

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN
FOR IMMEDIATE
IMPLEMENTATION

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released a district review report of Boston Public Schools (BPS) in May 2022, following up on the previous report released in March 2020. As outlined in the follow-up report, DESE uses district review reports to support local school districts in establishing or strengthening a cycle of continuous improvement. District reviews identify systems and practices that may be impeding improvement as well as those most likely to be contributing to positive results. In addition to providing information to each district reviewed, DESE uses review reports to identify resources and/or technical assistance to provide to the district.

While the May 2022 district review report notes that BPS has made progress since March 2020, key findings include significant, persistent challenges in BPS. The City of Boston and BPS agree that urgent action must be taken to address the long-standing challenges facing BPS. They further agree to immediately address systemic barriers to educational opportunity, build the operational capacity to implement systemic change, and support Boston's most vulnerable students—including students with disabilities and English learners—in achieving their full potential.

Mayor Michelle Wu, Superintendent Brenda Cassellius, and Boston School Committee Chair Geraldine Robinson on behalf of the City of Boston and the Boston Public Schools agree to pursue urgent corrective action to immediately address the concerns identified in the 2022 BPS follow-up district review report. DESE will provide targeted financial support to BPS for the work outlined in the Systemic Improvement Plan, along with technical assistance, as provided in the letter attached as Appendix B.

The City of Boston and BPS agree to undertake the initiatives outlined below and to be held accountable for reaching specific, identified goals on a clear timeline, and engage with students, families, educators, and community members to shape policies and report progress. The City and BPS's commitments under this Systemic Improvement Plan will continue through June 30, 2025 to allow for full implementation of the measures outlined below. Work to advance the commitments outlined here will begin immediately and will continue after the hiring of the new Boston Public Schools Superintendent and the formation of a City of Boston Children's Cabinet, chaired by the Mayor and the Superintendent.

The City of Boston and BPS Commitments:

Student Safety

Support the physical, social, and emotional well-being of students and ensure a safe school environment.

- By August 15, 2022, begin using an improved, robust system for managing, responding to and resolving complaints from parents and guardians.
- Respond in a timely manner to complaints received from DESE's Problem Resolution System (PRS), including allegations of bullying, as outlined in the Complaint Procedures Guide.
- By August 15, 2022, commission an independent student and staff safety audit to assess safety protocols at schools and make recommendations to ensure safe learning environments for all students across the District, including an evaluation of coordination and communication between BPS and BPD. The audit will be conducted by an individual or entity mutually agreed

upon between Boston/BPS and DESE.

- By September 8, 2022, hire a Coordinator of Problem Resolution who will ensure coordinated district and school investigation and response of all complaints received through the Problem Resolution System. This position will be dedicated to addressing PRS complaints and complaints BPS receives.

Special Education

Undertake a deep redesign of BPS special education services, with policies, procedures, and training to ensure that all students learn in the least restrictive environment, and that all students, regardless of disability status, get the services they need. Building options for students in the least restrictive environment must be the foundation of special education in every school. BPS is committed to inclusionary practices that directly address disproportionate placement of students of color in substantially separate programs.

- By August 15, 2022, engage an entity or team of individuals mutually agreed upon between Boston/BPS and DESE who have a proven track record of success working in urban school districts and who will work with a sense of urgency on improving special education services. The entity or team will meet with the Special Education Parent Advisory Council and other stakeholders, and will make a set of recommendations to the Superintendent.
- By August 15, 2022, BPS will provide DESE its plan for how the district will accomplish the work described in this section until the senior leadership positions are filled.
- By August 15, 2022, develop an updated policy and procedure manual on special education. BPS will train staff on effective implementation of the policies and procedures as part of the professional development provided at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.
- From August 15, 2022 through June 30, 2023, engage a McKinley Schools Working Group that will include the head of the McKinley Schools; a student at the McKinley Schools; a Boston School Committee member, selected by the Chair; and one representative from each of the following: DESE, SpEdPAC, the Boston Teachers Union, and the School's Parent Council. The Chair of the Working Group will be jointly selected by the Superintendent and DESE. The Working Group will be charged with implementing the recommendations of the McKinley Schools Intervention team and guiding the Needs Assessment phase of the building renovations proposed in the city's FY 23-27 Capital Plan.
- By October 15, 2022, the Superintendent will post new positions for a senior leadership team with demonstrated expertise in special education and systems changes in urban education.
- By November 16, 2022, the Superintendent will make a public report to the Boston School Committee on the recommendations from the mutually agreed upon entity or team advising the Superintendent.
- By November 1, 2022, release and begin to implement a district-wide inclusion policy to ensure students are educated in the least restrictive environment and that there is a full continuum of services available for all students. This policy will include short-term objectives and a timeline for implementation, addressing Central Office operational changes, including enrollment and budget processes, specific models for high-quality and inclusive education, and professional development and staff training. To implement the policy effectively, the district will finalize an inclusion plan for all schools that is based upon robust community engagement. The policy will transition from a minutes-based to a percentage-based definition of inclusion and incorporate models to significantly expand partial inclusion and address complex needs.

