

City of Boston

In School Committee

March 13, 2013

HOME-BASED MODEL OF SCHOOL CHOICE WITH NO WALK ZONE

ORDERED, That the School Committee hereby approves the Home-Based model of school choice recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the External Advisory Committee (EAC) on School Choice [see section F – Specific Model Recommendations related to Student Assignment Process and Approach, Memo to Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent and Members of the Boston School Committee Re: Summary and Recommendations dated February 27, 2013]. This model supersedes any previous student assignment plan.

Furthermore, the School Committee approves the Superintendent's recommendation to maintain walk zone access but eliminate walk zone priority once the Home-Based model is implemented. Walk zone access means that any school within one mile of a student's house will always be on his/her choice list, regardless of its MCAS quality (tier) level. Walk zone priority means setting aside seats in a school for children who live within a 1-mile radius.

Additionally, the Committee will reach out to parents to hear their experiences with the new model and perform a data-driven analysis of each part of the new assignment system one year after implementation to review if any adjustments should be made to any aspect of the plan.

On roll call, the order was approved by the following vote:

YEAS – Meg Campbell, Rev. Gregory G. Groover, Claudio Martinez, Mary Tamer, Vice-Chairperson Alfreda J. Harris and Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill - 6

NAYS – John Barros - 1

ABSENT – 0

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary

City of Boston

In School Committee

March 13, 2013

HOME-BASED MODEL OF SCHOOL CHOICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS OVERLAY

ORDERED, That the School Committee hereby approves the attached overlay for English Language Learners as part of the Home-Based model of school choice recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the External Advisory Committee on School Choice [see relevant parts of Section F – Specific Model Recommendations related to Student Assignment Process and Approach, External Advisory Committee (EAC) on School Choice Memorandum to Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent and Members of the Boston School Committee Re: Summary and Recommendations dated February 27, 2013].

On roll call, the order was approved by the following vote:

YEAS – John F. Barros, Meg Campbell, Gregory G. Groover, Claudio Martinez,
Mary Tamer, Vice-Chairperson Alfreda J. Harris and Chairperson
Michael D. O'Neill -7

NAYS – 0

ABSENT – 0

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary

English Language Learners (ELLs) Overlay

Guiding Principles

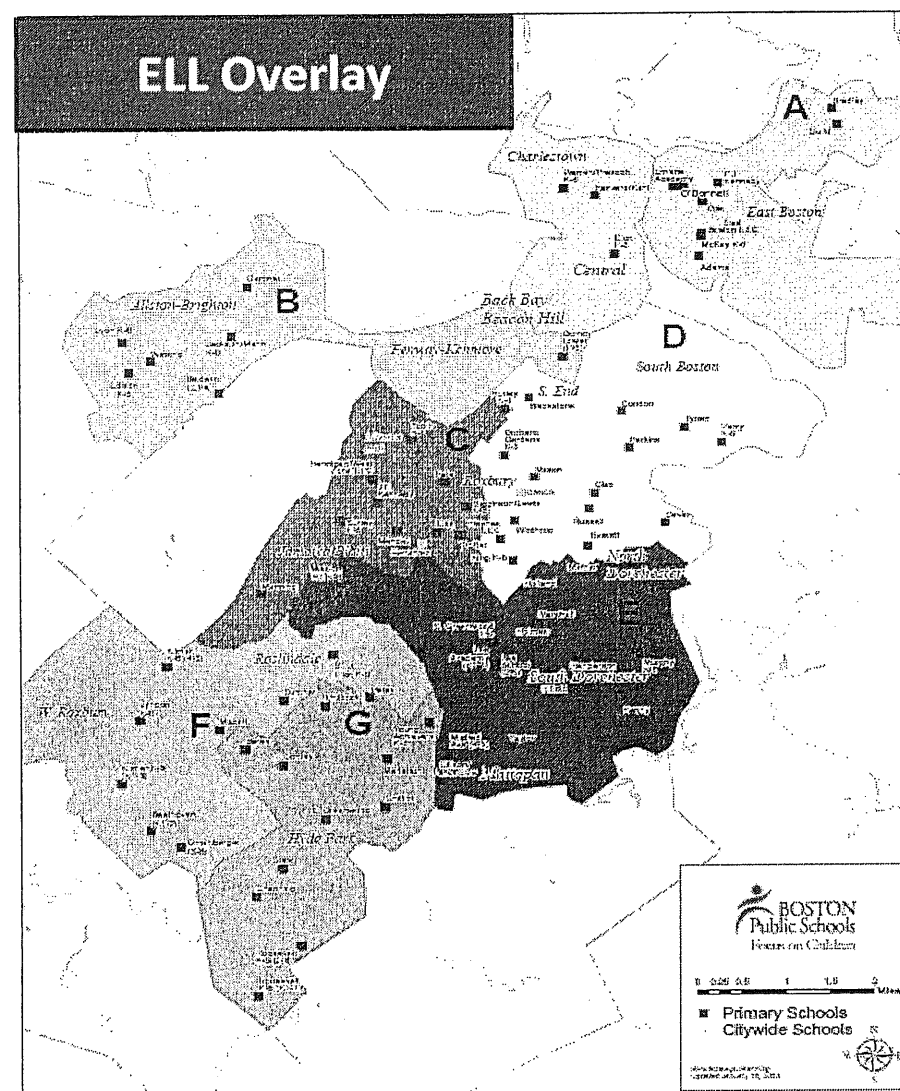
- ELLs at ELD levels 1-3 have access to any program within their “cluster”
 - ELLs at ELD levels 4-5 will continue to use the general assignment process
- Overlay boundaries are based upon where students live; programs may need some changes to best serve student needs

English Language Learner Overlay

- Boundaries align with linguistic communities, allowing language-specific programs for predominant languages in each cluster
- BPS will add 3 additional dual language programs over time so there is one in each cluster

Recommendations on ELL Overlay

- **EAC** – Recommend for implementation
- **Superintendent** – Recommend for implementation



City of Boston

In School Committee

March 13, 2013

HOME-BASED MODEL OF SCHOOL CHOICE **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES OVERLAY**

ORDERED, That the School Committee hereby approves the attached overlay for Students with Disabilities as part of the Home-Based model of school choice recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the External Advisory Committee on School Choice [see relevant parts of Section F – Specific Model Recommendations related to Student Assignment Process and Approach, External Advisory Committee (EAC) on School Choice Memorandum to Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent and Members of the Boston School Committee Re: Summary and Recommendations dated February 27, 2013].

