

Report and Recommendations
of the Boston Public Schools

Student Assignment Task Force

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Executive Summary

In December 2003, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the Boston School Committee and Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant launched a citywide process to generate conversations among diverse groups of citizens about student assignment in the Boston Public Schools. Under the leadership of a community Task Force, the goal of this process was to review the current assignment system and generate recommendations for modifications to the system that would lead to greater satisfaction among families and perhaps reduce transportation costs. Families who participated in this process sent a clear and consistent message that they are committed to public education. They are eager to invest in the future of the system and of the city by enrolling their children in the Boston Public Schools.

The first phase of the process involved community forums, focus groups and written surveys that sought public input on the benefits and drawbacks of the current assignment system. The Task Force then painstakingly analyzed those responses together with data provided by the Boston Public Schools and developed eight student assignment models. These models were presented for public consideration during the second phase of the process.

Based upon the community input from that series of public meetings and additional deliberations, the Task Force now makes two sets of recommendations. One set of recommendations addresses issues of student assignment; the other set of recommendations addresses system-wide issues.

The paramount concern among all who commented was that all schools need to be of high quality. That is a given. However, a school assignment plan alone cannot address the issue of quality. There are, however, key elements the Task Force identified that need to be a part of any student assignment plan. They include:

- a variety of schools from which a family may choose;
- increased access to schools in one's own immediate neighborhood;
- the ability to attend some specialized schools that are available on a citywide basis;
- preference for siblings to attend the same school; and
- an increased number of K-8 schools.

The Task Force's recommendations with respect to the student assignment process itself are:

1. preserve and ensure the minimum 50% allocation of seats for students who walk to school throughout the entire assignment process;
2. change the student assignment "algorithm" – that is, the mathematical formula and lottery system by which students are assigned to schools;
3. assign children to schools following a specific set of priorities;
4. create a "buffer zone" that would allow families who live close to a zone line to choose schools on either side of the line; and
5. ensure 50/50 enrollment (half English speakers and half Spanish speakers) at two-way bilingual schools.

Although the Task Force could not reach full consensus on the appropriate number and configuration of assignment zones, a majority of the group recommends that the current three-zone structure be replaced by a six-zone elementary and three-zone middle school structure, delineating a “primary” and “secondary” zone of school choices for every family.

The Task Force’s recommendations with respect to system-wide issues are:

1. improve communication with the public about how the student assignment process works;
2. improve communication within the School Department itself;
3. foster diverse student populations in schools;
4. promote parent participation and involvement; and
5. establish a BPS Schools Improvement Trust Fund.

The appendices to this report include maps and explanations of the eight models developed by the Task Force, as well as the advantages and disadvantages identified for each model. Also included in the appendices is the Task Force’s recommendation of how to assign a student whose current school becomes an out-of-zone school, and further explanations about the walk zone.

The Task Force has completed its original mandate, that is, to oversee the community process of finding out what the public’s opinion is about Boston Public Schools’ assignment process, and to develop ideas about ways to improve the process to enhance it for families while maximizing the use of the district’s financial resources. However, for many of the members of the Task Force, the process is still very much in progress. Several members of the group are willing and indeed would like to continue to work on this important project. There is explanatory literature to be written for parents, there is monitoring of the changes and implementation to be made and so forth, and members of the Task Force are prepared to assist in these efforts.

Next Steps and Other Considerations

This Report is being presented to the Boston School Committee in September 2004. They will review it as the basis for any formal proposals they may approve to modify the existing school assignment process. It is the understanding of the Task Force that any formal changes would be set forth during the fall of 2004, for initial implementation in September 2005. Parents would be notified of any proposed changes during the winter of 2004-05 so they could plan accordingly for the 2005-06 academic year. Any changes may come immediately in September 2005, or be phased in over a multi-year period.

Because of the magnitude and complexity of evaluating the financial implications of the seven models studied (plus the eighth model, the current system) for possibly changing the existing assignment process, this report could not offer specific scenarios of comparative financial projections if changes were to be implemented. The final plan adopted by the School Committee will have to consider these implications. The Task Force recommends that any savings accrued from adopting any changes, now and into the near (five-year) future, would be announced publicly no later than March 15, 2005, with a trust account established to protect these funds for use in schools most in need of improvement, and that a process would be elucidated for a fair allocation of those funds to the most needy schools.

The Task Force also hopes that a process for continued public input into school quality improvement processes would be put in place no later than January 2005, to continue public dialogue and participation in supporting efforts to improve quality in all city schools. American public education has long been subjected to short-term political pressures that too rarely take into account the kind of hard data and wide public input that the Task Force considered in its deliberations. Thoughtful consideration of what is best for *all* of Boston's increasingly diverse populations must supersede parochial considerations of what may appear best for limited groups of students in particular neighborhoods.

Recent reports suggesting that alternatives to public schools may not produce better educational outcomes underline the need to assure the widest public participation in supporting urban public education. The hundreds of parents and activists who attended the Task Force's public forums constitute a large cadre of supporters who believe that public education deserves wide support. The members of the Student Assignment Task Force are honored to have helped facilitate their participation, and strongly endorse their continuing work with school officials and community supporters to provide the best possible public school opportunities for our children.

Acknowledgements

The Student Assignment Task Force expresses gratitude to the Honorable Thomas M. Menino, Mayor of Boston, Dr. Thomas Payzant, Superintendent of Schools, and Dr. Elizabeth Reilinger, School Committee Chair, for their trust in our work. We acknowledge and deeply appreciate the assistance and counsel of staff members from the Mayor's Office, the School Committee, and the Boston School Department.

Karen Mapp, Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement, was instrumental in getting the entire project moving and offered insightful and useful advice along the way. The Task Force recognizes the insightful comments and extraordinary service of Laurie Ciardi, Executive Secretary of the School Committee, who provided much-needed support from electronic and print information, to logistical preparation for the community forum process and our own deliberations, to refreshments on demand. Her colleagues Ofelia Pedraza and Victoria Mitchell worked diligently behind the scenes. Martha Pierce and Meredith Weenick, Education and Policy Advisors, respectively, to the Mayor, also provided valuable information and assistance, attending the community forums and our Task Force meetings. We heard helpful synopses of current systems from Maryellen Donahue (Research, Assessment & Evaluation), Mike Hughes (Transportation), and Jerry Burrell (Student Assignment). There were dozens of volunteer facilitators who led the discussions at the twenty-six public forums and fourteen focus groups. Without their time and effort, we would not have heard the voices of the public.

Valerie Edwards, Director of the Boston Public Schools Office of Strategic Planning, and Carleton Jones, Boston Public Schools Strategic/Capital Planner, provided us with copious amounts of necessary data, charts and maps. They cheerfully gathered yet more information as we requested it. As strategic planners for the Boston Public Schools, they gave us critical guidance and key questions to consider, helping us to balance both the "big picture" as well as the small details. At many Task Force meetings, they presented the information in ways that assisted us in grasping the complexities involved.

In addition, community members attended Task Force meetings and provided valuable comments. The Task Force especially commends John Mudd and Kim Janey from the Massachusetts Advocates for Children. The Task Force also appreciates the citizens who attended the community forums and gave ideas, insights, and opinions about their experiences in the Boston Public Schools and explained their desires to provide quality education for the children in Boston. Without citizen participation, this Task Force would not have a substantive report of its work.

The conclusions of this Task Force are ours, the volunteer members of the group. We could not have reached them, however, without the assistance, expertise, and support of employees of the City of Boston and the Boston Public Schools. Each Task Force member feels privileged to have served on the Task Force and has learned from the staff, each other, and, most importantly, from the citizens who participated in the process.

Student Assignment Task Force Report

Introduction

In December 2003, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the Boston School Committee and Superintendent Thomas Payzant launched a citywide public engagement process to generate conversations among diverse groups of citizens about student assignment in the Boston Public Schools. Under the leadership of a community Task Force, the goal of this process was to make recommendations for an assignment system that leads to higher satisfaction among families and possibly frees up dollars for reallocation to improve quality. The first phase of the process involved community forums, focus groups and written surveys that sought public input on the benefits and drawbacks of the current assignment system. Over a period of more than two months the Task Force painstakingly analyzed the responses and developed eight models for student assignment. These models were presented for public consideration during the second phase of the process. Based upon the community input and BPS school data, the Task Force now makes two sets of recommendations. One set of recommendations addresses issues of student assignment; the other set of recommendations addresses system wide issues.

The mandate of the Student Assignment Task Force was to lead a multi-phased process of community input and analysis that would result in the creation of one or more potential models for student assignment to the Boston Public Schools¹. The Task Force devoted 122 hours meeting among themselves and hosting community forums from December through July in order to complete this task. While the Task Force recognizes that its primary responsibility was to guide the public process, this report is an opportune moment to communicate to the Boston Public Schools (BPS) the concerns and recommendations of the public. Many of the issues raised by the public will need to be addressed by the Boston Public Schools over the next several years regardless of which student assignment plan is ultimately implemented.

History

Like many urban school districts, Boston is working hard to increase quality, demonstrate academic improvements and success, and attract active and engaged families of all economic levels to its schools. Today the racial composition of Boston schools is dramatically different than it was in the 1970s when issues of segregation were driving changes to the assignment system. Since the 2000-2001 school year, school assignment in Boston has not included any racial/ethnic classifications. However, the city's shifting centers of population density, combined with the fact that there are now 89 fewer schools in the BPS than 30 years ago, make it difficult to ensure that every neighborhood has access to quality schools. Neighborhood schools as currently perceived could be feasible in some neighborhoods, but there is no evidence to suggest that they would be feasible on a city-wide basis at this time.

¹ The Task Force did not consider any aspects of school assignment for either high school students nor students who receive Unified Student Services, commonly referred to as SPED. All high schools are citywide. Students with special needs are assigned to schools in accordance with their Individualized Education Plans.

