

Innovations in Education

OVERVIEW

Thanks to the strong support of the Mayor, City Council, and School Committee and effective leadership, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) has made considerable progress over the past decade. Boston's comprehensive education reform plans, Focus on Children and Focus on Children II, have guided the progress in the Boston Public Schools. The unifying goal of the strategic reform plan has been to accelerate the continuous improvement of teaching and learning to enable all students to meet high standards. Results of this work have been encouraging despite the difficult fiscal context of recent years. Although FY08 will still present fiscal challenges, the budget will allow BPS to effectively support its teaching and learning priorities.

Focus on Children

Focus on Children, adopted in July 1996, emphasized the goal of improving teaching and learning to enable all students to achieve high standards of performance. The entire BPS community – educators, administrators, families, students, and private partners – worked towards this goal. The efforts of Focus on Children had a positive, measurable impact on public education in Boston. Test scores and other data show that Boston's schools and students demonstrated continuous improvement over the first phase of Focus on Children.

Focus on Children II, adopted by the School Committee in April 2001, emphasized the goal of whole school improvement. Whole school improvement is a collaborative process that leads to measurable improvement in student performance. It requires all stakeholders to look at a school's many challenges and opportunities not in isolation, but in their entirety. Focus on Children II set out six essentials of learning:

- Use effective instructional practices and create a collaborative school climate to improve student learning;

- Examine student work and data to drive instruction and professional development;
- Invest in professional development to improve instruction;
- Share leadership to sustain instructional improvement;
- Focus resources to support improvement in instruction and in student learning; and
- Partner with families and the community to support student learning.

BPS Operating Budget

The Boston Public Schools' FY08 budget, totaling \$782.5 million, represents a \$35.0 million increase over the FY07 appropriation. This budget reflects the Mayor's continued commitment to education. It demonstrates that despite fiscal challenges, education remains a top priority for the City of Boston.

Despite continuing pressures resulting from increases in health insurance and energy costs, the FY08 budget supports a number of critical priorities and achieves several important goals:

- Professional development, school training, and support for implementation of the Achievement Gap policy;
- Expansion of full-day Kindergarten 1 (K1) programs for four- year-olds;
- An increase from seventeen to thirty-one Family and Community Outreach Coordinators;
- Support for English Language Learners;
- Continuing support for low-performing schools, including \$2 million in additional services provided through the Step-Up Initiative, a partnership among the BPS, the City of Boston, and five universities;
- Start up costs for new and expanding K-8 schools;
- Increased capacity for program evaluation and institutional advancement;
- Expansion of the Boston Teacher Residency Program; and

- New resources to form a long-term strategy to address truancy, drop-outs and alternative education capacity and requirements.

In order to fund its priorities, cover increasing fixed costs, and balance the FY08 budget, BPS has taken an “all-funds” approach to budgeting that seeks to align resources with instructional priorities. BPS has estimated and budgeted up-front projected savings associated with vacant budgeted positions, and assessed salary savings generated through attrition in the workforce. BPS has also carefully examined Central Office positions, programs, and business practices to trim the budget. In addition, BPS has instituted multi-year “phase-in” periods for a limited number of teaching and learning initiatives in order to achieve cost savings.

BPS STUDENTS

Student Enrollment

Student enrollment is a key factor in the Boston Public Schools budget. During the budgeting process, BPS projects enrollment levels for each program, grade, and school. The projected enrollment at each school for the upcoming school year then determines the allocation of resources at the school level. As of February 2007, 56,763 students were enrolled in the Boston Public Schools. This enrollment level represents a decrease of 1,041 students from the 57,804 students enrolled in December 2005. The actual February 2007 enrollment represents a decrease of about 10.4% (6,572 students) from the recent enrollment peak of 63,335 reached in December 1999 (See Figure 1).

The enrollment projection of 56,184 students in FY08 anticipates a 1.0% decrease from the FY07 enrollment overall. The Boston Public Schools projects a 1.9% decrease in the number of regular education students from the actual enrollment level in February 2007. Special education enrollment is expected to increase by about 2.2% from the February 2007 enrollment level. Bilingual education/Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) enrollment is projected to decrease by about 1.5% from the February 2007 level.

