“Getting it Right”

Student Assignment & School Closings in Boston

"The good news," Groover said, "is we have a golden opportunity in the next few months to get it right."

Prepared by: Gina Chirichigno
March 28, 2011
Ford Secondary Education and Racial Justice Collaborative
There's a lack of moral, political, and intellectual integrity in this suppression of awareness of how social and economic disadvantage lowers achievement. Our first obligation should be to analyze social problems accurately; only then can we design effective solutions. Presenting a deliberately flawed version of reality, fearing that the truth will lead to excuses, is not only corrupt but also self-defeating.

—Richard Rothstein
Overview of Presentation

1) Context - Why Worry About Student Assignment?
2) The Case of Boston
   1) Student Assignment
   2) School Closings (Barbara & Rahsaan)
   3) Student Assignment, Round 2
3) Parallels with the Suburbs? (Amy)
4) National Coalition on School Diversity (Saba)
Understanding the Context
The Challenges Facing Many Public Schools

Social conditions affect schools and student performance.

- poverty
- inadequate housing
- exposure to violence
- social isolation

*Schools did not cause these problems. They aren’t able to singlehandedly cure them. However, the structure, culture and operation of schools often exacerbate, rather than reduce, inequalities.*
Similar to school closings, school districts around the country have been cutting transportation budgets. When opportunity is not evenly distributed, student assignment policies act as “gatekeepers” to quality education. The district’s responsibility is to provide all of its students with the most optimal learning conditions possible. Effective assignment policies can help ensure that individual schools do not become disproportionately overwhelmed – this benefits the district as a whole. Transportation is often a necessary expense, connecting students to similar levels of educational opportunity. There is no quick fix.
The structure, culture, and operation of schools often exacerbate, rather than reduce, inequalities.

- Student assignment policies are structural interventions that recognize and attempt to address the unequal geography of opportunity.
- Ideally, student assignment policies help place more students in academic environments that are already stable, smoothly functioning, and high-performing -- districts can take steps to ensure that these policies benefit students who are most in need of increased access to educational opportunity.
- School closures and transformations lead to changes in student assignment. Sometimes these changes may be minor, but in Boston school closures are tied together with the creation of a new student assignment plan.
Berkeley Unified School District describes the theory behind its student assignment policy in this way: “[C]hoosing or attending one school rather than another will confer neither significant advantage or disadvantage to pupils enrolled at any individual site.”

Wake County, NC assignment plan (recently voted down by a new school committee)

- No more than 40% of school population qualifying for FRL
- No more than 25% of school population performing below grade level on standardized tests
- Students originally assigned to “base” school, parents must apply for a different placement - preserves some degree of choice.
Uneven Geography of Opportunity

In our society, people do not have to exert the same amount of effort to access similar levels of opportunity.

- John Powell’s Escalator Analogy:
  - Some people ride up an escalator to reach opportunity
  - Others have to run up the down escalator to gain access to the same opportunities

- A powerful frame that prevents ordinary people from confronting the educational opportunity structure is the “Beat the Odds” myth

Educators must help individual children “beat the odds” but our education policy should be focused on changing the odds.
Professor Douglas Harris looked for schools serving low-income students that recorded high scores in two subjects, in two grades for two consecutive years.

The “Beat the Odds” Myth

Percentage of high poverty schools that are actually “Beating the Odds?”

1.1%

In schools with high levels of poverty and enrolling high numbers of students of color, the percentage of "high flyers" falls to...
Put another way, low-poverty schools are 22 times more likely to be high performing than high-poverty schools (Harris, 2006).

Research has found that the effects of poverty increase at two thresholds: between 7-20% and above 40% -- struggling schools (and school districts) often far exceed these thresholds (Galster, Quercia, and Cortes, 2000).

Students of color are far more likely to experience what is described as double (or triple) jeopardy -- living in a poor family, residing in a low-income neighborhood, and attending a high-poverty school (Acevedo-Garcia, 2008).

