

**RECOMMENDATION
TO POSTPONE THE REZONING OF BPS
UNTIL A MORE COMPREHENSIVE REFORM PLAN
IS IN PLACE**

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Introduction

The Boston Public School system is at a crossroads. It is considering the adoption of a proposal that would change the way students are assigned to their schools. This proposal is designed around cost-cutting measures, rather than access to quality schools, at a time that the district is becoming more segregated, both by race and class. As recognized in the Boston Public Schools Achievement Gap policy, adopted during the 2006-2007 school year, educators can use their knowledge about inequality as a tool to enhance educational opportunity by identifying where the highest needs students are, and developing a targeted response. Fortunately, technological tools exist that can assist Boston in developing that response. These tools have proven useful to other districts in studying the impact of racial and economic isolation and school diversity and in designing school assignment plans responsive to these trends. Instead of rushing to approve a student assignment policy that remains ambiguous and does not seem connected to a long-term school reform plan, we recommend that BPS continue to use the existing three-zone plan and work toward a solution that can address some of the challenges BPS has in educating all of its students.

As it is currently structured, the educational benefits of the proposed BPS five-zone student assignment plan are not apparent and do not seem to justify the disruption the changes would cause. This plan appears to exacerbate existing (and already troubling) inequalities rather than reduce them.

Background

School assignment policies are the initial “gatekeepers” that determine whether or not all students have access to quality schools. Equity-minded school assignment policies allow school administrators to help shape environments conducive to learning. A well-designed student assignment policy assures that all schools share equally in the benefits and challenges of educating children who live in district boundaries. Taking steps to prevent schools from becoming disproportionately overwhelmed empowers educators to chip away at the conditions that give rise to unequal educational outcomes.

For these reasons, when changing its student assignment policies, school districts should consider a host of factors, including the impact of racial and socioeconomic isolation upon student achievement; the effect that changes in transportation and choice will have on its most vulnerable students; whether parents have equal access to English Language Learner, special education, and innovative school options; and whether there are ways to improve efficiency within the existing framework, without the disruptions associated with redesigned attendance boundaries.

Just this year, the Education Trust observed that “disturbing patterns exist in virtually every state and the nation: 1) educational performance is too low, and big gaps separate low-income students and students of color from others; and 2) improvement, while real,

is far too slow.”¹ It continued, “too often, our system takes those who start from behind and gives them less of everything they need to succeed.”² Put simply, the structure, culture and operation of schools often exacerbate, rather than reduce, inequalities. A district’s school assignment policy is part of this equation. The five-zone plan under consideration appears to exacerbate existing inequalities rather than reduce them.

Boston could become a model for other cities struggling with the related conditions of intense racial and socioeconomic segregation and low achievement. With the community’s input and by using successful tools and models, BPS can design a policy that is more capable of addressing the achievement gap and distributing opportunity more evenly among students in the City of Boston. To achieve this, BPS must view any new student assignment policy as a mechanism of more meaningful long-term reform, rather than merely a short-term cost-saving measure. Most importantly, BPS must engage in a conscious and transparent consideration of the factors that contribute to the challenges it faces in educating all of its youth and the strengths from which it can draw. Any new student assignment plan should aim to repair disconnections that continue to impact the educational opportunities of Boston’s students.

1) The Importance of Quality Schools and Equal Access to Them

Massachusetts has long recognized the value of education to its citizenry. In fact, the education clause of the Massachusetts Constitution imposes on the Commonwealth an “enforceable duty” to “provide education in the public schools for the children there enrolled, whether they be rich or poor and without regard to the fiscal capacity of the community or district in which such children live.”³ In 2005, the Supreme Judicial Court reaffirmed the Commonwealth’s obligation to provide “a consistent commitment of resources sufficient to provide a high quality public education to every child.”⁴ Similarly, No Child Left Behind imposes an obligation on schools to provide students with: 1) an accelerated and enriched curriculum aligned with challenging state standards for what all students should learn; 2) effective instructional methods, used by qualified teachers who in turn receive ongoing, effectively designed professional development to better enable them to do so; and 3) effective and timely individual attention whenever a child experiences difficulty in mastering any of the skills or knowledge articulated in the standards.⁵

Like the Massachusetts Constitution and No Child Left Behind, the Boston Public Schools Achievement Gap policy recognizes the importance of quality education. It states, “All policies and practices will reflect the goals of eliminating achievement gaps

¹ The Education Trust, Education Watch State Report: Massachusetts, at 1, (2009) available at <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/summaries2009/Massachusetts.pdf> [hereinafter *Education Watch*].

² The Education Trust, *Education Watch* at 2.

³ *McDuffy v. Sec’y of Executive Office of Educ.*, 415 Mass. 545, 621 (1993).

⁴ *Hancock v. Comm’r of Educ.*, 443 Mass. 428, 432 (2005) (citing Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 69, § 1).

⁵ Paul Weckstein and Stephen J. Wermiel, The Need for Equal Opportunity and a Right to Quality Education, American Bar Association Human Rights, Volume 35, Number 3 (Summer 2008), available at http://www.abanet.org/jrr/hr/summer08/HR_Sum08_full.pdf at 22.

and achieving academic proficiency, explicitly and emphatically,”⁶ partially by “maximizing access for all students to high-level educational opportunities.”⁷ It describes this goal as a “*primary and urgent priority*.”⁸ The Achievement Gap policy assures parents and community members that it will incorporate certain elements related to quality education into its delivery of services.⁹

With the federal statutory and state constitutional mandates in mind, in addition to its own policy, BPS must take care to ensure that its students receive a high quality education regardless of their race, socioeconomic status, or zip code. The goal of providing students with the type of education contemplated by the Massachusetts Constitution and No Child Left Behind is only accomplished by ensuring that all BPS students are able to attend quality schools—not merely sometime in the future, but at the present moment. Because Boston is home to many struggling schools, it remains important that students within the district have equal access to quality schools. The recent proposal for rezoning raises serious concerns regarding equal access, along race and class lines, to quality schools for Boston’s student population.

It is difficult to measure many of the intangible, invisible, and inter-related factors that contribute to a quality school. These include school climate, administrator and teacher training and commitment to students, parent involvement, student satisfaction, and the like. One measure, however, that does indicate failure to provide a quality education is continued inability to make adequate yearly progress pursuant to No Child Left Behind.

The recent rezoning proposal contemplates five zones, two of which have an overwhelming percentage of Commonwealth Priority Schools, or schools identified by the Commonwealth as “Chronically Underperforming” pursuant to No Child Left Behind. Under the current BPS proposal, students who live in high-poverty, historically Latino and Black neighborhoods are far more likely to be forced to attend such schools at a pivotal time in their academic formation—during their elementary and middle school years.

According to the Superintendent’s own analysis, 58% of the schools in proposed Zone 3 and 57% of the schools in Zone 4 are Commonwealth Priority Schools, compared with 46%, 48%, and 17% in Zones 1, 5, and 2 respectively.¹⁰ This is a range of 41%, leaving Zones 3 and 4 (with disproportionate minority and low-income populations) with the largest share of underperforming schools. Under the current three-zone plan, there is

⁶ Boston Public Schools, Eliminating the Achievement Gap Policy Statement (2007) at 1, *available at* <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/GapPolicy.pdf> (adopted during the 2006-2007 school year).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.* at 2 (emphasis added).

⁹ *Id.* at 4 (stating that it is essential that BPS align its mission, plans and practices with the following elements: 1) insistence on high expectations, 2) use of performance data to drive educational decision-making, 3) clearly articulated and focused improvement plan, 4) high-quality leadership, 5) school cultures that embed cultural competence, 6) multifaceted formal and informal models of targeted professional development, 7) alignment of curriculum to standards, and 8) family and community engagement.)