It is important to acknowledge that this community process around student assignment is not occurring within a vacuum but has been working within the context of Boston's history of student assignment and the status of schools in Boston today. Dating back more than 30 years, student assignment in Boston has remained controversial, especially in terms of the lasting impact this has had on race relations in the city. Student assignment in Boston is rooted in the desires of families, educators and policy makers to ensure access to quality education for all children. To this end, school assignment plans in Boston have undergone many incarnations, mostly mandated by court orders, ranging from neighborhood schools to racial balance or some combination of the two. (See the Appendix for "A Brief History of BPS Student Assignment")

The student assignment plans that have been implemented in the past were informed by the United States Constitution, the Courts and the advice and guidance of expert academicians, university leaders, and community partnerships. Each of these plans has played an important role in defining the public's perception of Boston Public Schools today. The history of student assignment has shaped the composition of today's school and general population and inherently affects the experience of families in public schools. While many of the families of current BPS students do not carry with them any memories of how Boston arrived at its existing complex student assignment plan, there are many Boston families for whom this is still a highly charged issue.

Parents across the city spoke both in favor of increasing local access to schools in their immediate neighborhoods, and for having access to schools they might choose to send their children to in other neighborhoods, for educational and demographic diversity, or academic quality reasons.

In addition, our analysis of existing school quality data such as MCAS and national School Improvement Test scores indicates that variations in academic outcomes continue to exist from one school to another. These variations are generally associated with the perceived "quality" of individual schools, even as we found that perceived quality did not always correlate directly with actual test scores achieved in individual schools. Any recommendation to move directly to a policy limiting parental choices to schools located in their immediate neighborhoods only would inevitably isolate some parental choices to schools of lower quality than is currently available in other neighborhoods. This would not be a fair and equitable distribution of the BPS's currently projected resources.

Many factors influence school quality and educational outcomes, from parental involvement, to individual school leadership, facilities, student demographics, teacher experience, access to affiliated corporate or cultural resources, and neighborhood support. Per capita expenditures per se are not the most accurate measure of academic outcomes. The Task Force heard throughout our Forums and discussions of the importance of achieving equitable distributions of resources, and the need to develop recommendations that enhanced system-wide quality without diminishing the resources available to schools most in need of improvement. Our recommendations are consistent with achieving this goal.

A broad range of community leaders, legislators, advocates, policy makers and academicians, all seeking to promote access to quality education and address inequities in the system, have helped

to keep the issue of student assignment at the forefront of Boston public school policy. The Task Force is grateful to and acknowledges the thoughtful contributions that they made in helping to lay the groundwork for the Student Assignment Task Force's work today.

The Principles that Underlie our Recommendations

A number of key principles guided the design of the student assignment plans considered by the Task Force. Based on the findings from the community forums and other community input, including surveys and focus groups, the Task Force determined which of the issues and concerns raised by the public were of greatest importance *and* could be addressed through a student assignment plan.

The Task Force determined that any student assignment plan should include several key elements that were repeated consistently and forcefully by families throughout Boston when they talked about what was important when choosing a school for their children. These included:

- **Choice:** A student assignment plan should offer families a range of schools from which to choose.
- **City-wide options:** A student assignment plan should include some options to attend specialized schools that are available to all families in the city.
- **Sibling preference:** A student assignment plan should include preference for assignment to the same school for siblings.
- **Neighborhood schools not requiring transportation:** A student assignment plan should include some options for students to attend schools located close to their home.
- **Availability of transportation:** A student assignment plan should include some options for students to receive transportation so they may attend schools further from their homes.
- **Increased availability of K -8 schools:** A student assignment plan should include some options for an increased number of K-8 schools.

These principles are derived from the surveys and from the comments made by those who attended the ten community forums held during Phase I. A total of 761 city residents attend the Phase I community forums.

Additionally, the Task Force also addressed the following issues: (These issues are addressed more fully further in the report).

- **Number of zones**
- **Walk-zone preference**
- **Diversity**

Finally, it is critical any student assignment plan should give families access to high quality schools. The Task Force looked hard at issues of equity and determined that *all* models for student assignment must ensure that *all* families have the option to choose from schools that include some or all of the variables associated with quality. To this end, we attempted to configure all assignment zones to include a mix of high achieving schools, K-8 schools, new facilities, small and large schools, etc. Specifically, we wanted each zone to include access to schools with as many of the following variables associated with quality as possible.

Quality Indicators Considered:

- **Strong teaching staff and leadership:** certified, competent and experienced teachers, and strong administrators.
- **Curriculum and programs:** supplemental academic programs, honors and advanced work, special education, bilingual education, mentoring.
- **Academic achievement:** measured by MCAS scores, Adequate Yearly Progress reports (AYP), other test scores and graduation rates.
- **Resources in the school:** appropriate and adequate quantity of books, computers, supplies.
- **Range of available programming and student support services:** health, counseling, and tutoring, all with a focus on individualized attention.
- **Parent involvement:** family friendly atmosphere that encourages parental engagement.

These principles led to the eight models designed and considered by the Task Force.

The Eight Models

The main message emphasized by the parents and citizens who attended the community forums was the absolute necessity of quality schools for their children. The public conviction behind this empathic request for quality schools cannot be overstated. The Task Force also found that many indicators of quality education went beyond the purview of student assignment. This presented us with the first of two main dilemmas, i.e., how to recommend a student assignment model that took the quality of the schools into account.

- We began with the principles outlined above, i.e. choice, citywide options, sibling preference, neighborhood schools not requiring transportation, availability of transportation and increased K-8 schools. We used these principles to design the various zone structures evident in the eight models.
- We examined the existing “quality data” that the BPS collects on schools throughout the system. Specifically, we looked at data on school popularity, high and low MCAS scores, advanced work classes and the number of schools under state panel review and needing or receiving corrective action.

Appendix One contains a summary of the eight student assignment models developed by the Task Force. Many of the models take into account the “likelihood of getting one’s choice” of schools. The models represent a continuum from no choice, “you live here, you go there,” to a citywide option.

These models were introduced at each public forum with three caveats.

- Each model is a work in progress subject to change based upon the input gathered from the forums and the BPS data.
- No one model will satisfy everyone.
- Quality is the paramount concern throughout the city; however, an assignment plan alone cannot ensure quality.

Scenarios for a New Student Assignment Plan

Given the first caveat, that the models are works in progress, rather than recommend a specific model, the Task Force recommends to the School Committee two assignment scenarios that incorporate elements from the various student assignment plans examined and from many of the comments we heard from the public.

Student Assignment Scenario #1

The majority of Task Force members voted to recommend a primary/secondary zone structure as our preferred scenario because it allows us to consider the quality concerns of Boston’s parents. The Task Force determined that any student assignment plan must ensure that all families are able to choose from quality schools. Specifically, we wanted a student assignment plan where every zone would include access to schools with one or more of the quality indicators identified above. In order to explain this fully, we will begin by reviewing the zone structure of the current three-zone student assignment plan.

A map of the current Boston school zones reveals that an invisible line divides the city vertically. The current student assignment plan exemplifies and structures this division. On the left side of the line is a geographical area that contains the current North and West BPS zones. These zones include the neighborhoods of East Boston, Charlestown, Back Bay/Beacon Hill, the South End, and Fenway, Allston/Brighton, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, West Roxbury and Roxbury. On the right side of the line is a geographical area that contains the current East Zone. The East Zone includes the neighborhoods of South Boston, North Dorchester, South Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. When we compare these geographical areas to each other strictly in terms of school quality indicators and school capacities, we note some discrepancies that raise questions about equity and fairness. In order to best represent what we mean by this, let’s imagine that rather than the current three-zone structure, the city was broken down into six-zones for the purposes of student assignment.

Three of the models that the Task Force experimented with contained a six-zone structure. When we break the above geographical areas down in terms of this six-zone structure, we see that the left geographical area is represented by zones 1, 2, and 6 in our various six zone models

and the right geographical area is represented by zones 3, 4, and 5 in our various six-zone models. First let's look at this division in terms of school "quality" indicators.

The following "Chart of Quality Indicators" offers a comparison of quality indicators at the elementary school level from the left geographical area and the right geographical area as they appear in the current student assignment plan.

Chart of Quality Indicators

	The Left Geographical Area (zones 1, 2, & 6 in a six-zone structure)	The Right Geographical Area (zones 3, 4, & 5 in a six-zone structure)
# of highly chosen elementary schools	8	12
# of high scoring MCAS schools in ELA	17	12
# of high scoring MCAS schools in Math	18	13
# of advanced work classes	7	7
# of elementary schools not chosen	22	26
# of low scoring MCAS schools in ELA	15	20
# of low scoring MCAS schools in Math	13	18
# of schools under state panel review or corrective action	4	16

This chart demonstrates that at the elementary school level, zones 1, 2, and 6 in the left geographical area outperform zones 3, 4, and 5 in the right geographical area on every indicator except school popularity, although there are also more unpopular schools in zones 3, 4, and 5. In terms of MCAS scores, schools in zones 1, 2, and 6 score higher on both the ELA and Math exams, and they have fewer low scoring schools. The biggest discrepancy can be seen in those schools under state panel review or corrective action. Clearly, the schools in the right geographical area need more work in order to improve quality at the elementary school level.

This has implications for some of the models we developed. For example, when we look at these discrepancies in terms of the primary/secondary zone structure, the BPS data demonstrate that zones 1 and 2 outperform zones 3 and 4 on many indicators. The primary/secondary zone structure pairs zones (1 and 2) and zones (3 and 4) with each other, i.e., as each other's primary and secondary zone. This would work well for those families who live in zones 1 and 2. They would be able to choose from more high quality schools in either their primary or their secondary zone. This would not work well for those families in zones 3 and 4, however, who would have to choose from lower performing schools in both their primary and secondary zones. Given this, if the School Committee were to choose a primary/secondary option for student

assignment, the pairing of zones (1 and 2) and zones (3 and 4) would not equitable. In terms of school quality, then, any primary/secondary option would need to pair zones (1 and 3) and zones (2 and 4) in order to be fair and equitable in terms of a family’s primary and secondary choices.

The schools are a bit more evenly matched at the middle school level, but discrepancies exist especially in terms of MCAS scores.

A similar pattern appears when we look at school capacities in a six-zone structure. We looked at school capacity in terms of supply and demand. In other words, given the current BPS student population some zones have an overage (too many seats) or a shortage (not enough seats) in terms of the number of children living in a particular zone. The following chart compares the current school capacities at the elementary school level in a six-zone structure.