It is possible for students to be successful in high-poverty schools. But, if our goal is to change the odds, we have to change the structures of educational opportunity.

Can reducing racial and poverty concentration help change the educational opportunity structure?
Overall, desegregated high schools played a more effective role in counterbalancing student-level nonschool problems than did segregated ones, especially when Blacks and Hispanics [had] attended integrated elementary and middle schools.

Whites appeared to have benefited from desegregated schools in similar ways, but to a lesser degree...

Argun Saatcioglu, Non School Problems and School Desegregation, Teacher’s College Record (2010)
Why Desegregation?

- Desegregation reduces the concentration of social “non-school” challenges related to poverty and neighborhood inequality that impede learning.

- Institutions are less likely to become overwhelmed with such challenges. Advantaged students are also more evenly distributed.

All students benefit from diversity and the system becomes more effective overall if challenges are more evenly distributed.
The District Ecosystem

By thinking of school districts as ecosystems, the importance of student assignment policies as educational reform tools becomes more apparent.
A well-designed student assignment plan can narrow inequality, but cannot completely eliminate it. This is especially true in hypersegregated school districts like Boston.
The Case of Boston
Boston Public Schools

- In 2010-11, low-income students account for 74.4% of BPS’s student population
- 30.3% of the BPS student population is comprised of students with Limited English Proficiency
- BPS is a “majority minority” school district, comprised mostly of Latino (40.9%) and Black students (35.5%)
- As with most metro areas, segregation from opportunity in Boston exists mostly between, not within, districts

But there **is** evidence that segregation within the district matters.
Operating within a Complex Reform Landscape

- Emergence of More Charter Schools
- Student Assignment
- Circle of Promise
- School Closings

And so on....
The Geographic Footprint of Educational Challenges

Commonwealth Priority Schools

Concentrated Poverty–Black Population
# Timeline of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>February 2009</strong></td>
<td>Preliminary Proposal: Five-zone student assignment model (Feb. 4)</td>
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<td>Preliminary analysis of 5-zone student assignment model (Feb. 25)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Globe article ‘New school zone plan could hurt poorest neighborhoods’ (Feb. 25)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Globe article ‘School zone plan to be reworked’ (Feb. 26)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Globe editorial ‘Beyond the busing era’ (Feb. 27)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>April 29, 2009</strong></td>
<td>Presentation of revised 5-zone plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 7, 12, 18, 20, 26 and 26, 2009</strong></td>
<td>Community Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 2009</strong></td>
<td>Coalition for Equal Quality Education hosts Community Summit (May 14)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee submit analysis of five zone plan (May 29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>June 3, 2009</strong></td>
<td>Superintendent’s recommendations at school committee meeting (June 26 vote delayed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>July 2009</strong></td>
<td>CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee write follow-up letter to Superintendent, propose Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee meet with Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>August 2009</strong></td>
<td>BPS applies for TASAP funding with help of CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Globe article ‘Boston shelves 5-zone proposal’ (publicly announces TASAP application)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>October 2009</strong></td>
<td>BPS is one of eleven districts awarded TASAP funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>November 2009</strong></td>
<td>CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee draft a memorandum of understanding, detailing several concerns related to communication and lack of transparency in working with BPS. The district does not sign onto the memorandum of understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>January 18, 2010</strong></td>
<td>Governor Patrick signs into law a bill raising charter school caps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Reform Timeline

**March 2010**
- School Committee Approves K-8 Pathway for Roslindale (March 10)
- CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee submit letter detailing concerns about communication and transparency with respect to the Roslindale K-8 plan, which involves student assignment.
- CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee host Golden Opportunity Summit (March 29)

**June 2010**
- BPS Holds Neighborhood Day of Dialogue at 17 locations across Boston (by invitation)
- Globe article, ‘At school focus groups, parents voice concerns, call for more input’ (June 27)
- Globe article, ‘Some object as schools turn to focus groups’ (June 26)