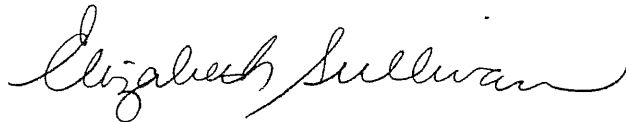
On roll call, the order was approved by the following vote:

YEAS – John F. Barros, Meg Campbell, Gregory G. Groover, Claudio Martinez,
Mary Tamer, Vice-Chairperson Alfreda J. Harris and Chairperson
Michael D. O'Neill -7

NAYS – 0

ABSENT – 0

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary

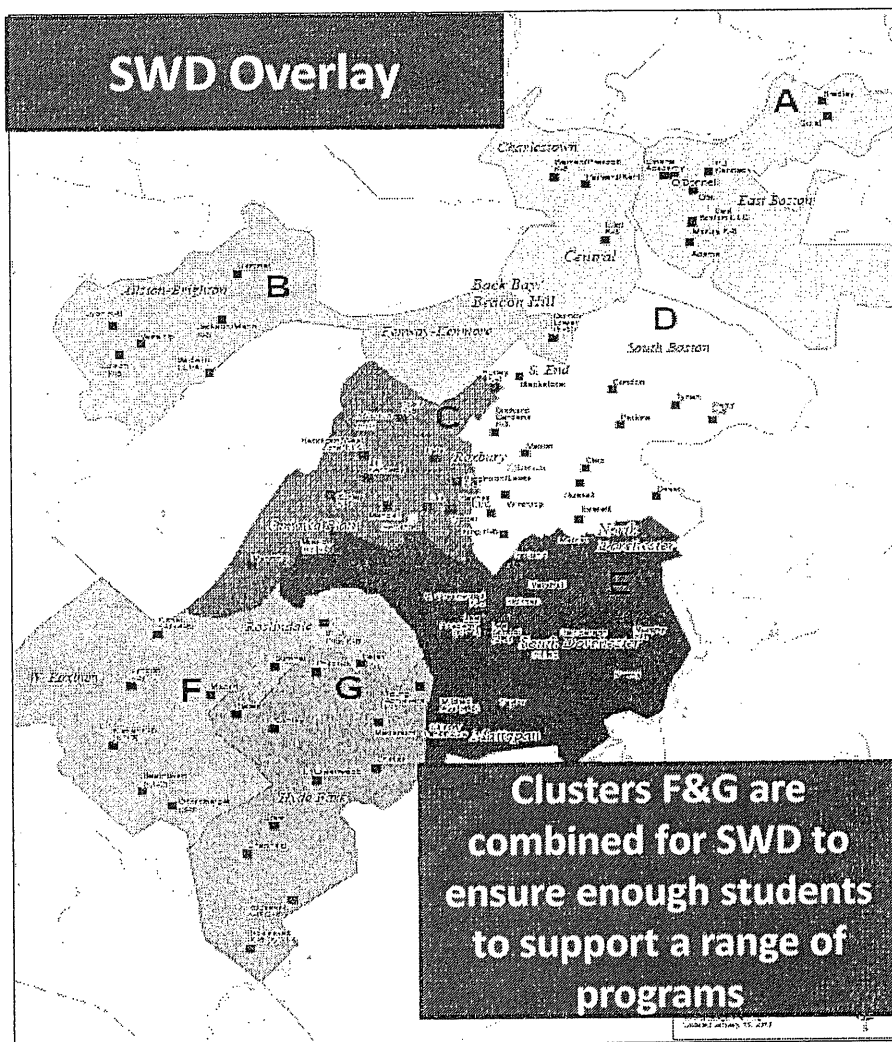
Students with Disabilities (SWD) Overlay

Guiding Principles

- SWDs have access to any program within their “cluster”
- Overlay boundaries are based upon where students live; programs may need to change to best serve student needs

Students with Disabilities Overlay

- Offer at least 1 inclusive and 1 sub-separate option per cluster for students with most common disabilities* and moderate/high need
- Programs serving less common disabilities will remain citywide
- Students with resource room services would participate in the general assignment process
- We will convert two schools to full inclusion for fall 2013



Recommendations on SWD Overlay

- **EAC** – Recommend for implementation
- **Superintendent** – Recommend for implementation

*Includes autism, emotional impairment, mild/moderate intellectual impairment, specific learning disabilities.

City of Boston

In School Committee

March 13, 2013

HOME-BASED MODEL OF SCHOOL CHOICE MIDDLE SCHOOL FEEDERS OVERLAY

ORDERED, That the School Committee hereby approves the attached overlay for Middle School Feeders as part of the Home-Based model of school choice recommended by the Superintendent of Schools and the External Advisory Committee on School Choice [see relevant parts of Section F – Specific Model Recommendations related to Student Assignment Process and Approach, External Advisory Committee (EAC) on School Choice Memorandum to Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent and Members of the Boston School Committee Re: Summary and Recommendations dated February 27, 2013].

On roll call, the order was approved by the following vote:

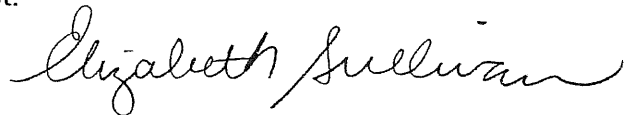
YEAS – Meg Campbell, Gregory G. Groover, Mary Tamer, and Chairperson
Michael D. O'Neill – 4