School Capacities Chart

	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4	Zone 5	Zone 6
Elementary school children living in the zone	3829	2776	5119	6270	4031	4015
Zone-overage	481	1265	414	146	422	300
One primary/secondary zone option				Another primary/secondary zone option		
	Zones 1/2	Zones 3/4	Zones 5/6	Zones 1/3	Zones 2/4	Zones 5/6
Elementary school children living in the zone	6605	11,389	8046	8948	9046	8046
Zone- overage	1746	560	722	895	1411	722

The top portion of the above chart contains the number of children per zone in the six zones and the overage for each zone. (According to BPS data none of the zones have a shortage of seats at the elementary school level. Current demographic trends suggest this pattern will continue at least through school year 2016-17²). For example, there are 3,829 elementary school students in zone one with 481 empty school seats remaining in that zone after those children are placed in classrooms.

The bottom portion of the chart illustrates what the overage looks like in two different primary and secondary pairing scenarios. Once again, there is a large discrepancy in the number of available seats between zones (1 and 2) and zones (3 and 4). In the first primary/secondary

² BPS Strategic Planning Team, student enrollment projections, July 2004

option, zones 3 and 4, which have the least number of available seats (560) and the highest number of students (11,389), are paired together, and zones 1 and 2, which have the greatest number of available seats (1746) and the least number of students (6605), are paired together.

Given the school quality discrepancies illustrated in the chart of quality indicators, it hardly seems fair to lock those families in the most populous zones (zones 3 and 4) into fewer seats among lower performing schools. A student assignment plan which pairs zones 1 and 3 and zones 2 and 4, is more equitable for those families in zones 3 and 4 who want to choose a school from their secondary zone in terms of actually having seats available.

The Task Force prefers a primary/secondary zone structure because we believe it offers the families in Boston a compromise between sending children to schools closer to their homes for those families whose paramount concern is proximity, and choosing the best school for one's child for those families whose paramount concern is choice. However, this structure will only work if the zone pairings are equitable. We have demonstrated the benefits of pairing zones (1 and 3), and zones (2 and 4) in terms of quality and school capacity. This would provide families with the same number of choices they have now but with some restrictions on those choices. This would also increase the probability of students being able to attend the schools of their choice within their primary zone. Therefore, this option represents the best compromise given the desires of parents.

We are also cognizant that this scenario has one potential drawback – transportation. We see no major transportation problems with primary and secondary zones (1 and 3) and (5 and 6). These zones are five and seven miles wide at their widest points, which is comparable to our current North and West zones. The pairing of zones 2 and 4 however may be challenging in terms of transporting children from South Dorchester to Allston/Brighton. Notice that this distance, at eight miles wide, is still one and three-quarter miles shorter than our current East Zone which is almost 10 miles long. However, we believe that the benefits of this scenario in terms of equity and choice, out weigh the potential transportation disadvantage. If the transportation issue cannot be resolved, the Task Force recommends that the School Committee consider having parents who want to send their children to a school in their secondary zone provide their own transportation.

Student Assignment Scenario #2

A minority of Task Force members felt that the current student assignment model should not change unless and until the following happen: One, that the quality of schools improve, especially the 19 schools currently classified as under-performing; two, that the 50% set aside for children who live within the walk-zone works for all neighborhoods, and three, that a new student assignment algorithm be adopted and given time to work. These three conditions would modify the current student assignment model enough to ensure that parent concerns are addressed while the BPS focus on school quality and reform.

Revising the current student assignment plan in these ways would create the possibility of an evolving and revised new student assignment process that must be continuously evaluated with changes made as problems or issues arise during a two-year period. A small Task Force that

consists of community members as well as public school officials could monitor this evolving process. Postponing the revision of the current student assignment plan until other issues such as quality, are further considered and addressed, allows for the possibility of an orderly process of revision and change, with public education as the key component.

Revising the current student assignment plan is not a solution to the demonstrated issues and problems in the current student assignment process. It is merely a stopgap measure until such time as the issues of quality can be discussed publicly in the city. A timeline for this public discussion could be approximately six months with the tangible result being the development of a comprehensive plan that emphasizes quality, diversity, and the re-programming and refurbishment of schools in the three zones. Then, a new re-configuration of the current three-zone plan, perhaps one of the models developed by the Task Force, must be considered.

Two Categories of Recommendations

The main recommendations of the Task Force fall into two categories: recommendations concerning student assignment and recommendations concerning system wide issues. The next section outlines and explains these recommendations.

Recommendations Concerning Student Assignment

Recommendation #1: Preserve the 50% walk-zone preference throughout the assignment process.

Sibling preference is important to all families in Boston and must be maintained. Once the siblings are assigned, we recommend the following procedure for assigning students from the walk-zone. Imagine that 20 out of 100 seats in a school are given to siblings. Twelve of these siblings are from the walk-zone and eight are outside the walk-zone. This leaves 80 seats. The first thing that should happen is those 80 seats should be divided among walkers and non-walkers, which leaves 40 seats for children from the walk-zone and 40 seats for those outside of the walk-zone. In this way, the 50% walk preference would be assured to those families who do not have siblings in the school. *We strongly recommend that the 50% walk percentage remain sacred throughout all the assignment rounds.* We do not recommend an increase in the walk percentage. Given the current real walk percentages, ensuring the 50% walk percentage throughout the assignment process would actually represent an increase in that percentage for a majority of the schools. The next question is how might the BPS maintain the walk percentage throughout the assignment rounds?

The rationale for this recommendation is included in Appendix Two. Appendix two explains the issues that parents have with the current walk zone percentages, how the walk zone percentage currently works, and explains some of the discrepancies that exist in the current approach to the walk zone.

Recommendation #2: Change the Student Assignment Algorithm

Task Force members are not intimately familiar with assignment algorithms. However, based upon an overview of three algorithms by BPS staff members, the one currently in use by the BPS, the Gayle Shapley Student-Optimal Stable Mechanism, and the Top Trading Cycles Mechanism, the Task Force recommends that the BPS switch to the Top Trading Cycles assignment algorithm as soon as possible. The algorithm currently in use is structured to maximize a family's first choice according to the priorities set by the BPS. This algorithm allows for too much gaming of the system. The Gayle Shapley algorithm is driven by priorities only, which cuts down on the amount of choice afforded to families. The Top Trading Cycles algorithm also takes into account priorities while leaving some room for choice. Since choice was very important to many families who attended the community forums, we believe that having an assignment algorithm that leaves some room for choice is best. Further, neither Gayle Shapley or Top Trading Cycles can be manipulated by parental gaming. We also believe that the Top Trading algorithm will enable the BPS to ensure that the 50% walk preference remains sacred throughout all the assignment rounds. *Therefore, we strongly recommend that the BPS adopt the Top Trading assignment algorithm.*

Recommendation #3: Assign children to Schools using the Following Priorities

We recommend that the School Committee adopt the following priorities when assigning children. These priorities would work in concert with the new student assignment algorithm.

Algorithm Priorities

- 1) Sibling walkers
- 2) Siblings
- 3) Children who live within the walk-zone set at 50%
- 3) Children who live within the buffer zone
- 4) The rest of the children who live within the primary zone
- 5) Children from the secondary zone

Please see Appendix Four for an explanation of what will happen if a school within the current zone structure becomes an out of zone school in a new student assignment plan.

Recommendation #4: Create Buffer Zones

Changing the boundary lines between zones, as many of the models proposed by the Task Force have done, may cause anxiety for those families who suddenly find themselves in a new zone with their access to a beloved school that is close to home abruptly cut off. *In order to accommodate these families, the Task Force recommends buffer zones along each boundary.* These buffer zones would extend one-quarter of a mile into each zone, thus they would be one half mile wide. Families who live within these buffer zones would be eligible to attend any school within one-quarter mile of the boundary of the adjacent zone. The Task Force recommends that this concept of buffer zones be adopted regardless of which model is ultimately chosen.

Recommendation #5: Two-way Bilingual Schools

With respect to the citywide, two-way bilingual schools, the Task Force *strongly recommends that 50% of seats be assigned to children whose first language is English, and that the other 50% of seats be assigned to children whose first language is Spanish.* This is important in order to maintain the original intent of two-way bilingual programs, that is, teaching and learning are to occur in both languages. If there is an unequal distribution of students, this goal is harder to achieve.

The Models that were not Recommended

The Task Force began Phase II of the community forums with an open mind about the possibility of recommending any one of the eight models that were developed. As the forums proceeded, it became clear to us that certain models would not be feasible to implement. Appendix Four contains an explanation for why we have not recommended certain models.

System Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Better Communication with the Public about how Student Assignment works

The Student Assignment Task Force has specific recommendations for publicizing the new system. Any changes in the way that student assignments are made should be clearly explained. Any changes in the process should be stated in bold print and in language that is easy for citizens to understand. Any new algorithm that is used should be fully explained in a one-page summary that parents and the public can understand. Parents need to be educated as to how and why the system works the way it does and how and why elements were altered from the previous algorithm.

Volunteers – parents and all other citizens – need to be well-trained in the ways that the new school assignment process will be managed, both for the school system and for individual families. Information about sibling preference and walk-zones, two key components of the assignment process, and about how they might be operationalized in a zone or could alter the assignment process at a particular school, must be clearly written. The School Department must prepare publications about the changes in the process and even customize them for individual schools, because the process for some schools may change far more than for others.

The School Department should establish a telephone hot line when the new process is inaugurated and have knowledgeable staff and/or volunteers available to talk with families about the process. An on-line information system should also be developed and monitored carefully. Periodically, printed updates about the progress being made in the revised process should be distributed to schools, libraries, and community centers.

Recommendation #2: Better Communication within the School Department itself

Communication among the various departments of the Boston Public School system, especially those departments that address aspects of student assignment, needs to be improved. To its credit, the BPS granted the Task Force access to any and all information and data we needed in order to complete the mandate before us. However, it was often difficult for one department to get the data or information from another department within the system. Improved communication among departments would go a long way toward improving communication with parents and the public in general.