**July 2010**
- CHHIRJ, ACLU, and Lawyers’ Committee release open letter related to student assignment in BPS
- Globe article, ‘Rights groups sever ties’ (July 15)
- Globe editorial, ‘In school-assignment debate, role of rights groups is key’ (July 22)

**August 2010**
- Breakfast with Mayor (August 3)
- Stakeholders’ Day of Dialogue (Aug. 17)
- Massachusetts is awarded $250M in Race to the Top funds (Aug. 24)

**September 2010**
- Diversitydata.org releases report on segregation in 100 largest US metros
- Globe article ‘Area school segregation called rife Hub, Springfield regions among US worst’ (Sept. 20)
- Globe op-ed, Derrick Jackson, ‘Apartheid in our schools’ (Sept. 21)
- Globe editorial ‘Reforms, not desegregation, will bring school advances’ (Sept. 26)
- Globe op-ed ‘ed reform, integration: not an either-or proposition’ (Sept. 29)

"We don’t have the option of walking away from these important issues," Johnson said.
# Reform Timeline

| October 2010 | Diversitydata.org releases a second report, addressing prospects for equity in student assignment within BPS  
|             | “Redesign and Reinvest” proposal first introduced, calling for the closure of 6 schools (Oct. 6)  
|             | Globe article, 'City parents to fight proposed school closings' (Oct. 26)  
| November 2010 | Globe article, 'School chief's plan reversals draw fire' (Nov. 15)  
| December 2010 | “Redesign and Reinvest” presented to school committee (Dec. 2)  
|              | Globe article, 'More schools targeted to close in Boston' (Dec. 2)  
|              | Globe editorial, 'City schools face stark choice: academics or empty buildings' (Dec. 6)  
|              | Globe article, 'Union says city officials met secretly over charter schools' (Dec. 7)  
|              | School committee passes “Redesign and Reinvest” (Dec. 15, vote originally set for Nov. 3)  
|              | –closing 11 schools and merging 10 others  
|              | Globe article, 'At Agassiz School, progress and a sense of betrayal' (Dec. 15)  
|              | Globe editorial, 'Menino's schools plan: Rising to the charter challenge' (Dec. 15)  
|              | Globe article, 'Public has no recourse for school closings' (Dec. 20)  
| March 2011 | Globe article, ‘Bias alleged in Boston school closing plan’ (March 1)  
| April 2011 | Topic of student assignment re-emerges at School Committee Meeting (April 13)  

To learn more about school closings in Boston, go to: [http://blip.tv/file/4589055](http://blip.tv/file/4589055)  
(video created by Robert Lamothe)
Concerns with the Proposed 5 Zone Plan
How the 5-Zone Plan Would Exacerbate Existing Inequalities

### The Current 3-Zone Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Racial Demographics</th>
<th>SES Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Average</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Zone</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Zone</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Zone</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>

### The 5-Zone Plan (As Proposed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Racial Demographics</th>
<th>SES Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Asian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Average</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone #1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone #2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zone #3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone #4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone #5</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Under the 5 Zone Plan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Increase</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Student Population</td>
<td>8-50% (range = 42)</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino Student Population</td>
<td>28-67% (range = 39)</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Student Population</td>
<td>7-21% (range = 14)</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Student Population</td>
<td>4-22% (range = 18)</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Lunch Student Population</td>
<td>59-76% (range = 23)</td>
<td>+17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced Lunch Student Population</td>
<td>7-11% (range = 4)</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the 18 schools in Boston with a White student population of 2x or more the BPS average:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Low Income</th>
<th>Free Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin ELC</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph P Tyner</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin D Roosevelt</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Latin Academy</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>38.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manassah E Bradley</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard J Murphy</td>
<td></td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>46.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Clap</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick O'Hearn</td>
<td></td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliot Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozart</td>
<td></td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Lyon</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lyndon</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joseph P Manning</td>
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<td>15.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Latin</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>21.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joyce Kilmer</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warren- Prescott</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver Hazard Perry</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston Collegiate Charter School (Charter)</td>
<td></td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the significance of lower concentrations of low-income students?