Currently, 79.2% of Boston Public Schools students are in regular education programs (including

vocational and advanced work, and mainstream special education), 10.4% are in bilingual education, and 10.4% are in substantially separate special education programs. The BPS student population is racially and ethnically diverse. In FY07, the student body was 42% Black, 34% Hispanic, 14% White, 9% Asian, and less than 1% American Indian.

The Boston Public Schools seeks to ensure equal educational opportunities and prevent discrimination and inequalities based on racial, ethnic, or socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, or any other reasons.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Regular Education

Regular education programs at the Boston Public Schools include grades 1 through 12, kindergarten, and early learning opportunities. BPS programs range from early learning to high school programs, from classical education to technology, and from advanced work classes to remedial and alternative education. In addition, adult basic education and evening high school programs are available for Boston’s adult population.

English Language Learners

The Boston Public Schools, through its Office of Language Learning and Support Services (OLLSS), ensures that English Language Learners (ELL)/Limited English Proficient (LEP) students acquire proficiency in English while achieving the same standards as their fluent English-speaking peers. There are approximately 9,700 ELL/LEP students in the Boston Public Schools. BPS offers many choices and services for these students to help them attain English language proficiency and learn content matter. These programs include sheltered English instruction programs, alternative bilingual instruction, Spanish/English two-way bilingual programs, native language literacy, and general education.

Federal and state laws have established specific standards to govern instructional services for ELL/LEP students. Massachusetts General Laws c. 71A, as amended by Chapter 386 of the Acts of 2002, is the law governing the education of English language learners. Known as Question 2, this law

requires that LEP students, with certain exceptions, receive sheltered English instruction until they are proficient in English. Furthermore, NCLB (Title III) requires districts to accelerate student English language proficiency and academic content proficiency as measured by standardized state assessments (MEPA and MCAS).

Since Question 2 took effect in FY04, OLLSS has redefined its mission to achieve a balance between focusing more deeply and systematically on the academic achievement of English Language Learners and monitoring compliance with Question 2. During FY08, OLLSS will work towards:

- Doubling the number of courses mandated by the Massachusetts Department of Education in the four SEI categories to enhance the district's capacity to provide every school with more qualified teachers of English language learners;
- Increasing the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) certified teachers;
- Reassigning a substantial number of certified ESL teachers to schools with the greatest need;
- Continuing the implementation of a multi-year professional development plan focused on enhancing instructional practices in schools and collaborative coaching and learning protocols;
- Continuing to emphasize diagnostic and prescriptive assessment of ELL/LEP students to inform instruction and intervention;
- Providing information to families and other stakeholders regarding the restructuring of programs for ELLs, the location of the instructional programs, and the availability of resources to engage families and the community at large; and
- Providing more direct support for ELLs through the hiring of an additional twenty ESL teachers.

Special Education

The Boston Public Schools provides special education services in both public schools and special education private schools to approximately 11,200 students. In keeping with BPS's goal to enable all students to achieve high standards, BPS's special education services are geared towards mitigating barriers to teaching and learning so that all students can reach citywide learning standards, graduate from high school, and have the tools to choose post-secondary education

and/or employment and contribute to the community. To ensure equal access to all curricula in regular education, all teaching and learning experiences within the special education arena are closely aligned with the Citywide Learning Standards (CLS) and Curriculum Frameworks.

All special education services are provided in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Massachusetts State Regulations (CMR 28), and Boston School Committee policies.

Special education teachers work with students with disabilities to meet the goals and objectives specified in their Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs). Speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, adaptive physical education teachers, and other specialists also provide services as determined through the IEP process.

BPS strives to provide appropriate services to students with disabilities and to serve more students within regular education settings. While many special education students receive instruction in regular education classrooms and resource rooms, approximately 43% of students with disabilities are educated in substantially separate settings to successfully meet their special education needs.