NAYS – John F. Barros and Claudio Martinez – 2

ABSTAIN – Vice-Chairperson Alfreda J. Harris – 1

ABSENT – 0

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary

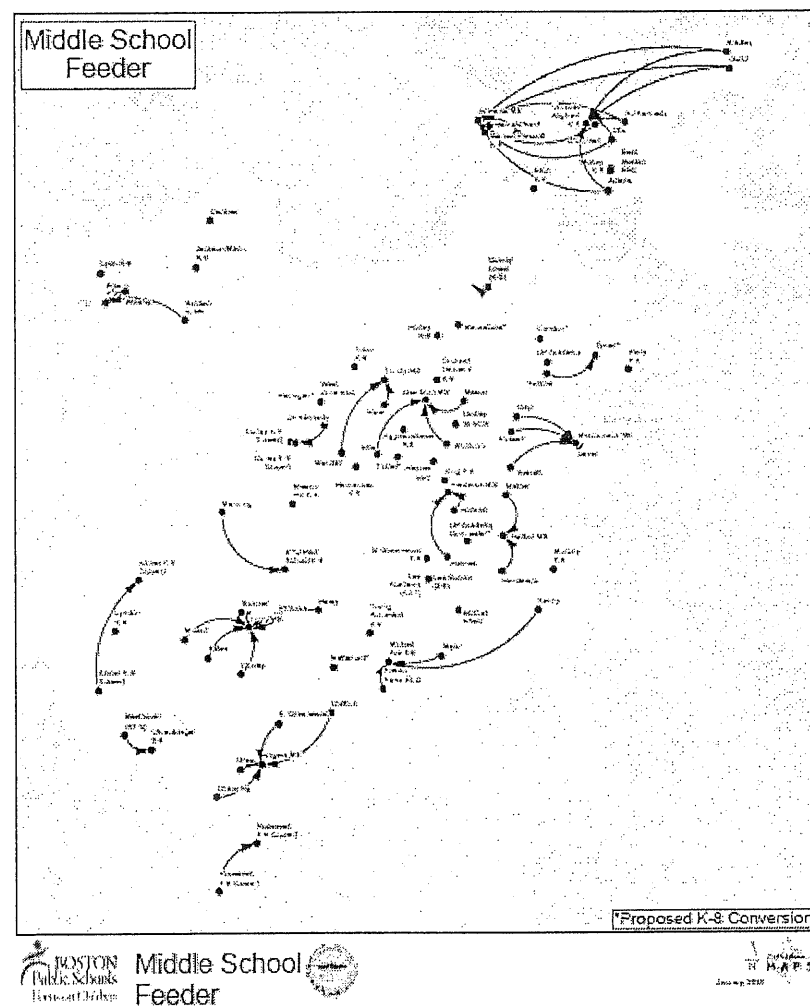
Middle School Overlay

Guiding Principles

- Predictability and clear pathways for all students from Kindergarten through 8th grade

The Proposal

- Guaranteed K-8 pathway through 8th grade, consisting of K-8 school or elementary to middle school pathway
- Families can also choose a different middle school if they are not comfortable with the pathway
- Exploring feasibility of potential K-8 conversions:
 - Blackstone, Condon, Hennigan, Marshall, Mattahunt, Perkins/Tynan, and Trotter
- Academic performance
- Enrollment patterns
- Need for more K0-K2 seats as enrollment increases in early grades
- K-8 conversions begin in fall 2014 and will be phased in over time



Recommendations on Middle School Overlay

- **EAC** – Recommend for implementation
- **Superintendent** – Recommend for implementation

City of Boston

In School Committee

March 13, 2013

EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL CHOICE ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

ORDERED, That the School Committee hereby approves the attached additional recommendations [see Section E – General Recommendations in External Advisory Committee (EAC) on School Choice, Memorandum to Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent and Members of the Boston School Committee Re: Summary and Recommendations dated February 27, 2013] related to student assignment, school choice, and school quality. These recommendations have been approved by the EAC and recommended by the Superintendent of Schools.

As part of this approval, the School Committee also recognizes the commitments of the Boston Public Schools related to both quality improvement and capacity detailed by the EAC (see Appendix: Quality & Capacity Improvement Commitments by BPS as part of Improving School Choice 2012-13, Memorandum to Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent and Members of the Boston School Committee Re: Summary and Recommendations dated February 27, 2013).

On roll call, the order was approved by the following vote:

YEAS – John F. Barros, Meg Campbell, Gregory G. Groover, Claudio Martinez,
Mary Tamer, Vice-Chairperson Alfreda J. Harris and Chairperson
Michael D. O'Neill - 7

NAYS – 0

ABSENT – 0

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary

City of Boston

In School Committee

March 13, 2013

GRANDFATHERING AND SIBLING GRANDFATHERING UNDER THE HOME-BASED MODEL OF SCHOOL CHOICE

ORDERED, That the School Committee hereby approves the following recommendations on grandfathering and sibling grandfathering:

Grandfathering: Per the recommendation of the External Advisory Committee on School Choice (EAC), all current students assigned to Boston Public Schools (BPS) as of September 2013 shall retain their school assignments (i.e., be “grandfathered” into existing school) with transportation provided as needed. Families will have the option of choosing to enter the new student assignment lottery and request a new assignment, but they will retain their current assignment unless they accept a new one. This grandfathering with transportation will continue through School Year 2019-2020.

Sibling grandfathering: Grandfathering shall extend to younger siblings of BPS students through School Year 2019-2020. Sibling grandfathering will apply for the younger siblings of students currently in school, even if that school is outside their assignment list under the Home-Based plan. This means that school will also appear as a choice for the younger sibling, and that sibling will receive assignment priority. Sibling grandfathering with transportation will continue through School Year 2019-2020. Others in the system can remain, but may lose transportation after that time.

On roll call, the order was approved by the following vote:

YEAS – John F. Barros, Gregory G. Groover, Claudio Martinez, Vice-Chairperson
Alfreda J. Harris and Chairperson Michael D. O’Neill – 5

NAYS – Meg Campbell and Mary Tamer – 2

ABSENT – 0

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary

TO: Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent & Members of the Boston School Committee
FROM: External Advisory Committee on School Choice (EAC)
RE: Summary and Recommendations
DATE: February 27, 2013

Introduction

Since our appointment to the External Advisory Committee on School Choice (EAC) beginning in January 2012, members of the EAC have listened to the many ideas that have been shared about choice, reviewed the data, and read the various analytic reports. It is our determination that changing the school assignment process so that it increases equitable access to a quality education for all students in the Boston Public Schools is an important task. It is also our determination that the major challenge to the Boston Public Schools is developing an articulate, systematic, and outcome-focused process for increasing the number of schools within the district that provide a high quality education. Our recommendations, therefore, will address the school assignment process and recommend concrete actions that are needed to be taken in order to provide equitable access to a quality education for all students in the Boston Public School system.