- 14 of these schools rank among the top 18 schools with the LOWEST concentration of low-income students;
- Only one of these schools is designated as a Commonwealth Priority School.
How do the students in these schools perform, compared to BPS and Massachusetts averages?

We studied how 5th grade students in the 14 schools taking this test performed on the 2008 English MCAS, finding:

- **Students Needing Improvement:**
  - 12 schools had lower percentages of students needing improvement than the BPS average of 45%.
  - 8 schools performed better than even the state average of 30% needing improvement.

- **Students in Warning Status:**
  - 11 schools had lower percentages of students in warning status than the BPS average of 26%.
  - 2 of these schools performed better than the state average of 8% in warning status.
Cause for Hope?

- Superintendent Johnson recommends that the school committee delay its vote on the Five Zone proposal
- Boston applies for, and is awarded, TASAP funding from the DOE
- Boston formally tables Five Zone proposal

THE PROSPECT of saving $10 million a year in transportation costs is plenty of reason to like Boston School Superintendent Carol Johnson’s latest plan to dismantle the city’s three sprawling student assignment zones in favor of five more-accessible sectors. But the greater value of the plan is its potential to improve the quality of education in each of the new zones.
What Was Supposed to Happen...

- Community-driven planning process
- “If successful, the strategy employed in this effort will become one of the district’s primary tools to actively engage families and the community in district-wide policy development and programmatic changes.”

“A Model for Participatory Decisionmaking”

“This is a cultural and structural change that has the potential to mend relations between the school district and the community it serves.”
## The BPS TASAP Concept

### Three Major Components

|   | Student Assignment Working Group | • This 12 person Working Group to include BPS educators, parents and administrators as well as community and organizational representatives.  
|   |   | • The Working Group to be selected by a cross-functional, executive-level district team.  
|   |   | • The Working Group to meet weekly to guide the TASAP process.  
|   | Advisory Group | • This voluntary committee to consist of up to 10 experts from different fields who participate in the Summit.  
|   |   | • The Advisory Committee to offer recommendations on the student assignment plan model as it is being developed.  
|   |   | • The Advisory Committee to consist of BPS parents, educators, and/or administrators as well as civil rights organizations, field professionals, scholars and researchers, recipients and beneficiaries of the project, and/or community based organizations.  
|   | Community Meetings | • A series of facilitated community meetings to take place in 12 different neighborhoods in Boston.  
|   |   | • Each neighborhood to have an opportunity to develop recommendations and submit feedback.  

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1. **Student Assignment Working Group** *Meets Weekly*
2. **Advisory Group** *Meets Monthly*
3. **Community Meetings**
### The BPS TASAP Concept

#### Post-Summit Work

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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</table>
| **1** | Post-Summit Report | • A team of field experts and community stakeholders would produce a series of recommendations to be used by the Working Group.  
• Was to be based partially on surveys and other feedback from the Summit. |
| **2** | Facilitated Neighborhood Dialogue Teams  
*Meet 3x each* | • Community meetings to take place in 12 different neighborhoods in Boston.  
• Teams would be led by trained facilitators with no stake in the process.  
• Groups would be: 1) presented with Summit report and recommendations; 2) provided information on key legal, financial, and structural factors to consider; and 3) be guided through the recommendation-writing process. |
| **3** | Writing of Plan | • Working group review of neighborhood recommendations.  
• Summary of neighborhood recommendations to be used in making final decisions on student assignment.  
• Consultation with individuals and organizations with student assignment expertise, as needed. |
| **4** | Review & Submission to School Committee | • Superintendent’s Review  
• Superintendent and Executive Team to be fully engaged in process and have provided on-going feedback.  
• School committee vote. |
| **5** | Outreach, Education, & Marketing | • Concrete steps to ensure that members of the general public have been given adequate information about the process and resulting plan. |
What Happened Instead...