¹⁰ Boston Public Schools, Preliminary Analysis of the Five-Zone Student Assignment Model, Presentation of Dr. Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent, to the Boston School Committee February 25, 2009, at 16, *available at* <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/5-zone%20model%20analysis%202-25-09.pdf> (utilizing School Year 2008-2009 data).

only a 6% differential between the zone containing the highest proportion of Commonwealth Priority Schools (54% in the East Zone) and that containing the lowest proportion (48% in the West Zone). The closing of certain schools and rezoning of the remaining schools will have a disproportionate impact on certain communities and may have a disproportionate impact on minority and low-income students in relation to their access to quality schools.

In trying economic times, equal access to quality schools is especially important for communities that have been historically disenfranchised and underserved. There is ample research that demonstrates the strong link between education and poverty, crime and health. Each of these socioeconomic indicators ties the quality of education received to the increased likelihood of employment, lack of criminal involvement and good health. It is unreasonable to expect that students matriculating through institutions that have been identified as “Chronically Underperforming” will be able to reach their full potential.

We commend Boston Public Schools’ stated commitment to expand excellence, increase access, and ensure equity for all BPS students and families. Consistent with this commitment, before it alters the way in which students are assigned to schools BPS must consider (and explicitly articulate) how it will improve consistently underperforming schools, develop more concrete plans to expand and explore programs that work, and ensure that students from all neighborhoods in Boston have access to quality schools.

Recommendations: Consistent with its commitment to expand excellence, increase access, and ensure equity for all BPS students and families, as stated in the Guiding Principles of Pathways to Excellence:

- 1) BPS should fully implement its own Achievement Gap Policy;
- 2) Until it is able to improve the quality of additional schools in the district, BPS should not reduce access to successful schools on the basis of geography; and
- 3) If and when BPS redraws its attendance boundaries, it must do so with attention to the distribution of quality schools and the burden of underperforming schools available to students.

2) The Importance of Access to Two-Way Bilingual Programs for All BPS Students

More than one third (38.1%) of students who attend the Boston Public Schools have a first language other than English and approximately one in five (19.9%) have limited English proficiency.¹¹ BPS recognizes the importance of improving services for English Language Learners (ELLs), as reflected in acceleration targets that include mastery of academic language fluency by, and the expansion of language support programs for, ELL

¹¹ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, School and District Profiles, <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00350000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=305&> (last visited May 28, 2009).

students.¹² Community members have expressed a desire that BPS expand program options for ELLs.¹³ Consistent with this goal, BPS acceleration strategies include the expansion of service model choices throughout the district.¹⁴ Because of demonstrated success in assisting students to attain academic proficiency in both English and another target language, an essential piece of this strategy is access to two-way bilingual programs, also known as the two-way immersion model of bilingual education.

Under the current three-zone student assignment plan, all students have access to two-way bilingual programs. The Sarah Greenwood is in the East Zone, the Hurley is in the North Zone, and the Hernandez (a citywide school) is located in the West Zone. If BPS adopts the five-zone plan and ends the Hernandez' citywide status, families in three of five zones (Zones 1, 2 and 5) will be unable to choose to attend a school with a two-way bilingual program. The planned addition of a program at the Dever school located in Zone 4 during the 2009-2010 school year, though a commendable step, does not address this problem. Although "Pathways to Excellence" proposes exploration of additional bilingual programs, until these programs are fully functional BPS should not reduce access to existing programs. Moreover, changing the zones (and thereby –at least without free transportation – the students who attend each school) will cause substantial disruption to each program. If a zoning change affecting access to the Sarah Greenwood, the Hurley, and/or the Hernandez is to be made, it is essential that staff at these schools be consulted in order to minimize disruption to successful programs. These staff should also be consulted as new two-way bilingual programs are opened in order to build on the success of BPS's current initiatives. Also, transportation must be provided to enable students to continue in their current two-way bilingual programs while new students enroll from new zones.

a. The Two-Way Immersion Model of Bilingual Education Yields Positive Results

Research strongly suggests that two-way immersion programs, which integrate native English speakers and speakers of other languages by providing instruction in both languages for all students, "promote[] bilingualism and biliteracy, grade-level academic achievement, and positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors in all students."¹⁵ Students who receive some instruction in their native language, a key feature of two-way bilingual programs, have positive attitudes toward themselves as learners, school, and other cultures and languages.¹⁶ Studies demonstrate that students who participate in two-

¹² See Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent, *Pathways to Excellence – Phase III*, Update to the Boston School Committee, April 29, 2009 (as revised May 11, 2009) [hereinafter *Pathways*], at 9, 7, available at <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/School%20Committee%205-zone%20presentation%204-29-09%20revised%205-11-09.pdf>.

¹³ See *Pathways* at 10.

¹⁴ See *Pathways* at 17.

¹⁵ Center for Applied Linguistics, English Language Learners: Two Way Immersion, <http://www.cal.org/topics/ell/immersion.html> (last visited May 28, 2009).

¹⁶ See F. Genesee, K. Lindholm-Leary, W. Saunders, & D. Christian, Educating English Language Learners, <http://www.lindholm-leary.com/present&handout/CABE%202006%20Educating%20ELLs.pdf>, [hereinafter *Educating English Language Learners*] at 38; See James Crawford, BILINGUAL EDUCATION: HISTORY, POLITICS, THEORY AND PRACTICE, BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, INC., 1995 (3rd ed.) [hereinafter *Bilingual Education*] at 144 (subtractive

way bilingual programs tend to have higher relative test scores in English reading and math, higher grades, and lower drop-out rates than ELLs who receive more limited language support through, for example, time-limited sheltered English immersion or transitional bilingual education.¹⁷

As with most educational programming, faithful implementation of a working model is key to student success.¹⁸ As evidenced by high demand for BPS's current two-way bilingual programs, particularly the Hernandez, Boston Public Schools families recognize the value of high-functioning, well-implemented two-way bilingual programs. Yet the five-zone plan decreases access to these programs for many BPS families and endangers their continued success.

b. Implementing the Five-Zone Plan Without Providing Transportation for Current Students Endangers the Success of this Model

The two-way bilingual model relies on student retention. With few exceptions for students who test in, programs at the Hernandez, the Hurley, and the Sarah Greenwood only accept students in the lower grades (kindergarten through second grade) because students must be prepared to learn in both languages at each academic level. For example, children who enter in kindergarten are prepared for instruction in both English and Spanish at the appropriate grade level each year. However, for a student to enter in fourth grade, she must demonstrate through a language test that she is reading, speaking and comprehending on or close to grade level in Spanish.

In 2009, more than half (56%) of the approximately 400 students at the Hernandez reside outside of the proposed Zone 3.¹⁹ Without transportation (see Section 4, below), it is unlikely that many of these students will be able to continue to attend the Hernandez. As a concrete example of the impact of the five-zone plan on this school, during the current (2008-2009) school year, 50 students attend third grade at the Hernandez. When these students reach fifth grade in the 2010-2011 school year, when the proposed zoning changes are scheduled to go into effect, approximately 28 students of the 50 will no longer reside within the appropriate boundaries. Assuming that these children, like most BPS students, cannot afford their own transportation, for its program to remain viable the Hernandez would have to recruit 28 new students capable of performing fifth grade work in both Spanish and English. All 28 of these students would need to reside within the boundaries of Zone 3. This problem will be replicated for the Hurley and the Sarah Greenwood, both of which would lose students due to rezoning.