Recommendation#3: Diversity

The School Assignment Task Force recommends that the School Committee and School Department remain mindful of the rich and changing diversity patterns in Boston's population. The changing demographics have been cited recently in a *Boston Globe* special section (Sunday, July 25, 2004) that notes that the population of Boston has altered and includes a broader range of immigrants as well as changing patterns in the well-established racial and ethnic groups who traditionally reside in Boston. Parents and citizens participating in the community forums organized by the Student Assignment Task Force were often definite in their opinion that achieving diversity in individual school buildings was a priority. Even though the student assignment process no longer must, by court order, address issues of racial balancing or preference, the diversity of particular schools was noted by parents and applauded. For many parents, a diverse school setting ensures a higher quality education for their children and all children.

The white population is no longer in the majority, and it is likely that individual school populations will continue to shift during the next decade. The School Department, in designing a school assignment process, must be ever mindful of the ways in which learning can be affected by diversity in school population as well as by teaching about diversity in the curriculum. To ignore the richness and breadth of Boston's population would be to lose one of Boston's treasures and cause difficulties in the city in the future. An education about diversity during childhood in the schools can lead to a more accepting and tolerant adult population in the future.

Recommendation #4: Parent Participation and Involvement

The resources of the School Department and the relationship of the Department to parents and families must be re-assessed and modified to allow the broadest recognition of parent participation and community support. Guidelines about the ways parents can participate and the kinds of support they can give to the school system must be determined. The purpose of parent involvement is not to create some elite schools but to create parent- and family-friendly individual schools throughout the entire system.

Once the school assignment system is re-configured and re-aligned, well-oriented and well-trained parents and families in individual schools can be the guides to the student assignment process. They would work with and be informed by staff from the Boston Public Schools.

Recommendation #5: Convert More Schools to K-8 schools

Throughout the city families want more K-8 schools for their children. They also want more K-0 and K-1 options.

Recommendation #6: Establish a BPS Schools Improvement Trust Fund

The Task Force heard significant doubt expressed by participants in the public forums about whether any of the potential millions of dollars of financial savings realized from modifications to the existing transportation plan would actually be re-directed toward making improvements in the schools deemed most deficient in producing high quality educational outcomes. Even though the Task Force did not conduct any financial analysis of the recommended models, to allay these concerns, the Task Force strongly recommends that the School Committee and Superintendent establish a new Schools Improvement Trust Fund. It is to be funded for up to five years out of proceeds from any savings realized from implementing the Task Force recommendations, the proceeds of which would be used specifically and exclusively for the improvement of quality educational outcomes in the system's most deficient schools. The Trust Fund should exist until such time that the needs of the most deficient schools could be met through existing School Department budgets. The results of school investments from this Fund should be published annually.

School Quality and Student Assignment

The Task Force was encouraged by the active participation of the public in the first phase of community forums. On the whole their participation and comments demonstrated a strong passion for and concern about student assignment and the status of Boston public schools in general. An underlying theme of the participants' comments was a belief that quality public education is a critical element of a healthy, thriving city and a right of all children.

Not surprisingly, the Task Force heard a strong preference for high quality schools in every neighborhood. While closely aligned with how families think about student assignment, this is not something that can be addressed through an assignment plan *alone*.

Ensuring Quality in the Boston Public Schools

The Student Assignment Task Force has helped to initiate a conversation among the families of current and potential students about quality education in this city. Those who attended the community forums welcomed this conversation and are eager to see it continue. Toward this end, the Task Force, in recognizing the goal driven, and persistent work of the Superintendent and School Department to focus on quality during the past decade, suggests enhancing and increasing the scope of that work by the establishment of a task force on Quality Education. Such a task force would be comprised of citizens and school personnel who would determine indicators of quality for the entire school system. The task force on Quality Education would be responsible for establishing, with the support of consultants and experts, a list of comprehensive citywide indicators of quality education.

We also recommend that the School Department develop and monitor a Quality Assessment Indicator (QAI) for *each individual* school. This will be different from the current individual school indicators in that the school itself, especially the parents and community partners of that school, will prioritize the quality indicators for that school and set a timeline to meet the assigned deadlines. These school based Quality Education Task Forces would be responsible for the following:

- Compiling a detailed outline of the physical components of the school building, including cleanliness and recent maintenance projects.
- Monitoring the preparation and professional development of teachers and all other staff who work regularly with students.
- Monitoring the achievements of individual students, teachers, parents, and overall school accomplishments.
- Monitoring the nature of parent involvement at the school.

Last, it is vital that the work that has already been accomplished and the progress that has been and will be made to achieve quality education in BPS schools be published in clearly written documents for parents and citizens.

A Task Force on Quality Education is not a six-month project. The school system must be willing to reckon with the issue of quality from a long-range, wide-scale perspective with community involvement and citizen participation. The city, together, must commit to an agreed-upon definition of quality for the Boston Public Schools. The School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools can lead this effort, but it must be supported by the entire city. It is not an easy task, and it will take at least a decade of work. In the end, the children of Boston will be better educated which in turn will benefit the entire city of Boston.

APPENDICES 1 to 14

Appendix One -- A summary of the eight models presented to the public during Phase II.

Appendix Two – Maps of Models A - H

Appendix Three - Walk Zones Explained

Appendix Four - When a Current School Becomes an Out-of -Zone School

Appendix Five - Parental RSVP for Transportation

Appendix Six - The Discarded Models

Appendix Seven - Findings from the Community Forum Process

Appendix Eight – A Brief History of Student Assignment in the BPS

Appendix Nine – Community Forum Schedule – Phase I

Appendix Ten – Small Group discussion script – Phase I

Appendix Eleven – Student Assignment Survey – Phase I

Appendix Twelve – Community Forum Schedule – Phase II

Appendix Thirteen – Large Group Presentation Script – Phase II

Appendix Fourteen – Bibliography

APPENDIX ONE

Many of the models take into account the “likelihood of getting one’s choice” of schools in a particular model. This is related to probability. It means that the actual probability of a family getting one of their first three choices is either greater or lower depending on the number of zones in any given model. The models described below fall somewhere on the continuum of student assignment models, from the no choice, “you live here, you go there” concept, to a citywide option.

MODEL A

Model A is the current three-zone model. The zones in Model A are drawn vertically resulting in one zone that is six miles long, and two zones that are nine and three-quarter miles long.

MODEL B

Model B is a new three-zone model. Two of the zones in model B are drawn vertically and one is drawn horizontally. The vertical zones are six miles and nine and one-half miles long respectively, and the horizontal zone is seven and a half miles wide. This model is the closest to our current model, but the lines are drawn differently to increase diversity and to balance out the higher achieving schools across zones.

MODEL C

Model C is a four-zone model. Two of the zones are seven miles wide, one is six miles wide, and one is four miles wide. This model offers parents a balance between choice and the likelihood of getting their choices.

MODEL D

Model D is the six-zone model. Two of the zones are five miles wide, and four of the zones are four miles wide. This model increases parents’ likelihood of getting the schools they chose, but it limits the overall range of choice available.

MODEL E

Model E is a six-to-three zone model. The model has six zones for elementary school students, the same zones described in Model D above. Those six zones expand to three zones for middle school students. The three middle school zones are the same zones described in Model B above. This model allows parents to keep young children closer to home by offering six zones at the elementary school level, but it expands the options for older children in terms of school programs by offering larger zones and more choices at the middle school level.

MODEL F

The layout of Model F is the same as the layout of Model E described above, the main difference being that Model F is a primary/secondary zone Model. In this model, parents are assigned to both a primary and a secondary zone. They choose three schools from their primary zone first, and three alternate schools from their secondary zone. The primary zone in this model offers parents a greater likelihood of getting the school they want because the zones are smaller, while the secondary zone offers parents additional choice.

MODEL G

Model G is a 12/10 zone model. This model has 12 zones for elementary school students and 10 zones for middle school students. Each zone in this model is between three and four miles wide. In this model, students would be assigned to the school nearest to them in their zone. This model increases parents' likelihood of getting into a school that is close to their home because it limits their options to just those schools. There is no walk-zone preference in this model.

MODEL H

Model H is the citywide zone model. This model has one zone that is twelve miles by eight miles wide at its widest points. This model provides total choice, but it limits the chance of getting those choices.

Based upon BPS data, each of these models has sufficient capacity to accommodate students in each zone. (It's important to note that while some neighborhoods do not have enough schools within their boundaries for the number of children who live in the neighborhood, every zone has enough capacity for the children living within that zone. In other words, the zones do not correspond to Boston's neighborhoods). See the chart below.

Number of schools available in each model

Model	Elementary schools	Middle schools	K-8 schools	City wide schools	Walk-zone percentage
A	20-26	3-8	2-7	5(3K-8/2M)	50%
B	18-22	3-7	6-9 ³	6(K-8)	50%
C	14-16	3-5	5-6	7(K-8)	25%
D	9-12	1-4	3-5	15(K-8)	50%
E	9-12	3-7	3-5	3(K-8)	50%
F	9-12	1-4	3-5	21(K-8)	50%
G	2-8	1-3	1-2	None	None
H	66	18	12	All	None

These models were introduced at each public forum with three caveats.

- Each model is a work in progress subject to change based upon the input gathered from the forums and the BPS data.
- No one model will satisfy everyone.
- Quality is the paramount concern throughout the city; however, an assignment plan cannot ensure quality.

³ This number reflects the fact that the Task Force is recommending that the BPS convert more schools to K-8 schools.

APPENDIX TWO

APPENDIX THREE

Walk-Zones

As we stated in the report, the need for more quality schools was of paramount concern throughout the city. The second most urgent concern was proximity or the desire for more neighborhood schools. Families who expressed this concern felt that the main way to achieve this goal was by raising the walk-zone percentage from its current 50% level. This was especially true of those families from the neighborhoods of West Roxbury, Roslindale, North Dorchester and South Boston. A majority of participants from *all* neighborhoods said they would favor proximity if the schools closest to their homes were quality schools.