Transportation

Create a safe, effective, and responsive school transportation system, with immediate reforms to improve on-time school bus arrival rates and eliminate uncovered bus routes (i.e., bus routes that are scheduled but not run).

- Immediately begin implementing the operational reforms negotiated between BPS and the school bus drivers' union, ratified by the union on May 24, 2022, to improve on-time arrivals and eliminate uncovered bus routes.
- Achieve a district-wide school bus on-time arrival rate of 95% or better each month. The on-time arrival rate includes all scheduled bus routes.
- Ensure 99% of BPS school buses will arrive at school within 15 minutes of the start of the school day.
- Report on-time arrival rates to DESE each month, beginning in August 2022 (in order to capture information inclusive of all bus routes, including approved special education school bus routes, charter school bus routes and any uncovered routes).
- By August 15, 2022, launch a diagnostic evaluation of the current BPS transportation system in order to analyze efficiency, performance, equity, and cost. The diagnostic should yield recommendations for route and schedule planning and optimization as well as updated service parameters.

Facilities

Provide welcoming, safe, healthy, energy-efficient, and inspiring environments for students and educators that are conducive to teaching and learning.

- By August 15, 2022, use the district's new Building Dashboard, including ongoing updates, to review all school bathroom facilities and implement a district-wide plan for necessary renovations. BPS will renovate student facilities in at least 15 schools within FY 2023. The selection of the schools will be driven by student need and will seek to avoid disruption to other construction projects underway. Such renovations will be subject to inspection by DESE.
- By October 1, 2022, use the Building Dashboard to create and implement a coherent preventive/deferred maintenance plan.
- By December 31, 2023, create and implement a comprehensive, long-term master facilities plan, incorporating the recommendations of the Facilities Conditions Assessment, expected to be complete by the beginning of SY23-24.

English Learners

Provide high-quality services to all English learners, particularly English learners with disabilities, including rigorous, age-appropriate curricula, enrichment programs, and access to advanced coursework and dual language programs.

- By August 15, 2022, develop a system to ensure that all English learners, including English learners with disabilities, receive all appropriate instruction and appropriate access to grade level content instruction. This should include a process for monitoring the quality of ESL and content instruction for English learners, across program models (SEI, dual language, newcomer, etc.).
- By August 15, 2022, complete the BPS Strategic Plan for Multilingual Learners that outlines steps for expanding access to native language instruction and literacy, including for students with

disabilities and present the Plan to the Boston School Committee as soon as possible during the 2022-2023 school year, but no later than October 12, 2022. The Plan shall include specific action steps related to bilingual, dual and heritage language, Sheltered English Immersion, and English as a Second Language programming.

- Report compliance levels of the City's successor agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Transformation Schools

Improve teaching and learning in BPS's lowest performing schools (see list of Transformation Schools in Appendix A).

- By December 1, 2022, produce an equity analysis on funding for Transformation Schools compared to non-Transformation Schools of similar size and programming and to all BPS schools, and implement a plan to equitably fund its lowest performing schools starting in FY 24.
- By October 1, 2022, consolidate the number of plans required for Transformation Schools into one clearly articulated, robust, evidence-based Quality School Plan for Improvement at each school.
- Provide quarterly briefings to the School Committee and DESE on how the District is supporting the development, implementation, and progress monitoring of the Quality School Plans at each Transformation School.