This report is organized into five sections:

- A. Committee Charge
- B. The Case for Change
- C. Guiding Criteria
- D. Methodology
- E. General Recommendations
- F. Specific Model Recommendations
- G. Acknowledgments

A – Committee Charge

At his State of the City address in 2012, Mayor Thomas M. Menino launched this effort to improve school choice and student assignment. He appointed the EAC to evaluate data, review proposals and make recommendations for a new student assignment plan. In its early meetings in Spring of 2012, the EAC refined its own charge to guide its work:

Every student in the City of Boston deserves to attend a high-quality school that meets his or her needs and is as close to home as possible. To realize this goal, the Mayor and Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools have appointed the independent External Advisory Committee on Improving School Choice (EAC). The EAC will evaluate city data, along with information collected during a series of community meetings with parents and other stakeholders and other information-gathering opportunities. Based on this information and a data-driven analysis of the several models of school assignment plans developed by the Superintendent and her staff, the EAC will provide a final recommendation that will be presented to the Superintendent, the School Committee, and the Mayor. This collaboration will yield a new plan for school choice.

The EAC further organized itself into three subcommittees: Community Engagement, Data, and Defining Quality & Equitable Access.

B – The Case for Change

Throughout this past year of deliberation, data analysis, dozens of community meetings and input from more than 4,000 families, the members of the EAC – many of us current and former students and parents ourselves – have developed an even deeper appreciation for the commitment, advocacy and engagement of families who are determined that the Boston Public Schools can and must meet their needs for a high quality education for their children and for all of this city's children. We learned that many Boston families have a strong desire for their children to take advantage of the diversity and rich learning opportunities that BPS schools have to offer.

At the same time, throughout this yearlong process, the EAC has found that the current student assignment system – put in place in 1988 with some modifications since then – is not delivering the outcomes we seek for Boston's students and families. The current assignment system relies on large geographic zones, with extensive transportation and a wide range of theoretical choices for students. Yet, the data clearly demonstrate that this system is not producing equitable results for all students. Through analysis of data collected during our work, the EAC has found:

1. Today, 37% of students travel more than 1.5 miles each way, but not necessarily to attend a higher-performing school.
2. Students in the current East Zone have only an approximately 40% chance of accessing a quality seat in their zone, compared to approximately 80% for the North Zone and approximately 75% for the West Zone.
3. Access to seats in higher-performing schools is not evenly distributed by race or income: 84% of white students and 77% of Asian students access seats in higher-performing schools, compared to 52% of Black and 61% of Latino students.
4. According to an October 2012 report, *Comparative Study of Boston Public School Proposed Assignment Plans*, "...current attendance patterns exhibit strong racial disparities even with ostensibly equal access. In fact, Blacks and Hispanics tend to attend lower quality schools overall, while at the same time traveling further from their homes."¹

We also heard from families who found the current system confusing, unpredictable and difficult to navigate. The large number of school choices is overwhelming to many families – from 25-30 schools in each of the three large zones. The uncertainty of knowing whether they would get any of their top choices was even more concerning – even though 74% of families currently obtain one of their three top choices in the student assignment lottery. We learned of costs and transportation challenges inherent in the far-flung system – not just pertaining to BPS, but to the thousands of parochial and charter school students that BPS buses transport to their schools every day as well. We also heard clearly from current BPS families that they are attached to their current schools and do not wish to have to change schools to accommodate the new system, and that they want their younger children to be able to attend the same school as their older siblings. Above all, the overwhelming message we heard was that quality is of critical importance to families – but that families define quality in very different ways, from a school that is close to home, to the school's schedules and services, to academic performance.

The question the EAC posed to itself as a result of these findings and input was: Can we develop a student assignment model that produces better and more equitable results for Boston's children and families than the one we have today? After nearly a year of effort, we believe we can.

¹ Metropolitan Area Planning Council, "Racial & Ethnic Impact of BPS Assignment Proposals: Supplemental Report", October 26, 2012

At the same time, the EAC recognizes that the student assignment system is just one part of the larger ongoing effort to improve the quality of all Boston Public Schools and the system as a whole. Increasing the quality of each and every school is the ongoing priority of the BPS regardless of the assignment system. Over the past year, we also reviewed data and heard from families regarding many of the important improvements in school quality over the last five years. Significant improvements include:

- A decrease in the drop-out rate to 6.9%, a level not seen in decades. Simultaneously in 2012 there was an increase in the four-year graduation rate to 64.4%;
- The expansion of Algebra classes, which are now offered in grade 8 at every BPS school;
- 86% of BPS students now pass the 10th grade Mathematics MCAS on their first attempt;
- The introduction of the BPS Arts Expansion Initiative, which has increased from 67% in 2009 to 89% in 2012 the percentage of BPS elementary/middle school students engaged in weekly year-long arts and music instruction;
- Presently there are 24 grade K-8 schools located in 13 neighborhoods, a significant increase since 2004, in response to family demand for greater predictability for students;
- Since 2004 BPS has increased the number of students taking AP courses by 56% and has raised the number of AP tests taken by 71% -- with the largest gains in participation seen with Black and Latino students;
- 76% of BPS schools now have a math proficiency rate of at least 30%, up from 60% in 2008;
- 76% of BPS schools now have an ELA proficiency rate of at least 30%, up from 69% in 2008;
- Between 2011 and 2012 the number of Black students reaching proficiency on the ELA MCAS test has increased by 10%; and
- BPS teachers continue to show their commitment to quality education and to honing their skills. To date, 77 teachers have earned the prestigious National Board Certification credential exemplifying an extraordinary level of dedication to their craft.

However, as BPS district leaders themselves point out, these improvements have yet to close historical achievement gaps across all groups and a number of schools have yet to see notable improvement. Thus, continued work is needed to increase the number of high quality schools within the district.

No school choice system on its own can improve quality – but it can improve equitable access while bringing children closer to home where possible, seeking to balance proximity and equity while improving predictability for families.

The following pages lay out the EAC's recommendations to the Superintendent and School Committee on a new school choice and student assignment system for Boston.