- School closures and mergers
- Transportation and student assignment changes
- Academic service model changes
- Changes to our teachers contract including performance evaluations, benefits and flexibility.

“These are difficult and complicated issues, but confronting all of them is vital to our continued success. All of these measures will be necessary to close a budget gap that stands at $63 million for next year alone.”

Introducing “Redesign and Reinvest”

Civil Rights Groups Sever Ties with TASAP
The “Community Engagement” Process

- With the help of local organizations, BPS hosted a “Day of Dialogue” in 17 locations across the city in June 2010.
- A similar meeting was held in August for stakeholders who had not been invited and/or were unable to participate in June.
- Approximately 400 people completed an online survey.

BPS surveyed participants asking them:
- When you think of a high quality school, what factors are most important?
- What criteria should be used to make choices regarding school merger, closure or expansion?

Survey responses are being used to justify BPS school closure plans.
When you think of a high quality school, what factors are most important?

Day of Dialogue Responses

- School environment/student experience: 26%
- Instructional quality: 20%
- Parent/community engagement: 9%
- Academic options: 46%

Online Survey Responses

- School environment/student experience: 19%
- Academic options: 30%
- Instructional quality: 45%
- Parent/community engagement: 6%

BPS Language: “This chart shows the general factors that parents and students told us are the factors that are ‘most important’ to creating a high quality school.”

Question: Is there a difference between factors defining versus “factors most important to creating” high quality schools?
When you think of a high quality school, what factors are most important?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Options</th>
<th>46%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two-way bilingual</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Programming (AWC, AP, IB)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Inclusion Programs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before/after-school programs</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Requests (e.g., civics, ethics)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Supports</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montessori</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K1 early learning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Emotional Behavioral Services*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational and Community Experience Programs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Prep</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Environment / Student Experience</th>
<th>26%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety and Discipline*</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School building is in good condition</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8 for continuity/Fewer Transitions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close to home</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Diversity/Competence (curriculum, staff)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive School</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition/Food</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Classrooms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Quality</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Performance/Results</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent/Community Engagement</th>
<th>9%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Programs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong relationships with the community*</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Reputation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BPS Reported a wide range of responses to these questions. For example:
- Safety and Discipline 0-59%
- Social Emotional Behavioral Services - only SpEd group mentioned - 19%
- Community Relationships 0-35%

Day of Dialogue: Specific Responses
When you think of a high quality school, what factors are most important?

- Effective Teachers
- Academic Performance (e.g., test scores, student attendance, graduation)
- Pilot school status
- Art and music electives
- School Reputation
- Two-way bilingual
- Advanced Work Classes
- Advanced Placement Classes
- Strong relationships with the community
- Montessori
- School building in good condition
- International Baccalaurate

Online Survey: Specific Responses

- No report for online responses.
- Cannot compare data between the two surveys - different scales used.
What criteria should be used to make choices regarding school closure, merger or expansion?

### Day of Dialogue Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic performance/results</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Discipline</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic distribution (equity)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand (school choice)</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimize disruption to students</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty seats (capacity)</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational, facility costs</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start time/before &amp; after school programs</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility safety</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal leadership</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small schools</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community interaction</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special services (inclusion)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Online Survey Responses

- Academic performance: 32%
- Geographic distribution: 15%
- Demand: 12%
- Empty seats: 10%
- Minimize disruption: 8%
- Operational costs: 7%
- Start time: 6%
- Facility safety: 3%
- Principal leadership: 2%
- Small schools: 2%
- Community interaction: 1%
- Technology: 1%
- Special services: 1%
What the Numbers Don’t Tell Us...