Data

Put in place the necessary systems and internal controls at the central office and school levels to ensure transparency and accurate data reporting.

- By August 15, 2022, an independent auditor will be hired by DESE to analyze BPS data on a regular basis, will be provided office space in BPS and will receive full access to all BPS data across all academic and operational functions. The allowable scope of the data auditor's access will include all source data and supporting documentation relating to data certified by BPS to DESE. In addition, all source data and supporting documentation relating to transportation services, facilities, student assignment, and internal BPS complaints concerning student safety and bullying will be considered in the scope of access provided to the data auditor. Additional data access requested by the data auditor outside of these areas will be jointly determined by DESE and BPS; this provision, however, does not alter BPS's obligation to respond timely to DESE's requests for data, documentation and other information made in the ordinary course (e.g., inquiries from DESE's Office of Professional Practices Investigations, Problem Resolution System, etc.). This independent auditor will meet on a regular basis jointly with DESE, the City and BPS, and the auditor's review and analysis will be available to the City, BPS and DESE.
- By September 8, 2022, publish revised student withdrawal procedures that outline specific controls that will be in place within the central office and all schools to ensure that state data reporting regarding graduation and dropout requirements are met in a timely and accurate way. Prior to publishing the revised withdrawal procedures, BPS will provide them to DESE for review. BPS will train applicable staff, such as guidance counselors and school leaders, on effective implementation of the policies and procedures for student withdrawal as part of the professional development provided at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.
- By October 1, 2022, launch a Data Working Group with district, school and expert members appointed from a list of candidates jointly acceptable to the Superintendent and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, except that the chair of the Data

Working Group will be selected exclusively by DESE. The Data Working Group will include a DESE representative, and will be charged with monitoring data quality and reporting on withdrawal procedures, graduation rates, on-time arrivals, and other key metrics to be identified.

- By February 2023, the independent auditor will share their analysis and recommendations with the City, BPS and DESE so that Boston may determine what long term resources are needed to sustain improved data quality practices across the system and incorporate necessary investments within the FY 24 budget.

Accountability

Establish enhanced accountability measures.

- Mayor Wu, the City of Boston and BPS will make regular reports on the matters set forth in this Systemic Improvement Plan to the Boston School Committee, and to the Boston community. The first regular report shall occur before August 31, 2022.
- The City of Boston, BPS and DESE will engage in collaborative process to set any additional outcome metrics for the Systemic Improvement Plan.
- The Mayor of the City of Boston, BPS School Committee Chair, BPS Superintendent and the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, or their designees, will meet on a monthly basis during the first year of this plan and every other month during subsequent years to discuss the priority initiatives.
- BPS will continue to work in collaboration with DESE on developing a Performance Management System for all BPS schools.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Mayor, Chair of the School Committee, and Superintendent execute this Systemic Improvement Plan under seal.



The Honorable Michelle Wu
Mayor, City of Boston

Date: 6/27/2022



Jeri Robinson
Chair, Boston School Committee

Date: 6/27/2022



Brenda Cassellius
Superintendent, Boston Public Schools

Date: June 27, 2022

Accepted⁴:

⁴ Nothing in this Systemic Improvement Plan limits any authority, including statutory and regulatory authority, of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, or the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.



Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and
Secondary Education

June 27, 2022
Date: _____

Appendix A
Transformation
Schools

For purposes of the Systemic Improvement Plan, the BPS schools identified as a "Transformation Schools" include:

Washington Irving Middle School Roslindale²
James P. Timilty Middle School Roxbury³
Madison Park Technical Vocational High School Roxbury
David A. Ellis Elementary School Roxbury
Higginson/Lewis K-8 School Roxbury
Lilla G. Frederick Middle School Dorchester
Brighton High School Brighton
Dearborn STEM Academy Roxbury
Sarah Greenwood K-8 School Dorchester
Young Achievers K-8 School Mattapan
King K-8 School Dorchester
Blackstone Elementary School South End
Community Academy of Science and Health Dorchester James J. Chittick Elementary School Hyde Park
John D. Phillbrick Elementary School Roslindale Lyon High School Brighton
Mario Umana Academy East Boston
Excel High School South Boston
Orchard Gardens K-8 School Roxbury
Roger Clap Elementary School Dorchester
Samuel W. Mason Elementary School Roxbury
Edison K-8 School Brighton
Mission Hill K-8 School⁴ Jamaica Plain
Curley K-8 School Jamaica Plain
Condon K-8 School South Boston
Charlestown High School Charlestown
English High School Jamaica Plain
TechBoston Academy Dorchester
James W. Hennigan K-8 School Jamaica Plain
Joseph Lee K-8 School Dorchester
Henry Grew Elementary Hyde Park

² On December 15, 2021, the Boston School Committee voted to close the Washington Irving Middle School.

³ On December 15, 2021, the Boston School Committee voted to close the James P. Timilty Middle School.

⁴ On May 5, 2022, the Boston School Committee voted to close the Mission Hill K-8 School, effective June 30, 2022.



Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-4906

Telephone: (781) 338-3000
TTY: N.E.T. Relay 1-800-439-2370

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

June 27, 2022

The Honorable Michelle Wu
Mayor, City of Boston
1 City Hall Square, Suite 550
Boston, MA 02201

Jeri Robinson
Chair, Boston School Committee
2300 Washington Street
Roxbury, MA 02119

Brenda Cassellius
Superintendent, Boston Public Schools
2300 Washington Street
Roxbury, MA 02119

Subject: Appendix B to the City of Boston and Boston Public Schools Systemic Improvement Plan

Dear Mayor Wu, Chair Robinson, and Superintendent Cassellius:

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will support the work Mayor Wu and the Boston Public Schools (BPS or the district) are undertaking to address the urgent concerns identified in DESE's recent district review report of the district. DESE and BPS agree that the March 10, 2020 MOU between them is terminated, and the supports identified below supersede those included in the MOU and any amendments.

Financial Support

DESE will provide BPS with \$10 million in contracted services, in-kind resources, and targeted grants sought by BPS to support the work identified in the Systemic Improvement Plan. This \$10 million will be provided to BPS over a three-year period (i.e., an average of \$3.3 million a year for three years). Among other purposes, these funds may be used to support the district as follows:

- To commission the independent student and staff safety audit;
- To engage the consulting team on special education and support implementation of the district inclusion policy;
- To create or procure an observation tool for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to support school leadership teams in assessing the quality of ESL instruction, consistent with BPS's curriculum;
- To conduct a diagnostic evaluation of BPS's transportation system that seeks to identify

- efficiencies, and opportunities for improvement;
- To provide ongoing technical assistance on how the district could create community and vendor workforce pipelines;
- To provide professional development and training to BPS staff consistent with the Systemic Improvement Plan; and
- To support the continuing work of the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning.

Technical Assistance

Complaint Resolution

- By August 15, 2022, DESE will begin to provide periodic trainings for BPS central office and building leaders, tailored to the specific needs of BPS, with a focus on understanding guidance within DESE's PRS Complaint Procedures Guide.
- In the fall of 2022, DESE will offer a training for district human resources staff about the ESL emergency licenses and SEI endorsement topics.

English learners

- DESE will complete a previously scheduled Tiered Focus Monitoring Review of BPS's English Learner program and will provide technical assistance as appropriate following that review.

Data

- Within a reasonable period of time following receipt of the necessary information from all school districts, DESE will provide BPS with a comprehensive list of all students included in the current four graduation cohorts. The file will identify each student's accountable school, graduation cohort year, and last-recorded enrollment status.

Facilities

- By September 8, 2022, DESE will identify a point-person who will inspect student bathroom facilities on an agreed-upon, ongoing schedule to confirm that these essential facilities are properly maintained throughout the school year.

School Supports

Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning

- In addition to providing some financial support for the Kaleidoscope Collective for Learning, DESE will also assign one or more DESE staff members to work with BPS to support the schools in the Kaleidoscope network.

Performance Management System

- In addition to providing some financial support for the Performance Management System, DESE will also assign one or more DESE staff members to the project.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education