C - Guiding Criteria

Throughout the intensive process of reviewing student assignment options, we have come to expect that the revision of the assignment process will:

1. Offer families a more predictable set of school choices;
2. Offer a transparent, consumer-friendly process for obtaining school information and making informed choices about where families will send their children;
3. Address some of the barriers in the current system that diminish some residents' chances of accessing higher-performing schools and provide families and BPS with a set of tools that will afford those who disproportionately lack access to quality programming and schools some recourse in the

assignment process should few, quality options be available to them; reduce average travel burden and allow families to choose schools closer to home where possible, while continuing to provide transportation where needed both to facilitate equitable access and to provide access to appropriate academic programming and services that address the needs of particular children (e.g., students with disabilities);

4. Provide flexible design and management options to respond to access challenges as school quality changes. These options should be provided without having to commission a redesign process. The goal of this flexible design is that, over time, family access to the school they most desire will increase and that every family will have access to a high performing school;
5. Set the stage for a rigorous on-going community discussion which will be informed by transparent data sharing. This discussion should focus on priorities for district-wide school improvement, implementation of effective educational strategies aimed at improving student outcomes, and replicating the most proven and effective strategies for achieving desired equitable access and quality academic achievement choices for every family across the district.

Given the assumptions above, the EAC identified the following priorities that it hopes to balance in its recommendations for any proposed student assignment system. There is no rank order among these priorities. It is our intention to propose a model that does the best job of balancing these priorities:

- Predictability
- Equitable access, as defined by the EAC below, to educational opportunity. At the time of this report, following the EAC's commitment to using measurable and comparable data in its analysis, quality will be measured by academic performance using MCAS proficiency and growth (see Methodology section below). As will be discussed later, the EAC believes this is a limited definition of quality and will recommend that the District develop a more useful and measurable set of quality measures over time.
- Choice
- Closer to home where possible
- More rational transportation to ensure access where needed
- Transparency of information available to families and stakeholders
- Ability to respond to changes in school performance over time and adjust to said changes. This includes the ability to introduce more sophisticated measures of "quality" inclusive of but not limited to academic performance.

The EAC will use the criteria above to assess proposed school assignment models in ways that understand that diversity of the Boston Public School population will demand diverse solutions to meet their needs. Our recommendations, therefore, must address the diverse needs of Boston's children. The must lead to a system that is transparent, equitable and adaptable to change over time.

EAC Definitions of Quality & Equitable Access

During the course of its deliberations, the EAC developed definitions of Quality and Equitable Access in order to guide our review of proposed models. They are included below:

EAC Definition of Quality

Acknowledging that quality varies for each individual, the EAC Defining Quality and Equitable Access Subcommittee - with its members' expertise, community feedback, and BPS research on quality - has drafted the following definition of a quality school to include:

- Academic excellence and student academic growth in all grades, across all subgroups of race, ethnicity, English Language Learners and students with disabilities
- Principal effectiveness and teacher excellence with caring teachers and school staff
- Parent engagement and a sense of community within and outside of the school
- Effective community partnerships
- Focus on the development of the whole child and the needs of all learners, though arts, music, athletics, and program and course offerings
- Safe and positive school climate including social and emotional support
- Adequate and appropriate facilities
- As close to home as possible.

EAC Definition of Equitable Access

The EAC Defining Quality and Equitable Access Subcommittee further defined equitable access this way:

- A new student assignment process should seek to provide every child, in every neighborhood including but not limited to the following subgroups; race, national origin, color, gender, immigrant status, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, special needs or disability, with the same opportunity to learn and succeed in the Boston Public Schools.
- The new student assignment plan should seek to provide an equal opportunity to receive a quality education, and at a "quality school" as defined by the EAC based on data and community feedback.
- The EAC will ensure that its recommendations to BPS take into account how all students in every subgroup will be affected by the proposed assignment models and policies, and that the EAC's recommendations support continued diversity throughout BPS.

D – Methodology

Much of the available data on school quality is assessed by measures of academic performance. While the EAC developed a broad definition of school quality informed by community input, we acknowledge the lack of valid data measures to analyze quality against this broader definition. We have learned that families in Boston have diverse opinions as to what constitutes a quality school and that many definitions are broader than academic performance. We also realize that useful measurable and comparable data needed to more fully understand the quality of leadership and instruction, various dimensions of students learning and social experiences, or of school community participation does not currently exist. We, therefore, include a recommendation later in this document related to developing and analyzing a more comprehensive set of quality measures over time.

To assess quality using academic performance and for the purpose of analyzing potential student assignment models, the EAC Subcommittee on Data worked closely with the BPS Data Team to identify a meaningful, measurable and comparable method of defining "quality" schools in terms of academic performance, as outlined below:

1. The BPS' MCAS Snapshot captures two years' worth of MCAS data for both English Language Arts and Math, showing both student performance (66% of the score) and student growth or academic gains (33% of the score).
2. This weighted ranking groups schools into four categories or "Tiers": (1) Tier 1, or top tier schools are in the top 25th percentile of BPS schools with entry grades related to the proposed student assignment model, (2) Tier 2 schools are in the 26th to 50th percentile, (3) Tier 3 schools are in the 51st to 75th percentile, and (4) Tier 4 school are in the bottom 24th percentile compared to other schools.
3. Tier 1 and Tier 2 schools are defined as higher-performing "quality" schools for the purpose of the proposed model design.

Because the MCAS Snapshot or tiered ranking outlined above is a relative measure of academic performance compared to other schools, we also include a recommendation later in this document that BPS further refine this measure to include an "absolute performance" threshold to set a clear benchmark defining higher-performing quality schools.

E - General Recommendations

Based on the findings outlined above, the EAC makes the following general recommendations related to student assignment, school choice and school quality. We make these recommendations regardless of the specific student assignment model used.

1. **Quality Improvements:** We assert that a primary responsibility of the district is to focus its effort on improving the quality of all schools, regardless of the student assignment system. The EAC operates on the assumption that this community has the capacity and will to increase the percentage of quality seats in the district, both as defined strictly by academic performance as well as a broader definition of school quality. Thus we believe it is vital that the annual accountability report include the district's plan for improving performance, particularly in lower performing schools (Tiers 3 and 4) and maintaining performance in high-performing schools.

During the course of the student assignment system and redesign process, the BPS identified and articulated a series of commitments related to both quality improvement and capacity to meet the changing needs of Boston's student populations. Those commitments are outlined in the attached Appendix. The EAC recommends that BPS report on its progress in implementing these promised improvements as part of its annual accountability reporting on the implementation of the new student assignment system.

Much as was done with the Acceleration Agenda released in 2009, we urge the district to set and articulate specific data-driven performance benchmarks related to increased academic proficiency across all schools, grade levels and student groups. The report should also highlight forward-looking demographic and capacity trend projections that could impact the district and assignment process. Finally, the report should include a resource and facilities plan to respond to relevant trends and to support ongoing improvement efforts. [See "Quality & Capacity Improvement Commitments" in Appendix at end of document.]