And what of the students who have begun two-way bilingual programs, only to be “zoned out?” The development of advanced oral proficiency in a second language takes three to

approaches, such as sheltered English immersion or early-exit transitional bilingual education, “produce a disproportionate number of children who fall behind in class, question their ethnic identity, and drop out of school”).

¹⁷ See *Educating English Language Learners* at 37-38.

¹⁸ See *Educating English Language Learners* at 37.

¹⁹ James Vaznis, *Budget Woes May Dim A Bilingual Beacon*, Boston Globe, May 13, 2009, available at http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2009/05/13/budget_woes_may_dim_a_bilingual_beacon/.

five years,²⁰ while it takes five to seven years to develop the cognitive academic language proficiency necessary to succeed in “context-reduced, cognitively demanding” activities such as reading, writing, mathematics, science, and other school subjects.²¹ Many students currently attending the Hernandez, the Hurley, or the Sarah Greenwood who transfer in 2010 because they cannot get to school will not have had sufficient time in bilingual programs to reap their benefits.

Perhaps with these points in mind, last October the Superintendent recognized the importance of keeping the Hernandez citywide, stating in that proposal, “I am not recommending a change in citywide status for . . . Hernandez K-8 School (a two-way bilingual program), given the limited availability of these programmatic offerings throughout the city at this time.”²² Although the five-zone plan as presented in its latest iteration does eliminate citywide schools, it notes potential exceptions for ELL students to the proposed policies eliminating citywide status and application to schools outside of assigned zones.²³

If the five-zone plan is implemented, exceptions for transportation similar to those for magnet schools could be provided for students attending two-way bilingual programs, at least until two-way bilingual programs exist in each zone. This would permit current students to complete their courses of study through the sixth or eighth grade and ensure ongoing access to a broader range of language support for all BPS families.

Recommendations: Consistent with acceleration strategies set forth in Pathways to Excellence, BPS should:

- 1) Expand neighborhood access to language support by ensuring that two-way bilingual programs are offered in and/or accessible to students in all zones;
- 2) Maintain citywide status for the Hernandez school until similar opportunities are fully implemented and functional for students in all zones; and
- 3) Should the five-zone plan be implemented, draw narrow transportation exemptions for two-way bilingual schools to allow students to remain in their current programs.

3) Using Racial and Socioeconomic Data Technologies for Rezoning, School Reform, and Resource Allocation Purposes

There's a lack of moral, political, and intellectual integrity in this suppression of awareness of how social and economic disadvantage lowers achievement. Our first

²⁰ See *Educating English Language Learners* at 13.

²¹ See Crawford, *Bilingual Education* at 130 (citing the research of Jim Cummins on the influence of first-language skills on both second-language acquisition and academic achievement.).

²² Memorandum of Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent, to Boston School Committee entitled Transportation Recommendations, dated October 29, 2008, available at <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/files/10-29-08%20Transportation%20recommendations.doc>.

²³ See *Pathways* at 32, note 1.

obligation should be to analyze social problems accurately;
only then can we design effective solutions.²⁴

It is widely accepted that social conditions such as racial isolation, poverty, inadequate housing, and exposure to violence affect schools²⁵ and student performance.²⁶ Children of color are disproportionately affected by such conditions.²⁷ Most importantly, research has shown that “the poverty rate of a school influences educational outcomes far more than the poverty rate of an individual”²⁸ and that Blacks and Latinos tend to be isolated in low-income neighborhoods at rates far higher than their White and Asian counterparts.²⁹ These trends exist nationwide,³⁰ and Boston is no exception (see [Figure 7](#), showing the racial concentration of non-White populations in low opportunity neighborhoods).

As recognized in the BPS Achievement Gap policy, educators can use this knowledge about race, poverty and inequality as a tool to enhance educational opportunity by identifying where the highest-needs students are, and then developing a targeted response. We believe BPS overlooked important data when drawing the boundaries of the proposed five-zone plan. Instead, administrators focused upon the natural and/or man-made boundaries (including roads) of the City of Boston. A careful consideration of the following data could lead to a solution capable of addressing systemic issues that give rise to low student achievement for most BPS students (see [Figure 5](#), comparing overall district and state performance) in addition to significant disparities between racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic subgroups. We urge BPS to take a more principled, carefully considered, approach to drawing new boundaries if indeed administrators and school board members consider new attendance zones necessary.

The Education Trust noted in 2009 that “most constructive conversations [about education reform]... begin... with a careful look at hard evidence.”³¹ Even a cursory

²⁴ RICHARD ROTHSTEIN, *CLASS AND SCHOOLS: USING SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM TO CLOSE THE BLACK-WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP* (2004).

²⁵ See, e.g. Kirwan Institute, *K-12 Diversity: Strategies for Diverse and Successful Schools*, at 5 (2007) available at http://4909e99d35cada63e7f757471b7243be73e53e14.gripelements.com/pdfs/KIAltSchoolStrategiesVersion3July31_2007.pdf [hereinafter *Strategies for Diverse and Successful Schools*] (“Schools comprised overwhelmingly of students from poor families face multiple obstacles that make educating children difficult, such as the inability to attract and retain qualified teachers, maintaining high teacher expectations, the lack of college prep courses, and perceptions regarding school safety.”).

²⁶ *Id.* at 9 (“students in areas of concentrated poverty are at risk for a number of additional factors that decrease educational performance such as exposure to lead and environmental toxins, psychological distress due to living in a high risk environment, and limited access to high quality, affordable healthcare...neighborhoods are critical as they have a direct impact on the school experience these students face.”)

²⁷ See DOLORES ACEVEDO-GARCIA ET AL., *CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND: HOW METROPOLITAN AREAS ARE FAILING AMERICAN CHILDREN* (2007), available at http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu/children_left_behind_final_report.pdf; George C. Galster & Sean P. Killen, *The Geography of Metropolitan Opportunity: A Reconnaissance and Conceptual Framework*, 6 HOUSING POL’Y DEBATE 7 (1995).

²⁸ *Id.* at 8.

²⁹ See generally The Kirwan Institute, *The Geography of Opportunity: Building Communities of Opportunity in Massachusetts* (2009) [hereinafter *The Geography of Opportunity*]; Dolores Acevedo-Garcia et al., *Toward a Policy-Relevant Analysis of Geographic and Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Child Health*, 27 HEALTH AFF. 321 (2008).

³⁰ *Id.* at 12 (“Unfortunately, racial isolation in low-opportunity communities and neighborhoods of concentrated poverty is a pattern found throughout the United States.”).

³¹ The Education Trust, *Education Watch* at 1.

glance at BPS statistics suggests that the school district as a whole is growing more segregated, both by race and by socioeconomic status. As Figure 1 suggests:

- While the low-income student population in BPS was roughly 50% in 1993-94, it is now nearly 75% low income;
- Since 1993-94, BPS's White student population has declined from 19.3% to 13.1%; and
- The overall combined Latino and Black student population has grown from 71.1% to 76%, with the Latino student population growing significantly while the Black student population has declined.

