



## Pathways to Excellence — Phase III FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We invite your feedback:

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### I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

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#### 1. When will this plan go into effect?

**ANSWER:**

The proposed Five-zone would go into effect school year 2010-2011.

#### 2. How can I find out about the overall Five-zone plan or specifics about one of the zones?

**ANSWER:**

Information about the proposed Five-zone model can be found on the BPS website at <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/zones>.

#### 3. How were the zone boundaries drawn?

**ANSWER:**

Zone boundaries were identified using pre-existing boundaries within city limits such as major thoroughways (Blue Hill Avenue and Route 203/Arborway/Morton Street), neighborhood borders (Allston-Brighton), and natural boundaries (Boston Harbor).

#### 4. How is the Five-Zone proposal different from the 2004 student assignment review?

**ANSWER:**

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 Schools. This process included reviewing the current assignment system and generating recommendations for modifications



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to the system that would lead to greater satisfaction among families. In September of 2004, the task force made student assignment and system-wide issue recommendations. ([http://bostonpublicschools.org/files/Student%20Assignment%20TF%20Report\\_0.pdf](http://bostonpublicschools.org/files/Student%20Assignment%20TF%20Report_0.pdf))

In 2009, with the current economic climate and the resulting budget constraints, BPS is charged with improving the quality of educational experiences for all BPS students **given limited resources**. With this focus on accelerating achievement, Dr. Johnson has submitted the Five-Zone proposal which provides suggestions for improving academics and realizing operational efficiencies resulting in operations cost savings.

The Five-Zone proposal includes five key areas: (1) academic improvements, (2) student support services, (3) increased Family Engagement, (4) operational efficiency – student assignment policy and (5) operational efficiency – transportation policy.

Implementation of this proposal will result in several key benefits and outcomes.

- Academic improvement (including a focused on making all schools quality schools; offering algebra in BPS middle schools and increased Advanced Work Class offerings; consistent literacy curriculum; middle school redesign)
- Promote a range of quality school choices
- Focus on improving Commonwealth Priority Schools
- Increased family engagement
- Educational continuity, fewer transitions (creation of K8 pathways)
- Creation of walkable communities
- Greater access to English Language Learner (ELL) programs & supports
- Increased Special Education (SpEd) programs and supports (especially Inclusion programs)
- Reduced operating and transportation costs

#### 5. Where did the 5 zones come from?

**ANSWER:**

The selection of five zones, rather than other splits, would preserve school choice. Additionally, the Five-zone proposal builds on the work that the 2004 Student Assignment Task Force accomplished.

## II. ACADEMICS

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### 1. What is the equity distribution of special education, English Language Learner, Advanced Work Class programs across all of the proposed zones? Does this match the needs of the population?

**ANSWER:**

BPS is making efforts to increase equitable distribution of programs based on the needs the student population.

### III. TRANSPORTATION & STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

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#### 1. Is it true that there will no longer be school transportation?

**ANSWER:**

The proposed five-zone model does not eliminate transportation but includes **new** student assignment and transportation rules. The changes to the current transportation policy are listed below.

Current policy	Proposed policy *	Impact
Two citywide schools—Hernandez & Timilty—students get a bus ride cross zone	Eliminate citywide status	All current students allowed to keep current assignments, but under the new rules of assignment and transportation
Families cannot apply to schools outside their home zone	Families cannot apply to schools outside their home zone (no change from current policy)	All current students who live out-of-zone can stay in their current schools, but they are not eligible for transportation
Some students receive walk zone priority and a bus ride	Any student with walk zone priority does not also get a bus ride	All current students who live in-zone are allowed to keep their current in-zone assignment, under the new transportation rules.
Walk zone established using “geocodes” (currently walking 1.0 mile)	Walk zone established using straightline ** distances (1 mile for elementary, 1.5 Miles for middle, 2 miles for high schools)	

\* Note 1. Potential exceptions for ELL and SpEd students.

\*\* Note 2. One mile straightline distance is approximately equivalent to 1.3 miles actual walking distance.

\*\*\* Note 3: All students registering in September 2009 and afterward will be assigned to an in-zone five-zone school, wherever possible, minimizing disruption for the following school year.

#### 2. Will students be grandfathered?

**ANSWER:**

Under the proposal, students can continue to go to their current school. Students residing in a different zone than their school will **not** be eligible for transportation.

#### 3. Will sibling priority or preference be granted for out of zone students?

**ANSWER:**

Siblings will be given preference for out of zone schools, but under the new transportation rules.



**4. How will enrollment in citywide schools be maintained if students transfer back into their home zone?**

**ANSWER:**

For the Timilty Middle School, students who live in Zone 3 will have the opportunity to transfer into the program.

For the Hernandez K8 School, students who live in Zone 3 who meet the prerequisites to enroll in the program after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade will be allowed to transfer into the Hernandez.

**5. Why is citywide status remaining for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders at exam schools but not for the Timilty and Hernandez?**

**ANSWER:**

Special application and / or special admission programs will remain citywide; for example, exam schools and alternative education programs. Certain special education or English Language Learner programs not available in all zones would also be excluded from the policy, e.g., McKinley Schools, Carter School.

English Language Learners: The new student assignment and transportation rules will apply to students requiring English Language Learner programs when in zone programs are available. Exceptions will be made for English Language Learner students if in zone programs are not available.

Special Education Students: The new student assignment rules will apply to students requiring special education programs when in zone programs are available. Exceptions will be made for students requiring special education services if in zone programs are not available. Student assignment and transportation will be made in the established IEP process.

**6. Will there be safety exceptions in a walk zone?**

**ANSWER:**

Yes, on a case-by-case basis. BPS will provide transportation service to students who live in the walk-zone but may have a dangerous walking path.

**7. Why, in Zone 1, is there no guaranteed feeder from elementary to middle?**

**ANSWER:**

Students in Zone 1 who are attending a K to 5 school will have choice between the Edwards or Umana Middle Schools. Students will be guaranteed an assignment at one of these two schools.

**8. Will there be a priority for students who are leaving their current school to attend one in their new home zone?**

**ANSWER:**

Please keep in mind that that grandfathering and sibling preference will impact school enrollment and available seats. If there is capacity in the assigned school, the student will be assigned to the school. If there is not capacity, the new student assignment and transportation rules will apply and the student will be assigned to an in zone school based on the new rules.



**9. What are we doing to support safety in the walkable communities?**

**ANSWER:**

BPS will continue to work with the Boston Police Department to ensure appropriate deployment of crossing guards.

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**IV. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

**1. What does “explore” mean?**

**ANSWER:**

The BPS Office of English Language Learner (OELL) has conducted strategic analysis of the Boston communities. With this expertise, OELL and the zone communities will engage in exploring and determining the appropriate programs to support English language learner students in each zone.

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**V. SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**1. Will special education students be impacted by the proposed five-zone enrollment and transportation rules?**

**ANSWER:**

Some special education programs, only offered at certain schools, would be excluded from the new enrollment and transportation rules. In these cases, the student enrolled in an out-of-zone school would receive transportation.

For students receiving special education services or attending special education programs offered in the zone he or she resides, the student would be assigned to the in-zone school and receive transportation based on the individual IEP.

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**VI. AFTER-SCHOOL AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

**1. What is the plan to offer more tailored before and after-school programs in the schools? Is there an outline with specific schools and timeframe for implementing?**

**ANSWER:**

The BPS Department of Extended Learning Time, After-school, and Services (DELTAS) oversees 44 out-of-school time (OST) programs in district schools. These programs connect schools, families, and community agencies to create programs that are responsive to the needs and interests of students. A rigorous process is in place to ensure these programs are effective, sustainable, and relevant. Additionally, almost every school in the district offers some kind of OST program that is run by either the school or a community partner. It is the work of DELTAS to increase the quality and access to these programs. Currently BPS is conducting a scan of all schools to determine their OST needs and assets. The scan will be completed by early June 2009 and the information will be used to inform a planning process



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that will be conducted over the summer of 2009. Schools will then be prioritized to receive district support. Support will be in the form of funding, program resources, technical assistance, curriculum, and/or training. Schools will be selected based on the following criteria:

1. Student Need – Schools whose data (grades, MCAS scores, attendance, suspensions, etc.) indicate their students need additional services. Commonwealth Priority Schools will be given preference.
2. Community Need – Based on neighborhood demographic data, crime data, parent input, etc., schools in certain neighborhoods will be given priority.
3. Equity of Services Across the District – The services offered in each zone will be analyzed to ensure all BPS parents have access to the same opportunities.

Working with its community partners, DELTAS will add approximately 15 schools to its network each year over the next 5 years to reach a critical mass of schools providing high quality OST programs and student support services. The next cohort of schools will be identified by September 2009.

## **VII. BUDGET & COST SAVINGS**

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### **1. What is the major driver of transportation increases? And why are we spending \$77m?**

**ANSWER:**

Just as we are all facing rising costs of supporting our personal and family needs, the costs of providing transportation has also increased. Since 2002, we have experienced the following increases: fuel costs increased 200%, Medical Insurance increased 100%, and MBTA passes increased 50%. Additionally, wages and benefits have increased. Other cost drivers include the current student assignment plan, cross zone transportation for special education students, and other programmatic options (citywide schools, extended learning time, door-to-door transportation).

### **2. What is the major driver of the estimated savings?**

**ANSWER:**

There are three major drivers:

- Reducing the number of assignment zones will allow us to shorten and consolidate routes within the zones.
- Changing the transportation eligibility rules will reduce the potential number of students to receive transportation.
- Implementing a computerized routing system will help increase further efficiencies.

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