In addition to in-district placements in mainstream or substantially separate placements, BPS is responsible for the educational services of approximately 440 students in out-of-district placements. Students receive out-of-district placements when it is determined that their needs cannot be met in a public school setting, and that a private day school or private residential school is required to meet their educational goals and objectives. BPS is currently fully or partly responsible for paying for services for 397 of these students. Costs range from \$26,116 per year to \$260,950 per year. Tuition rates are established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Rate Setting Commission.

Student/School Support Services

Students in all programs take advantage of a wide range of support services in the schools. These support services create a continuum of support for students with and without disabilities. The Unified Student Services Team offers school medical

services, psychological services, guidance services, and other support services across all grade levels. The Unified Student Services Team collaborates with human services and community agencies to supplement the support services BPS offers.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL DESIGNS

Pilot Schools

Innovation in education is essential to continuous school improvement. In recognition of this fact, BPS and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) collaborated in 1994 to create pilot schools that could serve as laboratories for innovative ideas in quality instruction. Pilot schools, exempt from the BTU contract and School Committee rules and regulations, can test innovative educational ideas that can later be introduced to the entire BPS community. In February 2006, BPS and the BTU agreed to significantly expand the number of pilot schools over the next few years.

Pilot school students' test scores on national and state tests have shown consistent improvement. Reports by the Center for Collaborative Education have suggested that the flexibility pilot schools have been given with regard to budget, staffing, and scheduling has had a positive impact on instruction, the educational environment, post-secondary outcomes, and most importantly, student achievement.

As of FY08, eighteen pilot schools will be in operation, serving an estimated 6,122 students. These pilot schools were created through a request for proposals process.

Boston's pilot schools include: Fenway High School, Young Achievers Science and Math K-8 School, Lyndon K-8 School, Greater Egleston Community High School, Mission Hill K-8 School, The Harbor School, New Mission High School, Boston Arts Academy, Quincy Upper School, TechBoston Academy, Boston Community Leadership Academy, Orchard Gardens K-8 School, Frederick Pilot Middle School, Another Course to College, Lee Academy, Mason Elementary School, Baldwin Early Learning Center, and Gardner Extended Services School.

Horace Mann Charter Schools

The City of Boston has two Horace Mann charter schools that will serve an estimated 570 students in FY08. These schools, the Health Careers Academy and the Boston Day and Evening Academy, were originally founded as pilot schools and were designated as Horace Mann charter schools in 1999. Horace Mann charter schools are similar to pilot schools from many operational, educational, and philosophical perspectives, but they are granted a formal charter from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Horace Mann charter schools submit a budget request to the Superintendent and School Committee each year. The cost of Horace Mann charter schools is included in the BPS operating budget. In accordance with the Massachusetts law governing charter schools, a Horace Mann charter school's budget allocation must be consistent with the allocation to other public schools in the district.

Commonwealth Pilot School

Following faculty approval in January 2007, the English High School was designated one of four Commonwealth Pilot Schools in the state beginning in September 2007. This is a new category of school created by the Massachusetts Board of Education to turn around schools consistently showing insufficient improvement in student achievement.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

External funds are critical to the success of the Boston Public Schools. They are targeted for specific purposes that enhance teaching and learning and are aligned with the general fund budget to support an all-funds approach to budgeting. External funds are provided through formula grants (called entitlements), competitive grants, reimbursement accounts, and other grants, primarily from state and federal sources.

BPS expects to receive \$120.9 million in external funds in FY08, an amount equal to 13.4% of its "all funds" budget. The FY08 projected budget for external funds represents a decrease of approximately \$20.4 million or 14.4% from the FY07 budget. In FY07, federal funding accounted

for 80% of BPS's external funds, state grants comprised 20% of external funds, and private grants made up less than half of one percent of BPS's grant funds. At the time of this writing, BPS was in the process of applying for grants that may be awarded for FY08, but are not yet guaranteed. As a result, the FY08 external funds budget is probably understated.