A tremendous amount of work has been done over the past year to identify where excellence exists in the district and where quality is still lacking. For example, the 11-zone map clearly shows which neighborhoods need immediate quality interventions and improvements. These analyses should inform the development of BPS' quality improvement plans moving forward.

2. **Transparency and Data-driven Approach:** The district should continue to assemble, analyze and make public the large quantity of data requested by the EAC through the student assignment redesign process. This availability of data will provide ongoing accountability and progress related to the recommendations in this memo. More importantly, this data will provide accountability and transparency to the families, partners and many stakeholders concerned with ongoing improvements in our schools. For the purposes of public reporting and family outreach, the district should also share a limited set of data that clearly summarizes key indicators of school quality and change in schools' performance.
3. **Accountability and Oversight:** The district should prepare an annual report to the Mayor, School Committee, City Council, and the community. The report should be available to the public on or before October 1 each year. The report should include data and analysis outlining the impact of the new student assignment system on all student populations (including students eligible for free/reduced meals, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners, and also by race/ethnicity and geography/neighborhood). The report should measure changes in equitable access to quality seats for all students, as well as changes to school academic performance and overall quality. The School Committee will be responsible for reviewing and endorsing the plan in writing. We further recommend that the School Committee consider appointing a Task Force (similar to the English Language Learners Task Force) to assist with monitoring and evaluating districts efforts to increase equitable access to a quality education for all students in Boston. In addition, we also recommend that a third party audit of quality and improvement be conducted every five years.
4. **Impact on Special Student Populations:** We recommend that any increases in quality seats be analyzed in terms of their impact on increasing equitable access to quality – specifically, by analyzing changes in access to quality seats and on-going academic outcomes, particularly for those populations whose access to high quality schools has been most restricted in the past. We strongly recommend that the annual report of school assignment clearly identify the impact of the process on students eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch (FRL) and how they are being served by efforts to improve the quality of education within the district. The annual report also should include data monitoring changes over time to the diversity of school populations.
5. **Comprehensive Quality Measure:** The district should speed the development of capacity to track and analyze a more comprehensive set of quality measures and that BPS school improvement and strategic plans more explicitly focus on improving overall school quality and not just performance. We recommend that the district, by December 2014, develop and publish additional valid data-driven measures corresponding to additional indicators of quality articulated by the EAC (listed earlier in this document). The EAC recognizes that all eight elements of its quality definition may not be perfectly measurable, but some additional number of them should be included in a more comprehensive quality measure. This more robust quality metric should be inclusive of but not limited to academic performance. Finally, the new metric once developed should be incorporated into the tiered ranking system used to organize and analyze the student assignment system.

6. **Absolute Academic Performance Indicators:** Because the MCAS Snapshot or tiered ranking used by the EAC and BPS is a relative measure of academic performance compared to other schools, we recommend that BPS incorporate “absolute performance” measures over time. Specifically, we recommend that BPS, by December 2014, specify an “Absolute Performance Threshold” for Tier 1, 2, & 3 schools. As more district schools improve, this allows Tiers 1 & 2 to expand to more schools performing at a high quality level. These thresholds should be no lower than the current performance levels of schools ranked as part of the 2013 student assignment model design.
7. **Parent Compacting Pilot Program:** Families who do not receive their first choice in the initial round of the lottery be allowed to participate in a parent compact that would involve attendance in an under-chosen school. We recommend that this option be offered on a pilot basis, with the results analyzed to determine impact and whether it should continue.
8. **Importance of Family Communication and Outreach for Successful Implementation:** As with any new initiative, implementation and follow up are crucial to its success. BPS should take steps to clearly explain the school choice model to families and actively seek to build public trust in the new system. Implementation must be done with a careful eye towards supporting families during the transition and special attention must be given to families with the least access to technology. We also encourage BPS to devote specific effort to reaching the families and school communities that have historically participated in the later rounds of student assignment, which reduces their chances of obtaining seats in highly-chosen and often higher-performing schools.
9. **Transportation Policies and Costs:** We recommend a complete review of BPS’ transportation policies and costs with an eye toward improving transportation efficiency and reducing costs. For this review could include looking at combining two school buses with nearby routes serving similar schools; changing school start times; and changes in legislative policy. We would like this review to include both policies and expenses associated with transporting students to schools outside of BPS jurisdiction.
10. **System Calibration and Strategic Adjustments:** The EAC recommends the adoption of the home-based school choice system, in part, because it affords BPS the opportunity to respond to changes in school quality and offer families the best options in the system. We recommend that BPS take full advantage of this feature of the model by determining a schedule for when strategic adjustments to the system will be made. Key adjustments over time should include re-ranking/re-tiering schools and reconfiguring families’ choice sets in light of changes in school quality.

F - Specific Model Recommendations related to Student Assignment Process and Approach

Recommended Student Assignment and School Choice System for BPS

We recommend that BPS implement the “Home-Based/A” model for student assignment, which ensures every family has high-quality schools on their list of options.

“Home-Based/A” ensures every family has high-quality school options. It adapts to changes in quality over time.

School choice lists contain a **minimum of six schools** and always contain the closest:

- 2 top-tier schools
- 2 top- or second-tier schools

- 2 schools from the first, second or third tier

Students with fewer higher-quality schools closer to home will have more choices to ensure they have access to quality.

Every list will include all schools that are within one mile from home (walk zone), citywide options and other nearby schools to ensure seat availability.

Tiers are based on a combination of a school's MCAS proficiency and academic growth. Families will rank the schools they prefer and students will be assigned based on priorities (walk zone and sibling) and availability.

Impacted Schools

The proposed new student assignment system outlined below will impact the 99 schools serving students from KO through Grade 8, including Early Learning Centers, K-5 schools, K-8 schools, and middle schools. All high schools within the BPS will remain citywide in terms of student assignment, as is the case currently.

Grandfathering

We recommend that all current students assigned to BPS schools as of September 2013 retain their school assignments (i.e., be "grand-fathered" into existing school) with transportation provided as needed. Their families will have the option of choosing to enter the new student assignment lottery and request a new assignment, but they will retain their current assignment unless they accept a new one. This "grandfathering" with transportation will continue through the 2019-2020 school year.