The more community forums we attended, the more we understood that concerns about the walk-zone percentage were driving the debate about student assignment across the city. Those who favored more choice saw the 50% walk-zone as limiting those choices. Fortunately, a majority of these families felt comfortable with the current 50% walk preference, but they would be very disappointed if that percentage were to be set any higher. Those who favored more neighborhood schools felt that the 50% walk percentage prevented more of them from attending their local schools. These families were less comfortable with the current 50% and called for much higher walk-zone percentages. We quickly came to understand that any decision we made about the walk-zone percentage in the new models would trigger dismay among a significant number of city parents. This presented us with our second main dilemma, i.e., how to determine a walk-zone percentage that would truly work for all the parents of Boston.

We examined BPS data about how the current walk-zone percentage actually works. Although we analyzed the walk-zone data for every school in the city, the numbers we provide below are for elementary schools only. According to the BPS application and assignment rules document, the . . .

walk preference is based on the distance from a given school to a student's home. Elementary students are considered walkers for assignment purposes if they live within one mile of a school, while middle schools students must be within one and one half miles of the school. Currently, with one exception, up to 50% of the seats in a school/grade are set aside for walkers. The remaining seats may be filled by a combination of walkers and non-walkers.⁴

This means that a school could end up with more than 50% walkers because once the 50% walk seats are filled, the "*remaining seats may be filled by a combination of walkers and non-walkers.*" We discovered through the community forums that most parents in Boston believe that the 50% walk percentage described above is sacred. Parents do not understand that this *only holds true for the first round* of student assignment, even though the BPS publishes this fact in its "Introducing the Boston Public Schools" newspaper.

⁴ From BPS Controlled Choice plan application and assignment rules document

How the Walk-zone Percentage currently works

Families who want to register their children for school have three school selection rounds or time periods they can choose schools from, one in January/February, one in February/March and one later in the year. Let us imagine a school that has 100 open seats. During the first round 50% of the children would be assigned from the walk-zone and 50% would be assigned from the entire zone – which includes children from both outside and inside the walk-zone. However, by the end of the assignment rounds, situations will exist where walkers fill fewer than 50% of the seats and other situations will exist where walkers fill greater than 50% of the seats.

Fewer Than 50% Walkers. For example, if 60 children apply to a school during Round One and only 30 come from the walk-zone and 30 come from outside of the walk-zone, what happens once those 60 seats are filled is that the rest of the seats – the remaining 40 seats - are filled by any student in the entire zone. If the remaining students all live outside of the walk-zone, then this results in the school having 30% of the students coming from the walk-zone and 70% of the students coming from outside of the walk-zone.

Greater Than 50% Walkers. In another example, if 60 children apply to the same school during Round One and only 30 come from the walk-zone and 30 come from outside of the walk-zone, again, what happens once those 60 seats are filled is that the rest of the seats – the remaining 40 seats - are filled by any student in the entire zone. If 35 of the remaining students live in the walk-zone and only 5 students live outside of the walk-zone, then this results in the school having 65% of the students coming from the walk-zone and 35% of the students coming from outside of the walk-zone.

But these are only imaginary examples. In order to better understand this, we examined BPS data on the actual percentages of walkers and non-walkers who attend the 95 elementary schools in the system. *Of 95 elementary schools, only 28 schools have 50% or more children from the walk-zone.* Six of those 28 schools are in East Boston, where families are not required to send their young children through the tunnel. Therefore, East Boston schools, as an exception, have between 94% and 84% walkers. This leaves 22 schools in the rest of the district that are attended by 50% or more walkers.

We believe it is important to note where those 22 schools are located because certain neighborhoods appear to be more concerned about the walk-zone percentage than others. Of the 22 schools, eleven of them are in Dorchester, seven are in Roxbury and there is one each in Jamaica Plain, Back Bay/Beacon Hill, Charlestown and Hyde Park. Interestingly, none of the schools that actually has 50% or more students coming from the walk-zone is located in Roslindale, West Roxbury, South Boston, Allston/Brighton and Mattapan. Residents from four of these neighborhoods are especially upset by the walk-zone percentage in the schools in their neighborhoods.

Now, even though the 67 schools that have fewer than 50% walkers are more evenly divided throughout the city, we did notice that three neighborhoods were not represented. Roxbury, East Boston and Charlestown have no schools with fewer than 50% walkers.

These low walk-zone percentages also hold true for very popular schools. For example, the student population at the Manning elementary school in Jamaica Plain, which is very popular, has only 16.9% of students coming from the walk-zone. The Kilmer, in West Roxbury, another highly chosen school, has a walk percentage of 34%.

The cause of this discrepancy is not clear. It is possible that the students at schools with a high percentage of walkers have been administratively assigned and those children have not necessarily selected those schools. Conversely, students at schools with fewer walkers may be “gaming” the assignment process and, consequently, not choosing their true first choice. We do not have the answers to these questions yet, but the BPS Strategic Planning Team is working to analyze the student family’s school choice data so that we can determine the cause of this walk percentage discrepancy.

One thing we can infer from this data is that perhaps those parents who feel that the walk-zone percentage is too low have a legitimate complaint. Is it a coincidence that the neighborhoods from which we are hearing the loudest complaints about the walk-zone just happen to be the same neighborhoods that have no schools with 50% attendance from the walk-zone? In any case, it is clear that the schools in some neighborhoods have a student enrollment that represents a true 50% walk-zone, and others do not.

APPENDIX FOUR

When A Current School Becomes an Out-of -Zone School

We anticipate that, if a new set of zones is put into place, for many students the school they currently attend would then be located in a different zone, which no longer corresponds to their home address. In this situation, the family would have two options. First, the family could apply for a new-to-them school in the new zone. For school year 2005-2006 only they would be at the top of the priority list, ahead of sibling walkers 2) their priority would place them after sibling walkers, and siblings, but before children who live within the new school's walk zone. In subsequent years, they would have assignment priorities without regard to coming from a changed zone. Second, the family could choose to stay at the current school through the highest grade that school offers, but the **family would be responsible for all transportation to and from school as long as the child continues to attend an out-of-zone school.** Of course, if the new school is located within a buffer zone, then that assignment priority would be in place for any school year. If there are younger siblings (five years and under) of students currently enrolled in a school which becomes an out-of-zone school due to new zone boundaries, the younger sibling would not be eligible for the sibling priority at the out-of-zone school.

APPENDIX FIVE

Parental RSVP for Transportation

The Task Force has a recommendation that should shave at least some of the costs for school transportation. There are many families who never take advantage of the free transportation the BPS offers their student. As a consequence, many bus drivers complete their routes with many empty seats. In some cases, a smaller vehicle would be sufficient, or two routes could be combined. When a family is notified of a child's school assignment, and the family is requested/required to notify the BPS of their intent to send their child to that school, **the family should be directed to notify the BPS if they plan to use yellow school bus transportation for the coming school year. If they choose to provide their own transportation, parents/guardians should be allowed one opportunity during the school year to re-instate the bus service for their child on a space-available basis.** Knowing that they could start yellow bus service if needed in the future, parents would be more likely to opt-out of BPS transportation, resulting in a more efficient use of transportation resources.

APPENDIX SIX

The Discarded Models - This appendix is organized in the order in which we choose to discard the models.

Model H

Model H, the citywide model, was discarded almost immediately, the main reasons being cost of transportation and the low probability of getting one's choice of schools. Having a higher probability of actually getting the schools one chose was a top request of many parents who attended Phase I of the community forums. Model H has the lowest probability of getting one's choice of school of all the developed models.

Model C

Model C was also discarded rather quickly. Although some participants liked the smaller zones, the majority felt that the differences between the four-zones of Model C and the current three-zone structure were not great enough to warrant the amount of confusion that would result from the change. Task Force members ultimately agreed with this assessment.

Model G

Model G, the only Model that was not actually developed by the Task Force, was more problematic. Even though many participants were drawn to the Model, those who opposed it were passionate and vocal. Those residents who favored neighborhood schools were opposed to Model G because they felt that it did not go far enough. Those who favored choice were also opposed to Model G for the obvious reasons. In the end, the Task Force rejected Model G for two reasons. First, Model G was the only model that had a shortage of seats at the middle school level. For example, zones, 1, 6, 8 and 10 either did not have enough seats for the number of children living in that zone, or came very close to not having enough seats. Second, even though the city has changed dramatically, given Boston's history of segregated schools and busing, Model G would have opened old wounds for many of Boston's older residents, creating much divisiveness throughout the city.

Model B

Model B had great appeal for both the Task Force members and the forum participants for one main reason: it re-distributed and disrupted the block of minority, mostly African-American, children who are currently stuck in the East Zone with 15 schools under state panel review or corrective action. Forum participants and the Task Force members alike felt that Model B provided a good balance of choice and diversity among the three zones. One drawback of Model B, as with all of the new models, was that the boundary lines split up the neighborhoods of the South End and Jamaica Plain. However, Model B was discarded mainly in favor of the six zone models. In other words, had the six zone models not existed, Model B most likely would have been the chosen model.

Model D

Model D, along with E and F, was one of the most popular models for both the Task Force and the forum participants. The main appeal of all three of these models is the six-zone structure. Those who liked Model D felt that it provided the best compromise between choice

and the likelihood of actually getting their choices. They felt that it provided the best racial and ethnic balance of all the models by maintaining diversity in every zone. Last, forum participants felt that the model brought the city closer to neighborhood schools in a way that did not re-segregate the city. Almost all of those who favored Model D felt that they could also live with Models E and F.

Model E

Model E was favored by those who appreciated the simplicity and clarity of the six-three-one zone structure (six zones for elementary school, three for middle school and one citywide zone for high school). They felt that as children mature, the need for proximity to home was superseded by the opportunity to attend the school with the best fit for that student, with location becoming less important. Model E was ultimately rejected by the Task Force because the recommended Model F prime offered family's a better chance of receiving their requested school, while also offering more choice via the secondary zone.

Even though the Task Force accepts full responsibility for our final recommendation, we wanted to ensure that we had solicited as much community input as possible. To this end, we conducted a follow-up email survey of all the people who provided us with their email addresses at the Phase II forums. In one question, we asked the participants "which of the eight models comes closest to reflecting your vision of how students should be assigned to schools and why"? The results of this survey demonstrated that the Task Force and the forum participants were on the same page. For example, the forum participant's top three choices were Model A, Models D, E, & F, and Model G. (We group Models D, E and F together because those who liked one also stated that they could live with either of the other two. This was true of both Task Force members and the forum participants). With the exception of Model G, Task Force members made the same choices.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Findings from the community input are summarized below according to the three questions asked at the forums.