Federal and State Aid

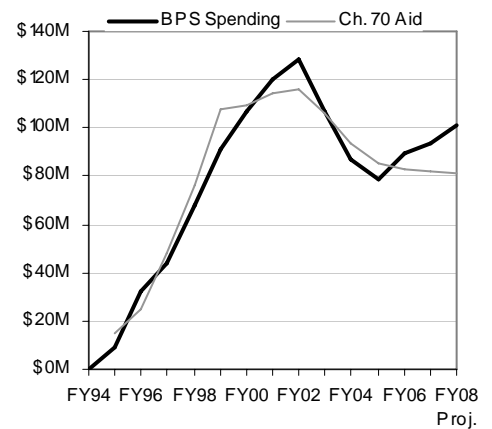
Federal and state aid to the Boston Public Schools has varied over the past few fiscal years. The Boston Public Schools' level of federal funding dropped in FY04 when the federal government began using 2000 Census figures in aid formulas, rose in FY05, leveled off in FY06, dropped in FY07, and is expected to fall further in FY08 as a result of budget cuts to education line items in the federal budget.

The Boston Public Schools' primary source of federal education funding is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). NCLB, established during the cyclical reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2002, pledged resources geared toward improving the quality of education for every child. NCLB expanded accountability through testing and placed greater emphasis on funding programs supported by research that used control groups as its primary method of determining effectiveness.

BPS's primary source of state aid is Chapter 70. The state began distributing school-dedicated Chapter 70 aid to support schools after the enactment of the state's comprehensive school reform law, the Education Reform Act of 1993.

Chapter 70 aid net of charter school tuition and reimbursements dropped sharply in FY04, increased slightly in FY05, dipped again in FY06, and rose slightly in FY07. In FY08, the City of Boston and the Boston Public Schools expect a modest increase in Chapter 70 aid net of charter school tuition and reimbursements.

In addition to state aid to support school operations (Chapter 70), the school funding system in Massachusetts includes a mandated local level of spending (local contribution) and required annual local spending increases (municipal revenue growth factor). The City has consistently met these requirements, and contributed beyond the level of funding required.



Cumulative Change in BPS Spending & Chapter 70 Aid
FY94-FY08 Adjusted to 2000 dollars

Figure 2

(See Figure 2 for changes in school spending and Chapter 70 aid levels.)

Additionally, the state provides important aid to mitigate the financial costs of educating students with disabilities. With "circuit breaker" reimbursements, the state shares the cost of educating students with disabilities once the cost to educate those students exceeds a threshold amount. "Circuit breaker" aid was enacted in 2000 and implemented in 2004.

Prior to FY2005 the Commonwealth provided annual funds to offset the cost of school transportation. The City received \$9.1 million in FY04 for the cost of student transportation, a cost that has since been absorbed by the City.

(Please see the Revenue Estimates Section for more detail on school aid.)

Private Partnerships

The Boston Public Schools, in collaboration with several non-profit partners, has been very successful in leveraging grants and donations from private foundations, corporations, and occasionally individuals to support BPS's educational mission. In FY08, BPS will benefit from major grants from foundations as well as partnerships with local organizations.

With supporting grants from the Barr Foundation, approximately \$408,000 is expected in private funds to support early childhood education in FY08. Funding will be used mainly to support five K1 classroom coaching positions. About five

percent of the funds will support the development of a parent guide, *Milestones*, which will provide information to parents on the appropriate developmental stages of their children. Another three percent will be used to support the evaluation of early childhood playgroups in the district.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has made a substantial grant contribution to support the work of BPS in transitioning toward small schools as part of their high school renewal and pilot school initiatives. BPS expects to have available approximately \$1.8 million from the Gates Foundation to support small school development and implementation in FY08. Gates Foundation funds were awarded through an intermediary, Jobs for the Future, which in turn makes funds available to school awardees through the Boston Educational Development Foundation (BEDF).

The Boston Public Schools Office of Human Resources has secured private foundation resources to implement innovative initiatives to improve customer service and enhance BPS's ability to recruit and retain outstanding educators. Over the past three years, a total of \$3.45 million in private grants have been raised to support the HR reinvention, including \$650,000 for FY08. In particular, the Broad Foundation and an anonymous local foundation have been generous in their support of BPS's efforts to upgrade its information systems and develop state-of-the-art technology-based recruitment and staffing tools.