Meanwhile, student populations in nearby suburbs are characterized by less racial and socioeconomic isolation, and higher performance.³² For example:

- Newton—69.8% White, 14.5% Asian, 6.1% Hispanic, and 5.1% Black, with 10.8% low income students
 - 2008 AYP Performance Rating Language Arts: Very High Math: Very High
- Cambridge—36% White, 34.6% Black, 14.1% Hispanic, and 11.3% Asian with 43.9% low income students
 - 2008 AYP Performance Rating Language Arts: High Math: Moderate
- Arlington—79.4% White, 9.5% Asian, 4.6% Hispanic, and 3.6% Black with 10.8% low income students
 - 2008 AYP Performance Rating Language Arts: Very High Math: High

This is all happening in the context of a state that is generally considered high-performing and has an overall student population of: 69.9% White students, 14.3% Hispanic students, 8.2% African American students, and 5.1% Asian students, with 30.7% of all students considered low income.³³ With the advent of NCLB's accountability framework, the landscape of urban education and the consequences for failing schools have changed, too. A student assignment plan (alongside targeted resource allocation) based on what is known about the detrimental effects of concentrated poverty and racial isolation would be a step toward closing the achievement gap in Boston.

³² This School and District Profiles data was compiled using Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website, available at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu> (for the 2008-2009 school year). Boston's 2008 AYP Performance Rating was "Moderate" in Language Arts and "Low" in Math.

³³ Massachusetts DESE, School and District Profiles: Massachusetts, available at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00000000&orgtypecode=0&>. This data is for the 2008-2009 school year. On the U.S. Department of Commerce's Leaders and Laggards: A State-by-State Report Card on Educational Effectiveness analysis, available at <http://www.uschamber.com/icw/reportcard/default>, Massachusetts is ranked number one in Academic Achievement, and received all A grades except for in the areas of Flexibility in Management and Policy Data Quality, where it received a C and B, respectively ("Massachusetts students are among the highest achievers in the country."). In Education Week's 2009 assessment of schools nationwide, Massachusetts ranked first in overall achievement, with a grade of 84.6% (B). Importantly, it received a grade of 70.3% (C-) in Equity. See <http://www.edweek.org/ew/qc/2009/17src.h28.html>. A recent report by the Schott Foundation found that "Massachusetts's Black, Latino and Native American students, taken together, have less than 30 percent of the opportunity to attend the state's best-supported, best-performing schools than the state's White, non-Latino students. A low-income student has a quarter of the opportunity to learn of the average White, non-Latino student." Schott Foundation, Lost Opportunity: A 50 State Report on the Opportunity to Learn in America: Massachusetts (2009), available at <http://www.otlstatereport.org/massachusetts.pdf>.

a. Considerable Evidence of Between-Zone and Within-Zone Segregation Already Exists Under the Three-Zone Plan

Within the current three-zone plan, there is already considerable evidence of *between-zone* segregation, particularly racial segregation (see [Figure 2](#)). Specifically, a comparison of the populations residing in each zone demonstrates that across zones:

- The African American student population ranges from 24-56% (range = 32);
- The Latino student population ranges from 24-49% (range = 25);
- The White student population ranges from 10-14% (range = 4);
- The Asian student population ranges from 4-12% (range = 8);
- The free lunch student population ranges from 67-73% (range =6); and
- The reduced lunch student population ranges from 8-9% (range =1).

Even within a system generally characterized by small White and Asian student populations, several schools have relatively high proportions of White students, as outlined in [Figure 3](#), and a handful of schools have relatively high proportions of Asian students.³⁴ This data reminds us that one cannot get an accurate picture of racial and socioeconomic isolation and its impact on learning outcomes by relying solely on the demographics of attendance zones—racially isolated school environments often exist in close proximity to one another.

Were this evidence of *within-zone* isolation to exist outside of the context of a considerable achievement gap between Black/Latino students and White/Asian students, this physical separation may not be so troubling. This racial and socioeconomic separation, however, has implications for student performance. Schools with higher concentrations of White students frequently have lower concentrations of poverty, which often translates into higher academic performance. This generalization seems to apply to BPS.

The data we reviewed pertaining to BPS’s racial and socioeconomic composition reveals evidence that should be considered in the design of a student assignment policy. [Figure 3](#) lists schools in Boston that have higher relative concentrations of White students (at least two times the BPS average for 2008-09). Among these 18 schools (one is a charter school, and thus is not subject to the same analysis in many instances):

- Only one of these schools, Eliot Elementary, is a Commonwealth Priority school;
- *14 of these schools rank among the top 18 schools in Boston with the lowest concentration of “low-income” students*, as defined by BPS, with low-income concentrations ranging from 20.6% to 49.5%; and
- Spatially, these schools are located on the outskirts of BPS boundaries, and tend to be clustered together.

³⁴ This School and District Profiles data was compiled using the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, available at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu> (for the 2008-2009 school year). Schools with a disproportionately high Asian student population include: Quincy (North Zone), with a 64.9% Asian population, Harvard/Kent (North Zone) with a 29.6% Asian population, Mather (East Zone) with a 35.5% Asian population, Murphy (East Zone) with a 25.4% Asian population.

This data suggests a relationship between minority status and low-income isolation within BPS schools. Figure 4 begins to assess whether less racially and socioeconomically isolated schools perform better than state and BPS averages. We looked at the 2008 MCAS English test results for fifth graders, finding that, of the 14 schools where students took this test:

- All but two schools (Roosevelt and Eliot) had lower percentages of students identified as “Needing Improvement” (hereinafter “NI”) than the BPS average (45% NI), with eight schools having lower percentages of NI students than even the state average (30% NI); and
- All but three of these schools (Clap, Eliot, and Manning) had lower percentages of students identified as “Warning” (hereinafter “W”) than the BPS average (26% W), with two schools having lower percentages of W students than the state average of 8%.

While our analysis was not exhaustive, we believe our findings signal a legitimate need to study more closely school and neighborhood trends before adopting a new assignment policy. This data will help BPS devise a policy that minimizes both *between-zone* and *within-zone* isolation of minority and low-income students.

b. The Five-Zone Plan Exacerbates Already-Existing Racial Isolation, and Produces a Large Socioeconomic Diversity Gap Between Students

Under the proposed five-zone plan, between-zone segregation will increase, both in terms of race and socioeconomics. Specifically, under the plan, across zones:

- The African American student population ranges from 8-50% (range = 42) (+10);
- The Latino student population ranges from 28-67% (range = 39) (+14);
- The White student population ranges from 7-21% (range = 14) (+10);
- The Asian student population ranges from 4-22% (range = 18) (+10);
- The free lunch student population ranges from 59-76% (range =23) (+17); and
- The reduced lunch student population ranges from 7-11% (range =4) (+3).

In parenthesis above, we have indicated the increases in racial and socioeconomic isolation between the three-zone and five-zone plan. For the reasons outlined in the analysis of the three-zone plan, which is already characterized by significant *between-zone* and *within-zone* racial and socioeconomic isolation, we are concerned with any assignment plan that further isolates students who most need access to meaningful choice.

c. A Favorable Student Assignment Plan Would Attempt to Counteract The Known Negative Effects of Racial and Economic Isolation

To address the need for equitable opportunity and improved living conditions for all residents, *we need to assess the geographic differences in resources and opportunities across a region to make informed, affirmative interventions*

into failures and gaps in providing access to critical opportunities.³⁵

We hope BPS will not overlook data and research demonstrating the educational challenges related to socioeconomic and racial isolation as they decide whether to approve the student assignment policy under consideration. We believe there is a need to assess the current distribution of resources and opportunities within BPS in order to formulate an informed school assignment policy that furthers BPS's goals. Doing so will enable BPS to use its limited resources in the most beneficial manner. To this end, we offer some alternative tools, strategies, and considerations that might prove helpful moving forward.

Modern School Assignment Plans: Using Technology and Data

Modern technology can help school districts create more equitable student assignment plans. For example, some school districts have used GIS-mapping technologies in designing their school assignment policies.³⁶ Some of the factors these modern student assignment plans take into account are: neighborhood demographics (to counteract the effects of concentrated poverty and/or racial isolation); parental income and/or educational attainment (both of which can impact a student's access to supports necessary to succeed in school); and the school's concentration of students performing below average on standardized tests.³⁷ Consideration of such factors during the student assignment (and resource allocation) process helps make the district more effective overall by ensuring a more evenly distributed student population. With this information, school districts can also put supports in place so that individual schools are less likely to become overwhelmed with factors beyond their control.

“Communities of Opportunity” Framework and “Opportunity Mapping” Tools

The Kirwan Institute (an organization that produces a significant body of research on the impact of racial and economic isolation and school diversity) has assisted a number of school districts³⁸ in designing student assignment policies that respond to their unique

³⁵ *The Geography of Opportunity* at 12 (emphasis added).

³⁶ Emily Bazelon, *The Next Kind of Integration*, *NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE* (July 20, 2008) available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/20/magazine/20integration-t.html>.

³⁷ For a comprehensive guide on school assignment policies in different districts nationwide, see The Civil Rights Project & The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, *Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 School Integration*, 48 (2008), available at http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/deseg/Still_Looking_to_the%20Future_Integration_Manual.pdf (For example, the guide describes the goals of the Wake County, NC plan as “[i]ncreased socioeconomic diversity and overall student achievement. Racial diversity is not an explicit goal. No more than 40% of a school's total enrollment can be comprised of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) and no more than 25% of a school's total enrollment can be comprised of students performing below grade level on state exams.”).

³⁸ Amongst these districts are Berkeley, CA and Louisville, KY. See, e.g. Emily Bazelon, *The Next Kind of Integration*, *NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE* (July 20, 2008) [hereinafter *The Next Kind of Integration*] available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/20/magazine/20integration-t.html> (“In Louisville, Powell lent his expertise to Todd and her team. They came up with a computer-generated map that shows what Powell defines as the district's areas of ‘low opportunity.’ ... The map used two different measures of class to identify Jefferson County's areas of disadvantage: income level and the educational attainment of adults. (To gauge disadvantage, districts embarking on

historical, geographic, and social contexts.³⁹ Just this year, the Kirwan Institute completed an “opportunity mapping” of Massachusetts that outlines the spatial distribution of educational, economic, and neighborhood/housing opportunity in various regions of the state (see Figures 7 to 9).⁴⁰ Generally, Kirwan found that “racialized isolation from neighborhoods of opportunity is very evident in Massachusetts”⁴¹ and recommended that the state “adopt strategies to open up access to the ‘levers’ of opportunity for marginalized individuals, families, and communities.”⁴² The Institute’s mapping of the racial distribution of concentrated poverty within the Boston metropolitan region is particularly helpful as BPS analyzes the proposed five-zone assignment policy. Figures 8-9 reveal a considerable difference in Boston’s geography of opportunity, whereby significant numbers of Black and Latino Bostonians are concentrated in high-poverty neighborhoods.⁴³ This particular spatial distribution of racial and socioeconomic isolation will undoubtedly affect Zones 3 and 4 more than other zones—in fact, a comparison of this map with the current distribution of Commonwealth Priority schools reveals this spatial distribution of opportunity at work. How will BPS compensate for the additional challenges face visited upon schools located in these neighborhoods of low opportunity? How will BPS ensure meaningful choice to the students who live there?

As part of what it calls the “Communities of Opportunity model,” the Kirwan Institute suggests a two-pronged approach to opportunity development: 1) to bring opportunity to opportunity-deprived areas; and 2) to connect people with existing opportunities throughout the metropolitan region.⁴⁴ In the present context, we stress the importance of offering meaningful choice (including transportation) to students in underserved communities by taking a more balanced approach to school choice. Such an approach would take the crucial effects of racial and socioeconomic isolation into account.

The Kirwan approach identifies precisely the underlying causes of disadvantage, in an effort to counteract neighborhood conditions, which “play a substantial role in the life outcomes of inhabitants.”⁴⁵ The Institute’s report provides an “analytical lens to view the

class-based integration often use who among their students receives free or reduced lunch; Powell, however, contends that this is a relatively crude measure.) Using census data, Todd’s team identified the zones in the district in which households fall below the average income and education levels, with fewer adults who have finished high school or gone to college or beyond. Finally, the team added one more factor: a higher-than-average number of minorities, almost all of them African-Americans or Hispanics.”)

³⁹ See Bazelon, *The Next Kind of Integration* (“In different districts, you have different geographic patterns,” Powell says. “So you need different integration models to shop around.”)

⁴⁰ See generally The Kirwan Institute, *The Geography of Opportunity*. This opportunity mapping was commissioned and funded by the Massachusetts Legal Services Programs. Kirwan defines “opportunity” as “a situation or condition which is conducive to meeting a goal or objective, placing an individual in a position to be more likely to succeed or excel.” *Id.* at 7. The indicators used to assess opportunity were: 1) Educational opportunity – student expenditures, student poverty rate, students passing math tests, students passing reading tests, dropout rate, graduation rate, and number of certified teachers; 2) Economic opportunity—unemployment rates, population on public assistance, proximity to employment, economic climate/job trends, mean commute time; and 3) Neighborhood/Housing quality—home values, neighborhood vacancy rate, crime index/rate, neighborhood poverty rate, home ownership rate, proximity to toxic waste release sites, and proximity to Superfund sites. *Id.* at 11. For each indicator, data was gathered at the smallest geographic scale and analyzed at Census tract level. *Id.* at 10.

⁴¹ Kirwan Institute, *The Geography of Opportunity* at 2.

⁴² *Id.* at 4.

⁴³ Figure 9 also suggests that there are pockets of White concentrated poverty, which may require a targeted response.

⁴⁴ Kirwan Institute, *The Geography of Opportunity* at 46.

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 2.

challenges and potential remedies,⁴⁶ and can help BPS decide whether the proposed student assignment policy is designed to serve the best interests of its students.⁴⁷ We believe it is not.

Promising Models of Long-Term Systemic Reform

Elements of other promising models, such as an emerging regional learning community in Omaha, Nebraska⁴⁸ and the magnet school programs in Hartford, Connecticut⁴⁹ may prove helpful to BPS as it formulates a long-term solution to closing the achievement gap. In addition, BPS can use the resource *Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 School Integration*, developed by the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund and the Civil Rights Project at UCLA in 2008.⁵⁰

Diversity’s Role in Balancing “In-Place” and “Mobility-Based” School Reform Measures

Given the research supporting racial and economic diversity as effective methods of counteracting concentrated disadvantage, BPS should consider maintaining as much racial and class diversity as possible when deciding where to draw student assignment boundaries. By striking the right balance between *in-place* (improving neighborhood schools and growing innovative models within struggling schools) and *mobility-based* (student assignment and choice policies) reform measures, BPS will better position its schools and students to achieve excellence. In contrast, exacerbating existing racial isolation (as the proposed five-zone plan does) will not offset the “vicious cycle of disadvantage”⁵¹ that students coming from low-opportunity neighborhoods bring to school. Merely redrawing attendance lines coterminous with existing neighborhood boundaries will do nothing to improve the quality of BPS schools—it represents a lost

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ BPS might consider using technological tools to run a simulation of the proposed five-zone plan to analyze its impact before adopting it.

⁴⁸ For information on this plan, see Jennifer Jellison Holme et al., *Using Regional Coalitions to Address Socioeconomic Isolation: A Case Study of the Omaha Metropolitan Agreement* (forthcoming 2009, on file with the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School) (“In May 2007, Nebraska’s governor signed into law an unprecedented piece of legislation requiring 11 public school districts in the Omaha, Nebraska metropolitan area to form a cooperative ‘Learning Community.’ The agreement is momentous on several grounds. First, it is distinctive in that it has secured the commitment of all 11 school districts across two counties to an inter-district socioeconomic desegregation plan, all without a court order. The second historic aspect to this agreement is that it will be funded through a new tax-sharing plan, by merging 11 local school districts into a shared metropolitan tax base. Another notable aspect of this plan is its establishment of a regional governing council that will implement the agreement and oversee the construction of new inter-district schools of choice and support centers in high poverty communities.”).

⁴⁹ Information and resources about this program are available on the *Sheff* Movement Coalition Website (<http://sheffmovement.org>) and the Capital Region Education Council Website (<http://www.crec.org>). See also Charles Hamilton Houston Institute, 20th Anniversary of *Sheff v. O’Neill*: Panel Discussion & Reception, available at <http://www.charleshamiltonhouston.org/Events/Event.aspx?id=100093> (featuring articles about the *Sheff v. O’Neill* anniversary and a presentation related to school diversity).

⁵⁰ The Civil Rights Project & The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, *Still Looking to the Future: Voluntary K-12 School Integration* (2008), available at http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/deseg/Still_Looking_to_the%20Future_Integration_Manual.pdf.

⁵¹ Kirwan Institute, *Strategies for Diverse and Successful Schools* at 5 (“Because these high poverty failing schools are often majority African American or Latino, a vicious circle of disadvantage keeps poor students of color from achieving the economic mobility that a quality education can provide.”).

opportunity. Therefore, the proposed five-zone plan does not appear consistent with BPS’s commitment to closing the achievement gap in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

d. Improving Educational Outcomes Within Economically and Racially Segregated Districts

School districts across the country have long attempted to identify and address conditions that give rise to poor educational outcomes. Admittedly, achieving racial and socioeconomic diversity, which are effective ways to achieve improved learning outcomes, is more virtually impossible in hyper-segregated school districts.⁵² In this respect, Boston is not much different from its urban peers— large-scale racial and socioeconomic diversity within BPS would be difficult to achieve. And yet, education policy researchers have increasingly concluded that “simply fixing up segregated and poor urban schools will never solve [the] deep and structural inequalities across spaces and institutions in our society.”⁵³ We can acknowledge that economic and social diversity are difficult to achieve without ignoring the well-established fact that they are important.

There is a widespread belief that if urban schools try hard enough, they can close the achievement gap. Surely, many schools have overcome tremendous obstacles and their students have achieved at higher levels than their urban counterparts. We do not want to downplay the success of these schools, yet we are cautious about accepting the notion that some schools simply must bear the brunt of educating higher proportions of disadvantaged students. Research suggests that these “beat the odds” schools are not common and/or easy to replicate and maintain—in short, they are not (and cannot be) the basis of an equitable and effective school reform strategy. In 2006, Professor Douglas Harris looked for schools serving low-income students that recorded high scores in two subjects, in two grades for two consecutive years. Using these indicators of success, he found that only 1.1% of high-poverty schools are actually “beating the odds.”⁵⁴ Among schools that are both high-poverty and racially segregated, only .3% of these schools are actually “beating the odds.”⁵⁵ We hope that BPS will consider this information, too, when deciding whether to approve the proposed five-zone student assignment policy.

By using knowledge about racial and socioeconomic isolation to devise a long-term strategy for change, school districts can “target and support meaningful school choices

⁵² *Id.* at 18 (“integrative strategies to improve school diversity and academic achievement are not possible in many large urban school districts... [because they] are segregated to a degree which does not allow for effective inter-district desegregative strategy (economic or racial).”).

⁵³ J.J. Holme & A.S. Wells, School Choice Beyond District Borders: Lessons for the Reauthorization of NCLB from Interdistrict Desegregation and Open Enrollment Plans, in *IMPROVING ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND*, 139, 183 (Richard Kahlenberg ed., 2008) [hereinafter *School Choice Beyond District Borders*].

⁵⁴ Douglas Harris, *Ending the Blame Game on Educational Inequity: A Study of “High Flying” Schools and NCLB*, 20 (2006), available at http://www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Ending%20the%20Blame%20Game-%20Doug%20Harris.pdf.

⁵⁵ *Id.*

for the most disadvantaged students.”⁵⁶ By viewing free transportation as an integral component of meaningful choice in a system struggling to overcome deep and structural inequalities, school districts can remain committed to “offer[ing] students more choice in where to attend school.”⁵⁷ Additionally, hyper-segregated school districts like Boston might consider regional remedies, if and when possible, over the long term.⁵⁸ At the least, such options are worthy of serious study as longer term solutions to increasing segregation and concentrated poverty.

After considering information about the impact of racial and social isolation on its students, and by using the tools that have been created to help translate knowledge into practice, BPS could devise a school attendance policy that responds to its unique history and circumstances. An effective policy would reduce the strain on schools that are tasked with offsetting the “vicious cycle[s] of disadvantage”⁵⁹ that affect their students’ success in school and life.

Recommendations: If and when BPS redraws its attendance boundaries, it should:

- 1) Study school and neighborhood trends before adopting a new assignment policy, perhaps by conducting a simulation of how the new plan will affect BPS’s highest-needs students;
- 2) Use available GIS mapping technologies to devise an attendance zone policy that is part of an effective and coherent school reform policy that does not exacerbate existing opportunity gaps;
- 3) Consider replicating some of the new student assignment models that other school districts have employed to minimize the impact of socioeconomic and racial isolation, which both affect learning;
- 4) Use current research on school diversity (economic and racial) to guide the formation of a new student assignment policy. To the extent possible, involve urban planning, public and mental health, and community advocates in this process. Consult the range of experts in the Boston metropolitan region who study the effects of racial and economic segregation, such as:
 - **Dolores Acevedo-Garcia** (Associate Professor of Society, Human Development, and Health at the Harvard School of Public Health);
 - **David Williams** (Florence Sprague Norman and Laura Smart Norman Professor of Public Health at the Harvard School of Public Health); and
 - **Teresa Osypuk** (Assistant Professor, School of Health Professions at Northeastern University);
 - **The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute** is also willing to consult and present on these issues.
- 5) Explore regional solutions, such as expanding the opportunities available to the highest-needs students to cross district boundaries, thus increasing their access to high-performing and low-poverty schools that are close to their homes.

Regardless of whether a new attendance plan is adopted, BPS should consider using the tools/models discussed above as it maps out a strategy for addressing the opportunity and achievement gaps that exist within the Boston metro area. This information can help inform BPS’s choices related to resource allocation, needed supports, teacher training and recruitment, etc.

⁵⁶ Holme, *School Choice Beyond District Borders* at 199-200 (based on opportunity of place—“enrollment in a failing school, family poverty, and residency in a racially isolated community with highly concentrated poverty.”).

⁵⁷ Kirwan Institute, *Strategies for Diverse and Successful Schools* at 18.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ *Id.* at 5 (“Because these high poverty failing schools are often majority African American or Latino, a vicious circle of disadvantage keeps poor students of color from achieving the economic mobility that a quality education can provide.”).

4) The Importance of Transportation

a. Without Transportation, the “Grandfathering” Provision of the Five-Zone Plan Will Be Meaningless for Many Families

Access to transportation means no less than the difference between attending and missing school. The Superintendent has acknowledged that under the new five-zone plan “29% of students would be in a new zone and would no longer receive transportation to their current school.”⁶⁰ As concerned parents of these students and the community at large have overwhelmingly expressed, ending transportation for these students effectively zones them out of their current schools by denying them any true choice of remaining there.

“[T]ransportation remains a critical component of allowing all students access to schools outside their neighborhood – to allow students the same access to schools regardless of where they live.”⁶¹ Researchers Amy Stuart Wells and Jennifer Holme recently concluded that federal, state, and local education choice policies enacted within the last 15-20 years “rarely [help] children from isolated poor communities gain access to schools with more resources and fewer burdens,” and that the school choice mechanisms often “[place] most of the burden of gaining access to better schools on... families themselves and thus [do] little to guarantee students’ meaningful access to better schools.”⁶² They observe that “different student assignment goals and designs lead to different outcomes.”⁶³ For example, financially-driven policies will lead to drastically different outcomes than those based in equity. Most important for the purpose of the current analysis, Wells and Holme found that transportation efficiency is key,⁶⁴ but that transportation itself “is critical to the participation of disadvantaged students.”⁶⁵ Transportation is what makes choice meaningful to, and possible for, many families. Ending free transportation for students who choose to remain in their now out-of-zone schools under the new five-zone plan takes that choice away from them and impedes their access to equal educational opportunities.⁶⁶ This is especially true for low-income and minority students.

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent, to Boston School Committee, dated April 29, 2009, entitled Five-Zone Proposal, available at <http://bostonpublicschools.org/files/Memo%20to%20School%20Committee%204-29-09.pdf>

⁶¹ The UCLA Civil Rights Project, Transportation Fact Sheet

http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/policy/court/crp_fact_sheet_transportation.pdf

⁶² Holme, *School Choice Beyond District Borders* at 141-42 (Although Holmes and Wells are writing about this topic in the context of inter-district choice programs, their assessment of choice policies is relevant to the question at hand—successful student assignment policies do not shut students off from opportunity, and equity-minded intra-district policies are important).

⁶³ *Id.* at 176.

⁶⁴ *Id.* at 201.

⁶⁵ *Id.* at 200.

⁶⁶ See Thomas W. Sanchez, Rich Stolz, and Jacinta S. Ma, MOVING TO EQUITY: Addressing Inequitable Effects of Transportation Policies on Minorities, a Joint Report of Center for Community Change and The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University (2003), at 22, available at <http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/transportation/MovingtoEquity.pdf>

While we oppose the adoption of the five-zone plan, should BPS decide to adopt the plan, it must, at a minimum, maintain current transportation for however many of the 29% of BPS students who are grandfathered in choose to remain in their current schools once these schools becomes out-of-zone for them.

b. BPS Should Consider Other Potential Transportation Efficiencies

While rezoning may allow for transportation cost-savings, it is likely that there are other ways of creating efficiencies within the current busing system to save money without causing the major disruptions of redistricting. Several school districts have used ideas such as anti-idling policies, bulk fuel purchases, and long-term contracts with fuel providers to reduce their transportation costs and save money. School districts in Texas and South Carolina have begun to invest in hybrid and EV buses to both save money and meet environmental standards.⁶⁷ These technologies not only increase fuel efficiency, but the buses may be able to be purchased inexpensively from companies looking for pilot programs and may be eligible for federal subsidies.

Major universities and private consulting companies specialize in analyzing major transportation systems for cities and school districts. Their studies find inefficiencies in order to create improvement and implementation plans, so that cities and districts can reduce budgetary costs. We strongly encourage the Boston School Committee to thoroughly analyze its transportation system *before* implementing a redistricting plan. It is likely that money can be saved through a more efficient busing system instead of an overhaul of the existing district plan.

Recommendations: Because transportation is key to access:

- 1) If and when BPS redraws its attendance boundaries it should continue to provide transportation to students who are grandfathered into their current schools; and
- 2) BPS should commission a study of ways other than rezoning to save transportation money, perhaps by increasing efficiency. If BPS has already conducted such research, it should make this information available.

Conclusion

School assignment plan are “gatekeepers” to quality schools. Thus, when educators determine that a change in its assignment policies is necessary, they should make changes only after considering a host of different factors, including the impact of racial and socioeconomic isolation on student achievement; the effect that changes in transportation and choice will have on its most vulnerable students; whether parents have equal access to English Language Learner, special education, and innovative school options; and whether there are ways to improve efficiency within the existing framework, without the disruptions associated with redesigned attendance boundaries.

⁶⁷ See discussion of these initiatives at <http://www.advancedenergy.org/corporate/initiatives/heb>.

Together, seeking more community input and using available technology and/or models would enable the district to design a school assignment policy rooted in equity, which is more likely to have a longstanding positive impact on Boston Public Schools. Although BPS may not be able to achieve a highly racially/ethnically and socioeconomically integrated learning environment, there are ways of ensuring that students do not experience *increased* isolation, while BPS works to build quality schools for all students.

Instead of rushing to approve a student assignment policy that remains ambiguous and does not seem connected to a long-term school reform plan, we recommend that BPS continue to use the existing three-zone plan and work toward a solution that can address some of the challenges BPS has in educating all of its students.

Appendix

Figure 1: Boston: Selected Racial and Economic Data

	African American	Asian	Hispanic	White	Native American	Low Income	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch	ELL	ELP	Special Education
1993-94	47.7	9.2	23.4	19.3	0.4	52			35.1	22.8	20.6
2003-04	46.4	8.8	30.4	14.0	0.4	73.4			35.3	19.0	18.9
2008-09	37.9	8.5	38.1	13.1	0.4	74.3	65.3	9.0	38.1	18.9	20.5

Figure 2: Current Three-Zone Attendance Plan

	Racial Demographics				SES Demographics	
	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch
Boston Average	37.9	8.5	38.1	13.1	65.3	9
East Zone	56	10	24	10	71	9
West Zone	39	4	43	14	67	8
North Zone	24	12	49	14	73	9

Figure 3: Schools with 2x or More Concentration of White Students 2008-2009 (as compared to BPS average)

	Status	Among Top 18 Schools in Boston w/Respect to SES					
		Black	Asian	Hispanic	White	Low Income	Free Lunch
Boston Average		37.9	8.5	38.1	13.1	74.3	65.3
Baldwin ELC		18.9	19.5	30.5	26.2	53	43.3
Joseph P Tynan		36.7	5.4	25.7	29		
Franklin D Roosevelt		35.4	1.4	32.4	29.4	56.6	46.2
Boston Latin Academy		28.3	21.1	16.5	31.3	49.7	38.2
Manassah E Bradley		5.9	4.5	54.7	31.7		
Richard J Murphy		28.6	25.4	11	31.9	57.5	46.3
Roger Clap		29.6	8	25.3	32.7		
Patrick O'Hearn		36.5	9.4	10.7	34.3	53.2	45.1
Eliot Elementary		16.5	5.1	39.6	34.9	58	49.8
Mozart		25.3	5.1	29.7	38.6	43	32.3
Mary Lyon		13.7	7.3	31.5	44.4	44.4	30.6
Lyndon		7	2.2	41.1	48.1	40.9	32.1
Joseph P Manning		15.8	7.5	24	49.3	37	30.8
Boston Latin		11.7	27.9	8.3	49.9	30.6	21.5
Joyce Kilmer		10.2	7.2	23.8	54.8	29	20.6
Warren-Prescott		12.7	2.8	27.1	56.7	55.3	48.9
Oliver Hazard Perry		14.9	4	19.3	59.8		
Boston Collegiate Charter School (Charter)		26.7	1.1	9.7	60.6	41.2	25