A. What is important when choosing a school for one's children?

1. Quality: The majority of the public expressed an overwhelming concern about quality. In most examples individuals did not specify how they defined quality. However, it was clear that many participants viewed a quality education as an education that is delivered to students via the following means:

- ***Quality of teaching staff and leadership***
- ***Rigorous curriculum:*** Curriculum extends to literacy, math and college preparation, as well as Advanced Work and honors classes
- ***School Climate:*** Participants defined this as “the feel of the school”, whether or not the teachers and administrators respect the students, each other, parents and the community. Schools with a strong climate are populated with teachers that have high expectations for all children and adults who create a sense of community and safety for all students. For the participants, a positive school climate involves communication, nurturing, respect for diversity, responsibility, commitment and shared values.

To a lesser degree the public described these factors as related to quality:

- ***Reputation:*** Overwhelmingly individuals defined this as achievement data (test scores, graduation and college attendance rates). To a lesser degree reputation also included popularity with other parents and the school's history.
- ***Diversity among students, staff and teachers***
- ***Parent friendly:*** Participants defined a parent friendly school as one with a welcoming environment in which teachers and staff consider themselves accountable to parents and demonstrate a commitment to on-going communication.

As part of their concern about quality, the forum participants often used choice as a proxy for quality. For example, given the current assignment system, the participants believe that the only way for them, as individuals, to ensure a quality education for their children is if they can choose the school that has the most “quality”, as they define it. For some, transportation becomes an important variable related to quality because it allows for choice of schools beyond a narrow geographic area

2. Proximity: Location and proximity was another repeated theme among participants when defining important factors that influence their choice of schools. This variable was described in several ways:

- **Neighborhood schools**
- **Parent involvement:** Individuals expressed great concern about parent involvement and linked it closely to the proximity of the school to the homes of its students.
- **Safety:** For many, proximity and location are highly aligned with safety. In most cases “safety” is related to the location of the school and the safety outside of the school and on buses.

3. Other concerns: Families also described other variables that affect their choice of schools.

- **School structure:** Comments about school structure focused overwhelmingly on class size and teacher/student ratios.
- **Structure of day:** These comments overwhelmingly concerned before and after school programs and school start and end times.
- **Grade structure:** Participants expressed a preference for a greater number of K-8 schools and an increased number of K1 classes.
- **Physical plant:** This includes the overall condition, appearance, cleanliness and physical resources of schools (e.g. high quality outdoor space)

B. What aspects of the current student assignment plan do you want to keep?
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1. Choice: The majority of participants want to keep choice as part of any new assignment plan. They defined “choice” as including:

- **City-wide schools:** Offering a range of specialized schools that are available to all city residents
- **Transportation:** Maintaining some level of transportation so children can get to schools further from their homes
- **Zone:** Maintaining zone structure

2. Neighborhood schools: Participants want to keep a preference for neighborhood schools in the new assignment system, including keeping the walk-zone and 50% set aside for neighborhood children.

3. Diversity and sibling preference: Participants want to maintain sibling preference and the same level of diversity in the schools.

C. What do you recommend for a new student assignment plan?

1. Assigning students: Recommendations for assigning students spanned the two extremes:

- ***Increase choice:*** Eliminate zones and make all schools “city wide” (available to all). Maintain or increase levels of diversity at schools.
- ***Increase neighborhood schools:*** Create a greater number of smaller zones and increase the proportion of students from the walk-zone who are given assignment preference.

2. Improving elements of student assignment process

- ***Enhanced choice:*** Create a system that gives families a higher likelihood of being assigned to one of their top three choices.
- ***Increased parent information:*** Participants expressed great concern about the level and timeliness of information they receive about the assignment process and schools. They want more ways to access information, a more transparent assignment system, an improved timeline and notification system regarding student assignment and improved marketing of the schools.

3. Improving individual schools to make them more desirable

- ***Quality:*** Participants want to see increased quality in all Boston Public Schools so that all residents will have quality schools available to them.
- ***Increased school type:*** Participants want more K-8 schools and more K1 options.
- ***Increased range of programming and support services in schools:*** This includes before and after-school programs, supplemental academic supports, bilingual programs and arts and music.

A number of issues were raised during the community forums that are highly important to families when thinking about the education of their children but outside of the scope of a student assignment plan. **Regardless of which student assignment option is chosen the Task Force makes the following recommendations on these key issues:**

- ***Increase parent information, offer greater transparency:*** Variables related to the quality of individual schools and school structure are central to the choices families make about schools. The Task Force recommends that schools be more “parent friendly” and that there be greater transparency and more readily accessible information for families on the following:

- ✓ Teaching staff and leadership
 - ✓ Curriculum and programs
 - ✓ Resources in the school
 - ✓ Student support
 - ✓ Parent involvement
 - ✓ School structure
 - ✓ Structure of the day
 - ✓ Grade structure
 - ✓ Academic achievement
- **Advanced work class:** First and foremost the Task Force recommends that a rigorous curriculum is available at all schools. Specifically, in terms of Advanced Work classes the Task Force recommends that BPS consider where Advanced Work classes are offered and whether they may be offered at all schools.
 - **School climate:** A positive school climate (as defined above) is important to families when choosing a school. Families are best able to assess school climate when they visit a school. The task for recommends that BPS institute a more uniform process for visiting schools and helping families learn more about school climate issues (e.g., opportunities to connect with other families who attend the school, etc.)
 - **Safety:** The Task Force recommends that BPS ensures safety for all its students and staff. This means ensuring safety within the schools, outside of the schools and especially on school buses. A perceived lack of school bus safety among parents is one of the driving forces behind the desire for more neighborhood schools, as well as the exodus of families from the BPS system.
 - **Child centered:** The Task Force recommends that BPS ensures that the educational and social needs of children are served at all schools. This means that adequate supports such as health, counseling, guidance and tutoring are offered.

APPENDIX EIGHT

~~1954 – *Brown v. Board of Education*. The U. S. Supreme Court rules “separate but equal” schools are unconstitutional.~~

~~1965 – Massachusetts passes the Racial Imbalance Law, prohibiting “racial imbalance” and discouraging schools from having student enrollments that are more than 50% minority. The Boston Public Schools (BPS) is ordered to change its assignment practices. The School Committee (SC) seeks a repeal.~~

~~3/72 – Black parents file a class action suit in U. S. District Court (*Morgan v. Hennigan*) claiming BPS schools are intentionally segregated. Judge W. Arthur Garrity is assigned to the case.~~

Published by the BPS Office of Communications

A Brief History of BPS Student Assignment

segregated school system that gives fewer resources to schools with mostly black students. In a partial judgement, Garrity enjoins the BPS, SC and city from discrimination on the basis of race and from creating, promoting or maintaining racial segregation.

9/74 – Garrity orders the BPS to implement the state’s racial balance plan as a temporary remedy (Phase 1) and orders the SC to create a permanent plan. Busing of students between Roxbury and South Boston begins.

2/75 – The SC fails to submit a plan. Garrity appoints four “masters” to draft Phase II, the permanent plan known as the Masters’ Plan, completed in 5/75. Over the next 15 years of active court involvement, the judge issues a series of remedial orders addressing a range of issues, including assigning students to schools, busing students to schools beyond walking distance, closing and opening facilities, recruiting and assigning faculty and staff, vocational education, exam school admission, student discipline, and parent and community participation.

9/75 – Phase II is implemented. The city is divided into eight community districts and 867 “geocodes” for assignment purposes. Each geocode is paired with a school in its district – either one nearby or one in another part of the district – with pairings designed to produce racially balanced enrollments in each school. Students are guaranteed assignment to their community district school. They may also apply for 32 citywide magnet schools and programs, with assignments following citywide racial guidelines. Garrity’s order also sets aside 35% of seats in matriculating classes at the three exam schools (Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy and Boston Technical High School) for black and other minority students.

12/82 – Citing good faith efforts of the SC to comply with the orders, the district court begins a “transitional course of disengagement” from the school system, while ordering that racial balances in the eight districts be maintained indefinitely. The court delegates primary responsibility for monitoring compliance with its orders to the State Dept. of Education.

9/85 – Garrity enters final orders in several areas, including student assignment. The Masters’ Plan is the basis of the orders, although it may be modified. BPS staffing must reach affirmative action goals of 25% black and 10% “other” minorities for teachers/administrators. The BPS later appeals the assignment order dealing with specified racial guidelines, and the Boston Teachers Union appeals the staffing order.

6/86 – Supt. Laval Wilson convenes a task force which recommends changes to the plan. These include districtwide school choice, establishment of parent information centers, elimination of separate magnet schools, and decentralizing assignments.

1987 – An experimental community district (District B, combining districts 3 and 4) is established which increases school choice in Hyde Park, West Roxbury, Mattapan and Roslindale.

9/87 – The U. S. Court of Appeals rules on the 9/85 challenges and finds the BPS has attained “unitary” status in school assignments, meaning schools are as desegregated as they can be given city demographics. The BPS is free to design a new assignment plan, with no restrictions, as long as it does not take any action that might intentionally resegregate the schools. However, it must follow court-ordered guidelines for faculty and staff.

12/88 – The SC adopts the Controlled Choice Student Assignment Plan, designed by consultants Michael Alves and Charles Willie. The plan organizes elementary and middle schools into three zones – East, North, and West. The High School Zone is citywide. Students may apply for schools within their zone of residence as well as several citywide schools. Racial/ethnic “ideal racial percentages” (IRPs) are established in each zone, reflecting the zone’s student

population. The Dept. of Implementation seeks to assign students so enrollments in each grade in each school are within 10% of the zone IRP. Key elements of the plan include parent choice, priority assignments for students in bilingual and special education, sibling and walk zone preference, Parent Information Centers, monitoring and oversight by the BPS Dept. of Implementation, and school improvement strategies including Zone Planning Councils. The 35% minority set-aside for the exam schools is maintained.

9/89 – Controlled Choice is implemented for kindergarten and grades 1 and 6.