The Boston Public Schools will receive financial and in-kind contributions from several local organizations in FY08. The non-profit Boston Educational Development Foundation (BEDF) serves as a fiscal agent for relatively small donations awarded to individual schools by corporate partners, foundations, or individual donors. As of March 2007, BEDF's accounts had balances totaling \$7.06 million dollars.

BPS has a long-running tradition of working with numerous independent organizations to help bring additional resources, expertise, and guidance to Boston's youth and BPS students in particular. BPS seeks to have each school build a partnership not only with a college or university, but also with a business or foundation, arts or cultural organization, and health or human services

provider. Through the Step-Up program, five area universities have made a commitment of resources totaling \$10 million over five years. These resources will be used to support underperforming schools.

Performance Indicators and Standards

Overview

BPS is committed to using performance indicators and standards to mark its progress. The goal of its accountability system is to promote continuous improvement in teaching and learning in every classroom and every school.

Federal and state funding guidelines also require BPS to track student progress. Changes in federal and state law over the past several years have changed the district's role with respect to accountability. Under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), federal regulations define the specific criteria for which schools will be held accountable, and on which sanctions and/or rewards are based. NCLB requires that states set standards for achievement and implement testing for students to see whether those standards are being attained, not only by the population as a whole, but also by student subgroups. Subgroups include students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, and students from all major ethnic and racial groups. At the state level, a provision in the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 stipulated that all students from the class of 2003 forward must pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) in order to receive a high school diploma.

Following are descriptions of the performance indicators that BPS currently uses in accordance with federal and state law. (*Performance Indicator & Standards data can be found in the Education chapter in Volume II of the City of Boston FY08 Budget.*)

Adequate Yearly Progress

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the amount of improvement toward student proficiency that a school or district must demonstrate each year, on average, to close performance gaps and have all students performing at proficient or advanced levels in English language arts and mathematics by 2014. AYP is determined separately for English language arts and mathematics. The amount of progress that is deemed to be “adequate” depends on a school’s or district’s performance level relative to state performance targets for each rating cycle, and the extent to which a school has improved relative to its baseline for that rating period. A rating cycle represents a two-year period over which MCAS performance is averaged. Cycle I, the current baseline, spanned 1999 and 2000, Cycle II spanned 2001 and 2002, Cycle III spanned 2003 and 2004, and Cycle IV spanned 2005 and 2006. A school is considered to have made AYP for Cycle IV if:

1. Performance is at or above the State Performance Target for Cycle IV (proficiency index of 68.7 or higher for mathematics; 80.5 or higher for English language arts) or
2. The school meets or exceeds the Improvement Target for all students overall and for all subgroups.

Daily Student Attendance

Student attendance is an indicator of student exposure to school instruction. It is calculated as the average daily attendance divided by the average daily membership based on data provided by each school to the Records Management Unit using certain grades at different schools and excluding kindergarten. High rates of student attendance are a basic requirement underlying school effectiveness. BPS expects student attendance to continuously improve.

Dropouts

The dropout rate is regarded as a significant indicator of a school’s effectiveness. According to state guidelines established in FY92, students in grades 6-12 are counted as dropouts if they leave school during the year from July 1 to June 30 for any reason other than transfer, graduation, death, or expulsion with an option to return. BPS expects the dropout rate to continuously decline.

MCAS Tests: Distributions

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is a statewide standardized test that measures student performance and serves to seek educational accountability from their respective school systems. MCAS data present the percentages of students at each school that fall into each of the four MCAS Performance Levels. Level 1 denotes “failing,” Level 2 denotes “needs improvement,” Level 3 denotes “proficient,” and Level 4 denotes “advanced.”

In the analyses of MCAS scores, percentages are based on the total number of students required to take the test. This includes regular education students, students with disabilities tested with standard accommodations, and limited English proficient (LEP) students. BPS expects that the percentage of students in Level 1 will continuously decrease and the percentages of students in Levels 3 and 4 will increase.

Promotions

Promotion rates are intended to reflect academic proficiency year-to-year during the standard school year. Therefore, promotion rates are calculated as the percentage of students promoted to the next grade as of June. They do not include those students who are promoted during the summer. Promotions represent an achievement both for students and for their schools. It should be noted that the more rigorous promotion policy now in place encourages an end to social promotions. BPS expects that after an initial adjustment, promotion rates will continuously improve.