To what extent can the district’s data be reasonably relied upon for decision making purposes?

- Wide variation in responses between groups, relatively low number of participants, etc.

- Many participants noted that they did not know the exact purpose of the meeting, thought they were there to talk about transportation, and/or had been notified only a few days prior.

- Participants also consistently mentioned that BPS should “be more transparent” and that they wanted “more frequent and open communication.”

- One stakeholder noted that “the timing of the stakeholder meeting was poor” and requested more opportunities to provide feedback; another “felt like stakeholders were being asked to help BPS decide which schools to close.”

“The private nature of the meetings - 15 to 20 people had been invited to each one – had sparked criticism from community groups and parents, who worried that many people would be left out of the discussions of how the district addresses declining enrollment that has left thousands of seats empty amid financial hard times.”
Civil Rights Groups’ Recommendations

• Publicly commit to the TASAP community engagement process with the assistance of an independent facilitator
• Improve public communication about the TASAP grant
• Use TASAP funds to seek expert advice and assistance
• Include ELL and SpEd advocates on Working & Advisory Groups
• Create a housing and schools task force
• Develop a sense of shared responsibility for and ownerships of TASAP by creating a sustained dialogue about student assignment, race and equity
• Work with state and local leaders to develop a regional equity and diversity plan
• Directly confront the lingering effects of school desegregation in Boston
• Coordinate and align student assignment with other reforms
• Avoid dichotomies - do not put transportation and creating quality schools at odds with one another
• Expand awareness through the media
In Need of Improvement

• Develop a concrete affirmative vision that is community driven.
• More coordination on messaging and framing (also integrate personal narratives).
• Create more forums for discussion - don’t wait for the district to do it.
• Don’t lose opportunities for proactive strategizing in the summer months and/or during school vacations.
• Honest and frequent communication within and between coalitions/groups is vital.

Lessons Learned

Proficient

• Keep the conversation going, and keep steering it back to equity.
• Engage local scholars for help with research.
• Frame the issue into a regional and/or statewide context.
The OCR Complaint

Barbara Fields
Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts

Rahsaan Hall
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law of the Boston Bar Association
In February 2011, the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of the Boston Bar Association (LCCR) and the Black Educators’ Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM) filed a complaint with the US DOE’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

- The complaint alleges discrimination on the basis of race against Boston’s Black and Latino students and parents, in violation of Title VI.
- Title VI prohibits institutions that receive Federal dollars from discriminating against students or their parents on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- Specifically, the complaint alleges that the BPS Redesign and Reinvest plan, which proposes to close several schools in the district, disproportionately burdens Black and Latino students.
- A disproportionate number of school closings will affect students from Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan, as compared to schools serving higher percentages of white students, such as West Roxbury, Roslindale, and Brighton.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston Average</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affected by Closings</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We are not suggesting that the District continue to blindly pour money into schools that have been identified as failing. However, we are concerned that the burden of making these improvements overwhelmingly falls on the backs of black and brown children in the city.”

–Rahsaan Hall, LCCR Staff Attorney

“Historically, disproportionate numbers of school closings have occurred in the predominantly Black neighborhoods of the city...BEAM has consistently raised serious questions of equity and fairness during each school closing process. The school closings have had a profound impact on our students, families, and community; creating constant disruption, instability, and uncertainty while failing to provide the quality schools promised by the district. We understand there must be critical decisions made to address the budget and underperformance of schools, but those decisions must be made using a process that is fair and equitable so that all students benefit.”

–Nora Toney, BEAM President
The OCR Complaint: A Closer Look

- Criteria for closures, mergers and expansions not clearly articulated or consistently applied.

- School district has a historical pattern of targeting Black communities for closures, mergers and other disruptions in the stability of education provided.

- Small schools that serve predominantly Black students being closed, while small schools serving larger percentages of White students are not.