5/90 – Garrity issues final judgment and withdraws from the case, allowing the SC to be completely responsible for BPS student assignments. The U. S. Court of Appeals upholds the ruling in 2/91.

9/90 – Controlled Choice is implemented for all grades, K-12.

12/90 – Plan revisions include increasing walk zone preference from 50% to 75% of a school's seats.

11/92 – More revisions are made: only students in kindergarten and transition grades 1, 6 and 9 must submit applications.

11/96 – Modifications to the plan continue under the superintendency of Thomas W. Payzant. Assignments can be made from the waiting list regardless of race; some schools potentially can have their walk zone seats increased to 100%; and assignments can vary as much as 15% above or below a school's IRP.

12/96 – Julia McLaughlin, a disappointed applicant to Boston Latin School, successfully challenges the constitutionality of the minority set-aside policy in exam schools admissions. The SC approves a new admission policy for the three schools: 50% of seats will be awarded to the highest ranking applicants based only on admission test results and grade point average, and 50% will be awarded using test results, GPA and flexible racial/ethnic guidelines.

8/97 – Another student plaintiff, Sarah Wessman, successfully challenges the new exam schools admission formula.

1997 – The Boston School Desegregation Case is officially closed.

6/99 – Boston's Children First files suit in U. S. District Court challenging school admissions based on racial preferences and the use of "racially drawn" assignment zones. BCF further asks that the SC be required to reassign all BPS students under a racially neutral admissions plan.

7/99 – The SC votes to eliminate the use of racial/ethnic classifications in all school assignments, effective in the 2000-2001 school year. As a result, the issue of a return to "neighborhood schools" is raised among community and political leaders and the general public.

11/99 – As recommended by Supt. Payzant, the SC adopts the New Choice Plan, which reduces walk zone preference from 100% to 50% and gives priority for remaining seats to students with no walk zone school. The SC orders the Superintendent to continue analysis of insufficient capacity

within walk zones and to consider changes in walk zones when new schools are built and existing schools are expanded.

4/03 – The U. S. District Court rules on the Boston’s Children First case (6/99). The court finds that the walk zone preference policy challenged by BCF is constitutional and that the three “Master Zones” are no longer being used as a racial balancing strategy. In its ruling, the court states that it believes BCF’s “ultimate goal, mandatory neighborhood school assignments,... is not constitutionally compelled.”

12/03 – The SC and Superintendent launch a public process to seek input on student assignment. Supt. Payzant appoints a 14-member community task force (no BPS employees) which convenes a series of nine community forums to hear how parents choose their children’s schools and what residents like and would change in the current plan. Based on data and public comment, the BPS will draft one or more student assignment plan models which the task force will present for review in a second series of public forums in spring 2004. If the SC approves a new plan by November 2004, the plan would take effect for the 2005-2006 school year.

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Thomas W. Payzant, Superintendent

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APPENDIX NINE

BOSTON PARENTS AND RESIDENTS:

We want to hear from you about choosing a school in Boston.

The Boston School Committee and Superintendent Tom Payzant want to hear from the people of Boston – **parents, grandparents, students, teachers, business people, clergy, community leaders** – any concerned citizen who cares about public education and the young people of our city.

The Boston Public Schools has launched a **citywide public engagement campaign** to generate conversations among diverse groups of citizens about how families choose public schools in Boston. This process is an opportunity for officials and residents to engage in full, open and honest discussions about student assignment.

The following is a schedule of **community forums** hosted by the community task force overseeing this process. Participants will provide the task force with valuable data about what is important to them when choosing schools. During Phase One of the public engagement process (January – February), the community forums will focus on parents' experiences of the student assignment system as it exists now. Community forums in Phase Two (March – May) will focus on public review of any **modifications to the plan** proposed by the task force.

COMMUNITY FORUM SCHEDULE : (Phase One)

Saturday, January 10

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Madison Park High School
75 Malcolm X Blvd., Roxbury

Monday, January 12

5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

West Roxbury Public Library
1961 Centre St., West Roxbury

Thursday, January 15

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Condon Community Center
200 D Street, South Boston

Wednesday, January 21

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Harborside Community Center
312 Border St., East Boston

Monday, January 26

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Oak Square YMCA
615 Washington St., Brighton

Wednesday, January 28

9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Mildred Avenue Community Center
5 Mildred Ave., Mattapan

Saturday, February 7

2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Curtis Hall Community Center
20 South St., Jamaica Plain

Tuesday, February 10

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

12th Baptist Church
150-160 Warren St., Roxbury

**** Thursday, February 5 ** NEW**

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Campbell Resource Center
1216 Dorchester Avenue, Dorchester

**** Wednesday, February 11 ** NEW**

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Hyde Park Municipal Building
1179 River Street, Hyde Park

APPENDIX TEN

FACILITATOR PROTOCOL: INSTRUCTIONS FOR FACILITATORS ARE IN **RED**

SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

Step One (1 minute)

Facilitators help move people into their groups. Some locations will have tables, some will require that people move chairs into circles for discussion.

Step Two (5 minutes)

Facilitator introduces him/herself first to get everyone started.

Introduce yourself by sharing the following information:

- Name
- Where you live
- Information about your family (number of children, ages)
- Where your children go to school

Facilitator introduces the purpose of the small group discussion.

The purpose of this discussion is to gather data from you on your thoughts about the current school choice process.

Step Three (1 minute)

Pick a timekeeper. The timekeeper's role is to help the group keep track of time to make sure that all steps are completed.

THE FOLLOWING STEPS WILL REQUIRE THE FACILITATOR TO WRITE RESPONSES ON NEWSPRINT:

Step Four (5 minutes)

Ask for open, honest answers and explain that “there are no wrong answers here, this is an open forum.” This is designed to be an icebreaker, so we are looking for quick, one-word responses.

Please answer the following question:

- What comes to mind, in a word or phrase, when you think about the current school choice plan?

Step Five: (20 minutes)

Facilitator gives a brief overview/definition of the current school choice process.

In order to move us into the next part of our discussion, we are now going to take a moment to just briefly review the main aspects of the current school choice plan.

Facilitator displays the map and reads the following:

Under Boston's current school choice plan, the city is divided into three geographic zones: East, West and North for elementary and middle schools. Students may apply for schools in the zone in which they live. There are also five citywide schools open to all students. There are at least twenty-plus elementary schools and four-plus middle schools available in each zone.

Facilitator then asks participants to identify the important factors if and when they are choosing schools for their children.

- What is most important to you when making choices for your children's schools? For example, if you were choosing a school for your child or nephew/niece or neighbor, what aspects would you consider to be the most important?

Facilitator will go around the group two or three times in order to solicit short word or phrase responses to this question. Once enough responses have been collected, the facilitator will ask participants to clarify the terms used, i.e. what do participants mean by location, quality, etc.

- Are there any other factors that we have not discussed that are or would be important in choosing your children's school?

Step Six (15 minutes)

Based on your current understanding, let's now talk specifically about the Boston Public School assignment process:

- 1) What aspects of the current assignment plan would you keep?
- 2) What aspects of the current assignment plan would you discard?
- 3) What are your suggestions for how we might change what is not working well in the current student assignment plan?

Facilitator should take notes for question 1 on one broad sheet, then take notes for questions 2 & 3 on a separate broad sheet. For question two, leave a space under each response, then go back and ask question three for each item that participants would discard. Write participants' responses under the item to which they refer.

Prioritization Exercise (7 minutes)

Each person receives nine dots: three red, three blue and three green dots:

- Use the red dots to select your top three priorities when choosing a school – the information from Step Five.
- Use the blue dots to select your top three choices for what you would keep about the current system - the information from Step Six.
- Use the green dots to select your top three choices for what you would discard – the information from Step Six.

Note: You can put all three of your dots on one choice, or split them up; it's up to you.

Facilitator gives each participant three red, three blue and three green dots. Participants get up and put their dots next to the items they feel are most important.

Wrap-up and report back to the larger group

APPENDIX ELEVEN



BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT ASSIGNMENT SURVEY

For each question, please check one box

1.) When choosing a school for your child, how important to you is:		1 not important	2 slightly important	3 moderately important	4 very important	5 extremely important
<input type="checkbox"/>	sending your child to a school in your neighborhood					
<input type="checkbox"/>	being able to choose from among many schools					
<input type="checkbox"/>	whether a school is racially and ethnically diverse					
<input type="checkbox"/>	whether a school has high MCAS (test) scores					
<input type="checkbox"/>	whether a school has a good reputation					
<input type="checkbox"/>	whether friends or family recommend a school to you					
<input type="checkbox"/>	whether a school has a caring, family-friendly climate					
<input type="checkbox"/>	the availability of particular programs in a school					
<input type="checkbox"/>	whether parents are actively involved in a school					
<input type="checkbox"/>	a school's building and facilities					
<input type="checkbox"/>	whether a school seems safe to you					
<input type="checkbox"/>	getting bus transportation to a school					

2.) Of the items directly ABOVE, please rank the THREE items that are the most important to you.

Please place a "1", "2" or "3" in the box to the LEFT of the item, with "1" being the most important to you

For each question, please check one box

3.) How important to a school's quality do you think it is to have:		1 not important	2 slightly important	3 moderately important	4 very important	5 extremely important
<input type="checkbox"/>	a high level of active parent involvement					
<input type="checkbox"/>	students who live in the surrounding neighborhood					
<input type="checkbox"/>	strong community involvement in a school					
<input type="checkbox"/>	a racially and ethnically diverse student body					
<input type="checkbox"/>	a challenging curriculum					
<input type="checkbox"/>	teachers with appropriate credentials and experience					
<input type="checkbox"/>	business, agency and community partnerships					
<input type="checkbox"/>	sufficient books, materials and supplies					

4.) Of the items directly ABOVE, please rank the THREE items that you think are the most important.