FORMAL BUDGET PROCEDURES

Governance

The seven-member Boston School Committee is appointed by the Mayor to staggered appointment terms and serves as the policy-making body of the Boston Public Schools. This structure was affirmed by the voters of the City of Boston in a referendum held in November 1996. The School Committee appoints a superintendent who serves as the chief executive officer of the Boston Public Schools. The superintendent, who is responsible for the management and supervision of the public schools, reports directly to the School Committee and also serves as a member of the Mayor’s cabinet. At each school, site councils, consisting of the building

administrator, parents, teachers, representatives from collaborating institutions, and a student (at the high school level), assist principals and headmasters in decision-making processes.

The Operating Budget Process

The operating budget serves as a financial plan for carrying out the educational mission of the school system. The operating budget is developed in accordance with the goals and objectives approved by the School Committee and with extensive input from principals, headmasters, school site councils, the superintendent's leadership team, and the larger school community. The budget reflects the goals that the BPS community seeks to achieve during the next fiscal year.

The public school operating budget is developed under the following statutory schedule:

The Superintendent is required to submit to the School Committee a proposed budget for the next fiscal year by the first Wednesday in February.

The School Committee is required to submit to the Mayor estimates of the next fiscal year's operating budget by the fourth Wednesday in February.

The School Committee is required to take "definite action" on the proposed budget by the fourth Wednesday in March. The School Committee may adopt, reject, reduce, or increase any item in the superintendent's recommended operating budget. If the School Committee fails to take action on the Superintendent's recommended operating budget by the fourth Wednesday in March, the budget recommended by the Superintendent is automatically and officially approved.

After School Committee approval of the next fiscal year's annual budget, the Superintendent submits the budget to the Mayor who may approve or reduce the total recommended budget, but who may not allocate among expenditures.

The Mayor must submit the school's operating budget to the City Council for appropriation.

The City Council shall vote on the total amount of the appropriations requested by the Mayor, but neither the Mayor nor City Council shall allocate the appropriations among accounts.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The City's capital planning process supports the Mayor's commitment to education and youth achievement in all neighborhoods across the city. The goals of the capital plan ensure that Boston's educational facilities are equipped to meet the needs of the City's families. Capital expenditures for schools between FY02 and FY06 totaled \$275.1 million. FY07 capital expenditures for schools are estimated at \$31.5 million.

The FY08-12 capital plan includes \$273.0 million for school facilities. In FY08, \$38.3 million in new authorization is proposed. The proposed capital plan includes the following:

- Construction of an addition at Burke High School in Dorchester. The addition will house a new gym and a full-service neighborhood branch library;
- Construction to re-open the Hemenway School in Hyde Park;
- Major renovation at the Cleveland School in Dorchester to update the facility for a future program expansion;
- Renovation of the Russett Road School building in West Roxbury to re-open as a school facility;
- Accreditation repairs at the ACC/BCLA, Madison Park and South Boston Education Complex;
- Upgrades at English High School in Jamaica Plain for transition to their newly designed program; and
- Construction of three new school yards and maintaining equipment installed during prior projects in continued support of the Schoolyard Initiative.

In addition to these highlights, the FY08-FY12 capital plan includes maintenance projects for masonry, roofs, fire alarm replacement, mechanical systems, and internal/external repairs at schools across the City. Project-level detail on capital expenditures can be found in the Education section of Volume II of the FY08 Budget.

Capital investment in high schools has resulted in all schools either maintaining or improving their accreditation status over the past year. The School Building Assistance (SBA) program, administered

by the Massachusetts School Building Authority, is an important revenue source for school renovation and construction. The SBA program reimburses municipalities for some of the costs associated with these capital projects. The SBA program will reimburse the City of Boston for 90% of approved project costs for the Burke High School project. Future projects will be reimbursed at a lower percentage. The City of Boston has submitted six Statements of Interest to the MSBA for consideration of funding in this fiscal year. For the period FY08-12 total estimated payments from the state are estimated at \$60.4 million.