In response to feedback from families, we also recommend that "grand-fathering" extend to younger siblings of BPS students and that the year 2019-2020 will be the final year in which younger brothers and sisters who have not yet entered the system will receive sibling priority to an out-of-zone school. Sibling priority will still apply for in-zone students. Others in the system can remain, but may lose transportation after that time.

Walk Zone Access and Walk Zone Priority

We recommend that BPS maintain the walk zone priority as is: at 50/50 and with no change to the processing order. We further recommend that the Walk Zone Priority policy be reviewed within two years using data from the new assignment system to assess impact and to consider further changes to the policy if needed.

Overlay Maps for Special Populations

The BPS proposed a series of overlay maps to address the assignment process of specific student populations, including middle school students, students who are English Language Learners (with an ELD Level of 1-3 requiring special services), and students with disabilities requiring special education services. These maps are designed to function regardless of the student assignment system used to assign students to general education seats. The next set of recommendations by the EAC relates to these overlay maps for special populations.

Overlay Map for Students Requiring Special Education Services:

For the SY2013-2014, there are 10,649 students with disabilities (SWDs) in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). This represents 19.2% of all students enrolled in BPS. Currently 46% or 4,898 SWDs are educated

in substantially separate settings. In the Spring of 2009, the Council of Great City Schools issued a report "Improving Special Education in the Boston Public Schools," which stated:

"BPS needs to develop a comprehensive plan that would lead to a substantial decrease in the district's reliance on substantially separate classes and clusters, so more students with disabilities—including three-to-five-year olds and those with significant disabilities – could attend school where they would have otherwise attended if they were not disabled. Include expected outcomes and targets for the high performance of all students, accountability measure (such as components in the Balanced Scorecard), appropriate support and monitoring strategies, progress data, and specific time frames for implementation."

In January 2013, Dr. Thomas Hehir made a presentation to the Boston School Committee that included data, which evidenced that SWDs achieve higher outcomes when they are educated with their non-disabled peers. The outcome performance data supports, and Federal and state laws require that SWDs be educated, to the maximum extent appropriate, with their non-disabled peers.

SWDs need to have the same opportunity to be educated in their neighborhood schools as their non-disabled peers under any new assignment process/plan, and this necessitates that specialized services and full-inclusion programs be expanded throughout the District to bring the services to where the students live. The Boston Public Schools has proposed that the assignment/placement of SWDs be organized into six (6) clusters (A-G) with clusters F&G being combined into one. These clusters were designed to distribute the percentages of SWDs evenly across the district based on the overall percentage of SWDs district-wide. According to BPS, the proposed Sped Overlay will: include at least one inclusive and one substantially separate option (established as highly specialized strands to allow the same continuity of school programming from grade to grade as non-disabled students) per cluster for SWDs with high incidence disabilities; maintain programs serving less common disabilities as citywide; and allow students with resource room services ("partial-inclusion") to participate in the general assignment process (after their IEP and type of placement is decided by their IEP Team). All partial-inclusion SWDs assigned/placed through the lottery process will be reported back to OSESS for tracking and monitoring of all SWDs. OSESS will work with any family who rejects an assignment to identify an appropriate placement.

The approval of the proposed Sped Overlay by the EAC for the assignment/placement of SWDs in BPS is contingent upon the full implementation of BPS' stated commitments to expand inclusion in BPS including: 1) establishing a minimum of two NEW schools into full inclusion schools for the 2013-2014 school year; 2) developing a comprehensive work plan for submission to the School Committee by June 2013 on how BPS will continue to expand inclusion for the next three to five years (with set targets) through close collaboration with Boston SpedPac and schools; 3) issuing new guidelines for "placement," clarifying substantially separate as the exception v. the norm by March 2013; 4) training special education coordinators on guidelines, inclusion, and new inclusive programs by Spring/Summer 2013; 5) building accountability systems to monitor the percentage of SWDs recommended for inclusion by coordinators/IEP Teams; and 6) targeting clusters in the Sped Overlay with fewer inclusive options for new programming in Fall of 2014. The Sped Overlay map of geographic clusters provides a foundation to implement all of the abovementioned necessary actions in BPS to expand inclusion for SWDs, and to change its long standing past practices of segregating students with disabilities.

BPS needs to capitalize on its institutional knowledge present at the Henderson and Mary Lyon schools and replicate those successes from K0-Grade 12, and significantly decrease the percentage of SWDs

currently being served in segregated settings. All clusters need to provide the types of programs and settings that are necessary to meet each child's individual needs as close to home as possible, and provide SWDs with the free and appropriate public education that is required under special education laws and regulations.

Overlay Map for Middle School Students: We endorse the district's proposal concerning middle school feeder patterns as long as parents of 5th grade students have the option of entering a lottery system for open seats under the new assignment plan and are not limited to choosing the "feeder program" school.

We also recommend that the district explore instituting a school choice priority for families of fifth grade students who have not met academic proficiency standards and who attend under-performing schools. Such a priority would give these students preference in Tier 1 or 2 middle schools should their families desire to send them to a higher performing school. We recommend that this exploration be conducted as follows:

1. BPS should develop a report that analyzes the effects of this priority on the home-based system, including potential effects on distance to school, access to quality, and predictability. The report should also make a clear recommendation regarding instituting this or a modified middle school priority based on review of similar best practices in comparable districts and assessment of feasibility. This report should be developed by September 2013.
2. The recommended School Quality Task Force and The Boston School Committee should review and decide on the recommendation.