Please place a "1", "2" or "3" in the box to the LEFT of the item, with "1" being the most important

5.) My zipcode is:

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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6.) My neighborhood is: (please use number code on back)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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7.) I am: (please check all that apply)

(please circle all that apply)

a parent or guardian of BPS student(s) in grade(s):

K0	K1	K2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	other
----	----	----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----	----	----	-------

<input type="checkbox"/>	a parent or guardian of non-BPS student(s) in grade(s):
<input type="checkbox"/>	a parent or guardian of child(ren) not yet in school, age(s):
<input type="checkbox"/>	not a parent or guardian

K0 K1 K2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 other

infant 1yr 2yrs 3yrs 4yrs 5yrs other

8.) The primary language(s) spoken in my home:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Cape Verdean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Haitian/French	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spanish
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Portuguese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vietnamese
<input type="checkbox"/>	English	<input type="checkbox"/>	Somali	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

9.) My race is:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	White
<input type="checkbox"/>	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hispanic		

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED SURVEY BY FEBRUARY 15, 2004 FOR PARTICIPATING!

THANK YOU

Attention Boston Parents and Residents!

During a series of 10 Community Forums in January and February, we heard about what's important to you in choosing a school and your experiences with the current assignment system. Based on that information, the Student Assignment Community Task Force will present a series of recommendations on how the current plan may be modified to reflect the needs of Boston parents.

The following is a schedule of community forums hosted by the Student Assignment Community Task Force. During these forums, the public will have a chance to review the proposed changes to the current assignment plan and share their comments and feedback.

COMMUNITY FORUM SCHEDULE:

Tuesday, April 27

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Harriet Tubman House
566 Columbus Avenue, South End

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Mattapan Family Service Center
535 River Street, Mattapan

Thursday, April 29

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Charles Street AME Church
551 Warren Street, Roxbury

Thursday, May 13

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Brighton High School
25 Warren Street, Brighton

Saturday, May 1

2:00 – 4:00 pm
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Ctr.
885 Washington Street, Chinatown

Saturday, May 15

2:00 – 4:00 pm
English High School
144 McBride Street, Jamaica Plain

Monday, May 3

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Annunciation Cathedral Hall
7 VFW Parkway, West Roxbury

Monday, May 17

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Roslindale Community Center
6 Cummins Highway, Roslindale

Tuesday, May 4

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Vietnamese American Community Center
42 Charles Street, Dorchester

Tuesday, May 18

6:00 – 8:00 pm
East Boston High School
86 White Street, East Boston

Wednesday, May 5

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Harvard-Kent Community Center
50 Bunker Hill Street, Charlestown

Wednesday, May 19

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Hill House
74 Joy Street, Beacon Hill

Thursday, May 6

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Hyde Park Municipal Building
1179 River Street, Hyde Park

Thursday, May 20

6:00 – 8:00 pm
New Boston Pilot Middle School
270 Columbia Road, Dorchester

Monday, May 10

6:00 – 8:00 pm
South Boston Neighborhood House Senior Ctr.
136 H Street, South Boston

Tuesday, May 25

6:00 – 8:00 pm
Joseph Lee Elementary School
155 Talbot Avenue, Dorchester

Tuesday, May 11

Child care and translation will be available.

For more information call 617-635-9014 or visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/assignment.

APPENDIX THIRTEEN

Protocol for Phase II of the Community Forums

Part One – Summary of the information collected during the first round of Forums as well as the methodology we used to come up with the models – 10 minutes

Part Two – Explanation of the Proposed Zones – 40 minutes

Part Three – Questions and answers about the Zone options – 60 minutes

Report back, questions and general discussion – 10 minutes

Part One – What you told us during the first forums – 10 Minutes

From January until April the Task Force conducted community forums, focus groups, and surveys to learn whether and how the current school assignment policy should be modified. After 22 meetings and 63 hours of discussion the Task Force analyzed the data generated by that inquiry and then designed eight model assignment plans, which reflect the public's recommendations.

First, we will summarize what we heard from participants during the first round of forums. The task used these concerns to design the models we will be presenting to you in a few moments.

Begin Power point presentation of summary data

We will now briefly introduce each model and outline its features. As you review the models, you should keep in mind three important points: One, these are models and may be altered based on the public's input. Two, given the widely diverging opinions about how students should be assigned, it is not possible to create one model that will satisfy everyone in every respect. Three, we consistently heard that the public desires quality schools and we have provided information about certain available measures of quality. However, given the different definitions of quality and different methods of achieving it, no assignment plan alone can ensure quality.

After we introduce the models. You will be asked to rotate between three stations, where the each model will be described in greater detail and where you will be able to ask questions and offer input.

Part Two – Explanation of the models – 40 Minutes

Note for the presenter: It is possible to talk through each slide, rather than have a script, however, the follow script is offered. Be careful that you say the same things about each model without diverging to far from the following script. The script goes along with each slide.

Slide One Script

This is Model A, the Current Three Zone Model. This model has three zones. There are between 20-26 elementary schools in each zone, between 3-8 middle schools in each zone and between 2-7 K-8 schools in each zone. There is a 50% walk preference for those who live near a school. There are five citywide schools, 2 middle and 3, K-8.

Slide Two Script

This slide contains data for each zone on school popularity, racial break-down, high and low MCAS scores, which are used to determine a schools AYP rating, the number of Advanced work classes and the number of schools per zone that are under state panel review or corrective action. This information is also contained in your packet on page _____. Your packet also contains, on page _____ a glossary that explains the terms used in these data charts. In the interest of time, we will not review this information zone by zone for each model. Again, the information is contained in your packets so that you can review it more carefully later on. You can also ask for more details about this information at the stations.

Slide Three Script

This is Model B, the New Three Zone Model. This model also has three zones. There are between 18-22 elementary schools in each zone, between 3-7 middle schools in each zone. You will notice that this model has between 6-9 K-8 schools in each zone. This reflects the fact that the task force is recommending that the BPS convert more schools to K-8 schools. This applies to a number of the models we will present tonight. There is a 50% walk preference for those who live near a school. Six of the K-8 schools will be citywide, leaving two K-8 schools in each zone. The citywide schools have not been identified yet, that is why you see more than two per-zone in this chart.

Slide Four Script

The second slide for every model we will present contains the same data we reviewed earlier – popularity, racial break-down, high and low MCAS scores, the number of AWC and the number of schools per zone that are under state panel review or corrective action. Please review to page _____ in your packet.

Slide Five Script

This is Model C, the Four Zone Model. This model has four zones. There are between 14-16 elementary schools in each zone, between 3-5 middle schools in each zone and between 5-6 K-8 schools in each zone. There is a 25% walk preference for those who live near a school. The walk preference is smaller in this model because the zones are smaller. There are 7 citywide K-8 schools in this model, leaving each zone with 2 K-8 schools.

Slide Six Script

Here is the comparative data for this model. See page____ in your packet.

Slide Seven Script

This is Model D, the Six Zone Model. This model has six zones. There are between 9-12 elementary schools in each zone, between 1-4 middle schools in each zone and between 3-5

K-8 schools in each zone. There is a 50% walk preference for those who live near a school. In this model, all 15 K-8 schools will be citywide.

Slide Eight Script

Here is the comparative data for this model. See page___ in your packet.

Slide Nine Script

This is Model E, the Six-Three Zone Model. This model has six zones for elementary school students. Those six zones expand to three zones for middle school students. At the elementary school level, there are between 9-12 schools per zone. At the middle school level there are between 3-7 middle schools in each zone. In this model, the K-8 schools are contained in the six smaller zones. There are between 3-5 K-8 schools in each zone. There is a 50% walk preference for those who live near a school. This model contains three K-8 schools, leaving 2 K-8 schools in each of the six zones.

Slide Ten Script

Here is the comparative data for the elementary zones model. (see page___ in your packet.) You will notice that the popularity data is not contained in this chart. However, you can find the popularity data for all six zones in this model under Model D, on page _____ in your packet.

Slide Eleven Script

Here is the comparative data for the middle school zones model. (see page___ in your packet.) Again, you will notice that the popularity data is not contained in this chart. However, you can find the popularity data for these three zones in this model under Model B, on page _____ in your packet.

Slide Twelve Script

This is Model F, the Primary/Secondary Model. This model follows the same zone structure as Model E, which we just reviewed. In this model, parents choose three schools from their Primary zone first, then they can choose three alternative schools from their secondary zone. See Model B on page ____, in your packet for the total number of elementary and middle schools in the combined primary and secondary zone. There will be a 50% walk preference in one's primary zone (as well as in one's secondary zone if one lives close to the boundary between zones). In this model, all 15 K-8 schools will be citywide.

Slide Thirteen Script

Here is the comparative data for model F. See page___ in your packet.

Slide Fourteen Script

This is Model G, the 10/12 Zone Model. This model has 12 zones for elementary school students. Each elementary school zone has between 2-7 elementary schools, and between 1-2 K-8 schools.

Slide Fifteen Script

At the middle school level, this model has 10 zones. Each middle school zone has between 1-3 middle schools and 1-2 K-8 schools. In this model, students would be assigned to the school nearest to them in their zone. There are no citywide schools in this model.

Slide Sixteen Script

Here is the comparative data for the elementary zones. Again, you will notice this does not contain the popularity data. We have not broken the popularity data out for this model as of yet.

Slide Seventeen Script

Here is the comparative data for the middle schools zones. Again, no popularity data. See page ___ in your packet for these charts.

Slide Eighteen Script

This is Model H, the Citywide Zone. Citywide there are 66 elementary schools, 18 middle schools, 12 K-8 schools. 56 of those schools are high achieving on the ELA MCAS and 55 are high achieving on the Math MCAS. 56 of the schools are low achieving in both ELA and Math MCAS. (please note that they are not the same 56 schools). Nineteen of the schools citywide are under state panel review or corrective action. There are 24 Advanced Work Classes throughout the city.

Slide Nineteen Script

Here is the racial breakdown citywide. See page _____ of your packet.

These are the eight models.

Part Three – Questions and Answers about the Models – 60 minutes

Now you will have a chance to visit three stations to get more information about the models and to ask questions. At stations 1 & 2, you will learn about Models A, B & C. At stations 3 & 4, you will learn about Models D, E and F. Finally, at stations 5 & 6, you will learn about Models G & H. You will have about 20 minutes at each of the three stations. The number on your packet determines which group you will join. After you have visited each station, you will get a chance to prioritize the models. Then we will gather as a whole group for report backs and questions. (this needs to be revised and more detail added)

APPENDIX FOURTEEN

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