- BPS removed Clap School (which serves a disproportionate percentage of White students compared to district average) from list of schools originally slated for closure. The school will now be turned into an “Innovation School”- an option not made evident to other schools slated for closure.

- Unequal transportation burdens will be placed on high school students currently attending the Hyde Park Complex (closure leaves no neighborhood school for these students), who are predominantly Black. These students will be reassigned, in some instances, to schools/programs that have not passed accreditation standards.
• Plan continues a pattern of relocating programs with high percentages of Black students out of buildings soon after they received and/or were slated to receive renovations. In some instances, programs serving larger proportions of White and Asian students replaced relocated ones.

• The district has historically spent money renovating early learning centers that serve higher proportions of white students, while slating for closure the East Zone Early Learning Center, dispersing Black and Latino early learners.

• There is no clearly articulated plan to accommodate ELL and SpEd students at a number of schools slated for closure.

• The district provided unequal opportunities to Black, Latino and immigrant parents for input on BPS’ course of action and development of the plan, compared to those provided to White parents who were better able to access the political process.
Parallels in the Suburbs?

Amy Stuart Wells
Teachers College, Columbia University
The National Coalition on School Diversity

Diversity & Equity Analysis Tools

Saba Bireda

Poverty and Race Research Action Council
In conjunction with Title I funds for school improvement reserved under section 1003(a) of the ESEA, School Improvement Grants under section 1003(g) of the ESEA are used to improve student achievement in Title I schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring so as to enable those schools to make adequate yearly progress and exit improvement status.

The DOE Appropriations Act 2010 provided $546 million for School Improvement Grants in fiscal year (FY) 2010. In addition, the U.S. DOE estimates that, collectively, States have carried over approximately $825 million in FY 2009 SIG funds that will be combined with FY 2010 SIG funds, for a total of nearly $1.4 billion that will be awarded by States as part of their FY 2010 SIG competitions.

http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance02232011.pdf
D-1. What is the definition of “school closure”?

School closure occurs when an LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available.

D-1a. How important is it for an LEA to engage families and the community in the LEA’s decision to close a persistently lowest-achieving school?

It is extremely important to engage families and the school community early in the process of selecting the appropriate school improvement model to implement in a school (see H-4a), but doing so is particularly important when considering school closure.

It is critical that LEA officials engage in an open dialogue with families and the school community early in the closure process to ensure that they understand the data and reasons supporting the decision to close, have a voice in exploring quality options, and help plan a smooth transition for students and their families at the receiving schools. (New for FY 2010 Guidance)
Federal SIG Guidance

- Assigned schools should be within “reasonable proximity” to the closed school
- Preferable to send students who previously attended closed school to higher-achieving schools
- Emphasizes parental choice (assessment of distance v. quality)
School Closing Principles

- Did the school district engage in an adequate community process in determining which schools to close?
- Does the proposed school closing increase or decrease poverty concentration and racial isolation?
- Will students in the closed school have guaranteed access to a higher performing school?
- Will the choices available to students in the closed school be increased (including choices in less poverty concentrated and racially isolated schools)?
- Do parents have more than just a single take-it-or-leave-it choice?
- Will free transportation be made available to ensure that families can exercise their new choices?
- Does any redistricting that occurs as a result of school closings proportionately burden white and non-white children?
The National Coalition on School Diversity

Participating Organizations:

- NAACP Legal Defense Fund
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
- American Civil Liberties Union
- Poverty & Race Research Action Council
- Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
- Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
- Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School
- Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA
- University of North Carolina Center for Civil Rights
- Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University
- Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at UC Berkeley School of Law
- Institute on Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota
Men and women of all races are born with the same range of abilities. But ability is not just the product of birth. Ability is stretched or stunted by the family that you live with, and the neighborhood you live in—by the school you go to and the poverty or the richness of your surroundings. It is the product of a hundred unseen forces playing upon the little infant, the child, and finally the man.

President Lyndon Johnson
June 4, 1965