Overlay Map for Students Requiring English Language Learner (ELL) Services:

In SY2013, there are 16,474 English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in Boston Public Schools coming from homes where more than 30 languages are spoken and with a broad diversity in terms of race, nationality, income and previous schooling experience. For the purposes of school assignment, ELLs are divided into two groups: those at English Language Development (ELD) Levels 1, 2 and 3 enrolled in programs for English Language Learners and accounting for 54.7% of all ELLs (see recommendations for this group in a subsequent section) and those at ELD levels 4 and 5 accounting for 45.3% of all ELLs and enrolled in General Education. The EAC recommends that the assignment of the latter group consider the following:

The Boston Public Schools has proposed that assignment for ELLs at Levels 1, 2 and 3 be organized in six clusters which overlay any assignment design for students in general education. BPS' ELL Task Force supports this proposal and the EAC's recommendation is that this overlay be created with the following characteristics:

- That all clusters provide seats in language specific as well as multilingual programs in each cluster. Students from high incidence language groups will have access to both language-specific and multilingual seats while those from low incidence language groups will have first priority in multilingual program seats. Students will not be assigned to a language-specific seat of language other than their own without the specific approval of the Office of English Language Learners (Successor Settlement Agreement, 2012; paragraph 45(b)).
- In all clusters, ELL program classes should maintain a ratio of 20:1 at all grade levels (K-12) in each school (Successor Settlement Agreement, 2012; paragraph 45(a)).
- The Successor Settlement Agreement between United States of America and the Boston Public Schools (2012) requires that OELL, Enrollment Services and Capital & Strategic Planning departments

produce a Strategic Plan that will ensure that based on district ELL demographics (1) there is a sufficient capacity of available ELL program seats to serve all ELLs; (2) that there is an equitable distribution of ELL-only and mixed ELL/non-ELL SEI classes throughout the District, including in schools frequently chosen by parents where seats are in high demand; (3) that the location of the ELL seats accurately reflect ELL demographic, settlement patterns and school preferences (paragraph 32c).

- BPS is committed to closing the gap between ELL program seats and Limited English Proficient students as well as to adjusting the supply of program seats to meet the demand for program seats in each cluster. BPS will present the overlay, implementation steps, and strategy to the ELL Task Force.

About 300 ELLs are students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) who receive High Intensity Literacy Training (HILT) prior to entering regular programs for ELLs. Both the META Consent Decree (Latino Parents and Master PAC et al. v. BPS, 1994) and Successor Settlement Agreement between United States of America and the Boston Public Schools (2012) require the following to be considered in the assignment of these students:

- All clusters must provide sufficient seats for SIFE students in appropriate HILT programs including those students who enroll during the school year (Successor Agreement, paragraph 32(c)). HILT seats must be equitably distributed across all clusters, reflect the demographic needs of each cluster and include the highly desirable schools (Successor Agreement, paragraph 32(c)).
- If SIFE students are denied enrollment into a school, the reason for the denial is to be reported to the Department of Justice. (Successor Agreement, paragraph 32(b)).
- HILT programs will not exceed the class size of 15 students. (META Consent Decree, Attachment C)
- ELLs in ELD 4-5 are guaranteed a general education seat in the same school when they move from ELD level 3 (Paragraph 32(A)).
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requires that the progress of ELLs in General Education be monitored yearly. As a result ELLs may be moved from a General Education seat to an ELL program seat if the student is not making academic progress because of English language proficiency.
- BPS will provide sufficient seats for Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) in appropriate High Intensity Literacy Training (HILT) programs, including those students who enroll during the school year, and these seats will be equitably distributed across all clusters to meet the demographic needs of each cluster.

Citations for ELL Section

Successor Settlement Agreement between United States of America and the Boston Public Schools, April 19, 2012.

Multicultural Educational Training and Advocacy (META) Consent Decree of 1992, and the Amended Order of 1994.

G - Acknowledgements

Parag Pathak

Director of the School Effectiveness and Inequality Initiative (SEII),
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Tayfun Sönmez

Professor of Economics,
Boston College

Peng Shi

PhD Candidate,
MIT Operations Research Center

Edward Glaeser

Director of Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston,
Harvard Kennedy School

Superintendent Johnson and her team at the Boston Public Schools

The broader community

Appendix:

Quality & Capacity Improvement Commitments by BPS as part of Improving School Choice 2012-13:

During the course of the student assignment system and redesign process, the BPS identified and articulated a series of commitments related to both quality improvement and capacity to meet the changing needs of Boston's student populations. Those commitments are outlined in the attached Appendix. The EAC recommends that BPS report on its progress in implementing these promised improvements as part of its annual accountability reporting on the implementation of the new student assignment system. Please note that these are not listed in order of priority.

1. More K-8 Pathways: Every student would have access to K-8 pathway school(s) in their menu of options.
2. More school options: Including in-district charters, Innovation schools, dual language and inclusion programs.
3. Create new in-district charter and Innovation Schools to address quality concerns in Mattapan, Hyde Park, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mission Hill and South Boston.
 - a. Identify 6-8 schools over the next year from among the lowest performing Level 3 and Level 4 schools to convert to either in-district charter or Innovation School. Schools would open in Fall 2014.
 - b. Focus interventions in areas where there is greatest need (capacity) and quality is uneven
 - c. Include extended day, staffing flexibilities, strategic collaboration with nonprofit partners and families and targeted resource investments to support these schools
4. Convert an Allston-Brighton school to a regional option.
5. Commit to finding a space to serve downtown families where current walk-zone access is limited.
6. Activate the BPS student assignment hotline earlier to more students off the waiting list and into schools faster.
7. Offer option for incoming K2 families to be assigned to their closest available school in Round 1 if they don't receive one of their choices through the student assignment lottery.
8. Add three additional dual language programs over time so there is one in each cluster on the ELL Overlay Map.
9. Offer at least one inclusive and one sub-separate option per cluster on the Special Education Overlay Map, for students with most common disabilities and moderate/high need.
10. Convert two schools to full inclusion for fall 2013.
11. Explore expanding the Montessori program at East Boston EEC to add capacity in early grades for East Boston families.
12. Add additional seats in currently high-performing schools in South Dorchester.

13. BPS is committed to closing the gap between ELL program seats and Limited English Proficient students as well as to adjusting the supply of program seats to meet the demand for program seats in each cluster. Specific changes to meet these commitments will be implemented in SY13-14 and in SY14-15.
14. BPS will provide sufficient seats for Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) in appropriate High Intensity Literacy Training (HILT) programs, including those students who enroll during the school year, and these seats will be equitably distributed across all clusters to meet the demographic needs of each cluster.

City of Boston

In School Committee

November 5, 2014

HOME-BASED MODEL OF SCHOOL CHOICE MODIFICATION:
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS OVERLAY:
MERGE OF CLUSTERS F AND G

ORDERED, That the School Committee hereby approves the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools to merge clusters F and G of the overlay for the English Language Learners as part of the Home-Based school choice plan effective school year 2015-2016.

On roll call, the order was approved by the following vote:

YEAS – Hardin Coleman, Gregory G. Groover, Michael T. Loconto, Vice-Chairperson
Claudio Martinez and Chairperson Michael D. O'Neill – 5

NAYS – 0

ABSENT – Meg Campbell– 1

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary