and power to hire, build and "create that staff".

Sufficient dual and three way certified staff

The hiring and training many more teachers with general education, special education, and in some cases ELL certifications will be required to serve thousands of more students in inclusive classrooms. The district does have programs and practices in place, but they are not of sufficient scale.

Sustained communication plan

Stakeholder buy-in and engagement is consistently cited as a precondition to successfully implementing inclusive practices. In an effort to establish this precondition, it is necessary to have regular, two way communications with stakeholders including parents and students, employees of the Special Education department, the SPED PAC, BTV, BTR, Human Resources, etc.

6. Appendix

Appendix 1: Participants in Plan Development

Project Steering Committee

Name	School	Position
John St. Amand		SPED PAC vice chair
Harolyn Bowden	Mason	Principal
Catherine Constant		Director of Special Education and Student Services
Isabel DePina	Harbor High	Principal
Bill Henderson		External
Carolyn Kain		SPED PAC Chair
Diane Lescinskas		SPED PAC
Eileen Nash		Deputy Superintendent
Jason Sachs		Director – EC
Mary Tamer		School Committee
John Verre		Assistant Superintendent

Project Working Group

Name	School	Position
Harolyn Bowden	Mason	Principal
Dione Christy	Family and Student Engagement	Senior Director
Rina Cimino	Haley	Teacher
Catherine Constant		Director of Special Education and Student Services
Mary Yaya Davis	Haley	Teacher
Isabel DePina	Harbor High	Principal
Paula Donnelly		Executive Director
Patricia Lampron	Henderson	Principal
Eileen Nash		Deputy Superintendent
Sharon Robinson-Byrd	Roosevelt	Teacher
Deb Rooney	Lyon	Principal
Jackie Sedgwick	Ohrenberger	Teacher
Karen Silver	Early Childhood	

Appendix 1: Participants in Plan Development (continued)

Inclusive Network

School	Principal Name
Adams Elementary	Antonio Barbosa
Another Course to College	Lisa Gilbert-Smith
Bates Elementary	Kelly Hung
Boston Arts Academy	Anne Clark
Boston Community Leadership Academy	Brett Dickens
Burke High	Lindsa McIntyre
Conley Elementary	Joseph Foley
Dearborn Middle	Jose Duarte
Dorchester Academy	Kwesi Moody
ECC at Fifield	Maria Mullen
Edwards Middle	Leo Flanagan, Jr.
Eliot K-8	Traci walker Griffith
Frederick Middle	Donna Mack
Gardner Pilot Academy	Erica Herman
Haley Elementary	Angel Charles
Harbor School	Nadia Cyprien
Henderson Elementary	Patricia Lampron
Holmes Elementary	Phanenca Babio
Jackson/Mann K-8	Andy Tuite
Lee Elementary	Kimberly E. Curtis-Crowley
Lyndon K-8	Kathleen Tunney; Andre Ward
Lyon 9-12	Jean-Dominique Herve Anoh
Lyon K-8	Deborah Rooney
Manning Elementary	Ethan d'Ablemont Burnes
Mason Elementary	Harolyn Bowden
Mendell Elementary	Julia Bott
Perry K-8	Edward Lee
Rogers Middle	Corbett Coutts
Roosevelt K-8 (3-8)	Emily Glasgow
West Roxbury Academy	Rudolph Weekes
Winship Elementary	Louise Kuhlman
Young Achievers K-8	

Appendix 2: Inclusive Feeder Patterns

	Current Feeder School	Is feeder school inclusive?
Zone A		
Adams Elementary	Edwards or Umana	Edwards-yes
Eliot K-8	N/A	yes

Zone B		
Gardner Elementary	N/A	yes
Lyon K-8	N/A	yes
Winship Elementary	Edison K-8	no

Zone C		
Manning Elementary	BTU K-8	no
Mendell Elementary	Timilty Middle	no

Zone D		
Mason Elementary	Dearborn MS	yes
Perry K-8	N/A	yes

Zone E		
Henderson Elementary	Harbor MS	yes
Holmes Elementary	Frederick MS	no

Zone F		
Haley Elementary	Irving MS	no

Zone G		
Bates Elementary	Irving MS	no
Roosevelt K-8	N/A	yes