Figure 4: Performance of Students Attending Schools with Above-Average SES and White Student Populations—An Example of How They Compare with State and District Averages (using data from 2008 5th Grade English MCAS)

English 2008 MCAS 5th Grade			
	Needs Improvement	Warning	Subgroup Averages
State Average	30	8	
Boston Average	45	26	
Baldwin ELC*	—	—	Black
Joseph P Tynan	40	23	State: 46-17
Franklin D Roosevelt*	51	17	Boston: 48-22
Boston Latin Academy*	—	—	Asian
Manassah E Bradley	3	3	State: 25-7
Richard J Murphy*	29	13	Boston: 30-11
Roger Clap	25	30	Hispanic
Patrick O'Hearn*	40	15	State: 47-21
Eliot Elementary*	33	33	Boston: 48-23
Mozart*	25	17	White
Mary Lyon*	0	23	State: 26-5
Lyndon*	22	9	Boston: 27-12
Joseph P Manning*	29	36	Low Income
Boston Latin*	—	—	State: 46-18
Joyce Kilmer*	15	6	Boston: 46-22
Warren-Prescott*	32	11	
Oliver Hazard Perry	50	23	
Boston Collegiate Charter School* (Charter)	—	—	

**Figure 5: MCAS Tests of Spring 2008:
Percent of Students at Each Performance Level for Boston⁶⁸**

Grade and Subject	Advanced/ Above Proficient		Proficient		Needs Improvement		Warning/ Failing		Students Included	CPI
	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE	DISTRICT	STATE		
GRADE 03 - READING	6	15	23	41	45	33	26	11	3,935	64.8
GRADE 03 - MATHEMATICS	10	25	26	36	32	25	32	14	3,939	64.3
GRADE 04 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	2	8	23	41	48	39	27	13	3,925	62.3
GRADE 04 - MATHEMATICS	9	20	21	29	47	38	23	13	3,943	66.3
GRADE 05 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	6	13	31	48	43	30	20	8	3,520	69.5
GRADE 05 - MATHEMATICS	11	22	22	30	34	30	34	17	3,528	61.9
GRADE 05 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	3	17	14	33	46	38	37	12	3,525	54.1
GRADE 06 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	6	15	37	52	37	24	19	8	3,510	72.8
GRADE 06 - MATHEMATICS	10	23	22	33	29	26	39	18	3,547	59.8
GRADE 07 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	4	12	44	57	34	23	18	8	3,887	75.7
GRADE 07 - MATHEMATICS	7	15	21	32	28	29	43	24	3,951	56.9
GRADE 08 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	5	12	52	63	28	18	15	7	4,022	79.2
GRADE 08 - MATHEMATICS	9	19	25	30	26	27	40	24	4,059	59.3
GRADE 08 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	0	3	10	36	38	39	52	22	4,020	44.4
GRADE 10 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	14	23	44	51	33	21	9	4	3,932	82.3
GRADE 10 - MATHEMATICS	35	43	24	29	25	19	16	9	3,888	79.3
GRADE 10 - SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY	5	14	24	43	42	31	29	12	3,504	61.8

Figure 6: Proposed Five-Zone Attendance Plan

	Racial Demographics				SES Demographics	
	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White	Free Lunch	Reduced Lunch
Boston Average	37.9	8.5	38.1	13.1	65.3	9
Zone #1	8	6	67	19	76	10
Zone #2	15	22	42	21	62	11
Zone #3	37	9	48	7	75	7
Zone #4	50	12	28	10	74	9
Zone #5	42	4	36	17	59	10

⁶⁸ Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MCAS Tests of Spring 2008: Percent of Students at Each Performance Level for Boston, available at http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/mcas/performance_level.aspx?linkid=32&orgtypecode=5&orgcode=00350000&fycode=2008.

Figure 7: Opportunity in Massachusetts (Non-White Populations)

Map 3A: Comprehensive Opportunity Map with non-White population overlay
GREATER BOSTON



This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity based on Education, Economic & Mobility, and Housing & Neighborhood indicators overlaid with non-White population.

Source: US Census 2000; County Business Pattern; ESRI; EPA; Massachusetts Department of Education; MA State Police Date: July 17, 2008

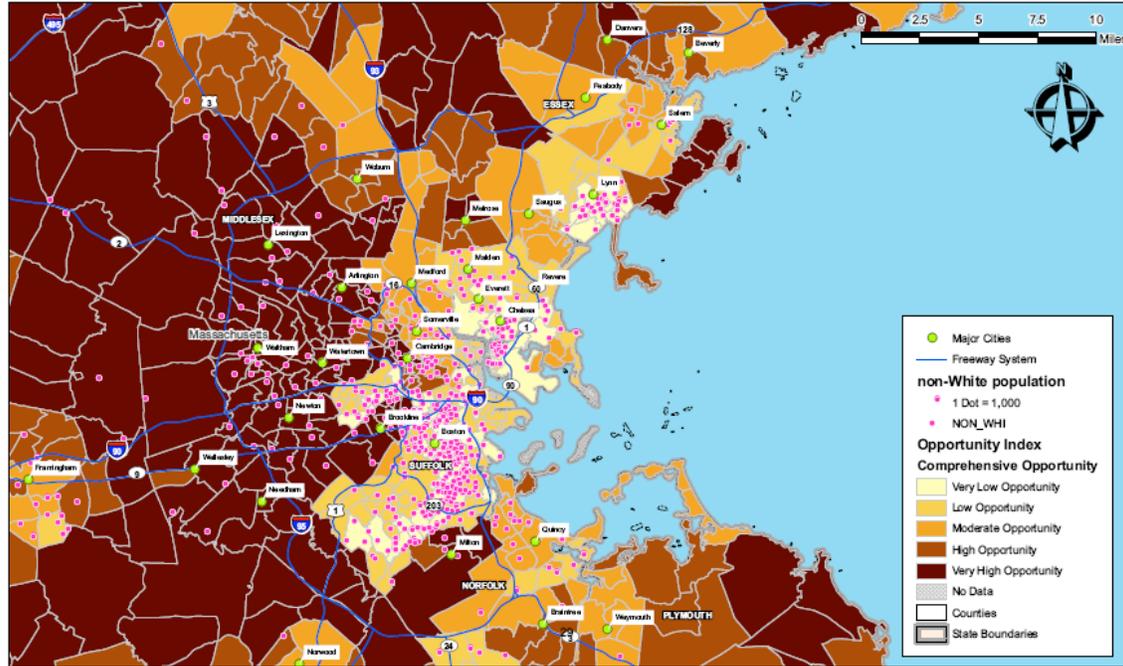


Figure 8: Poverty Concentration in Boston Metro Area (African Americans)

Note: Kirwan’s use of the 20% marker for poverty rates based on research regarding the relevance of certain levels of poverty, and their impact on neighborhoods. For more information, see Kirwan Institute, *Strategies for Diverse and Successful Schools* at 5 (“Studies show that the effects of concentrated poverty rapidly increase at two thresholds: between about 7% and 20% (when a neighborhood is “tipping” into high poverty), and over 40% (at which point a neighborhood is in extreme high poverty). The USDA Economic Research Service has also used a 20% poverty rate to delineate areas of “high poverty” in the U.S.”) (citing George Galster, Roberto et al., *Identifying Neighborhood Thresholds: An Empirical Exploration* 11 HOUSING POL. DEBATE 701 (2000)).

**Map 2A: Poverty Map, Boston Metro Area, MA
Africans Americans in poverty and high poverty census tracts**

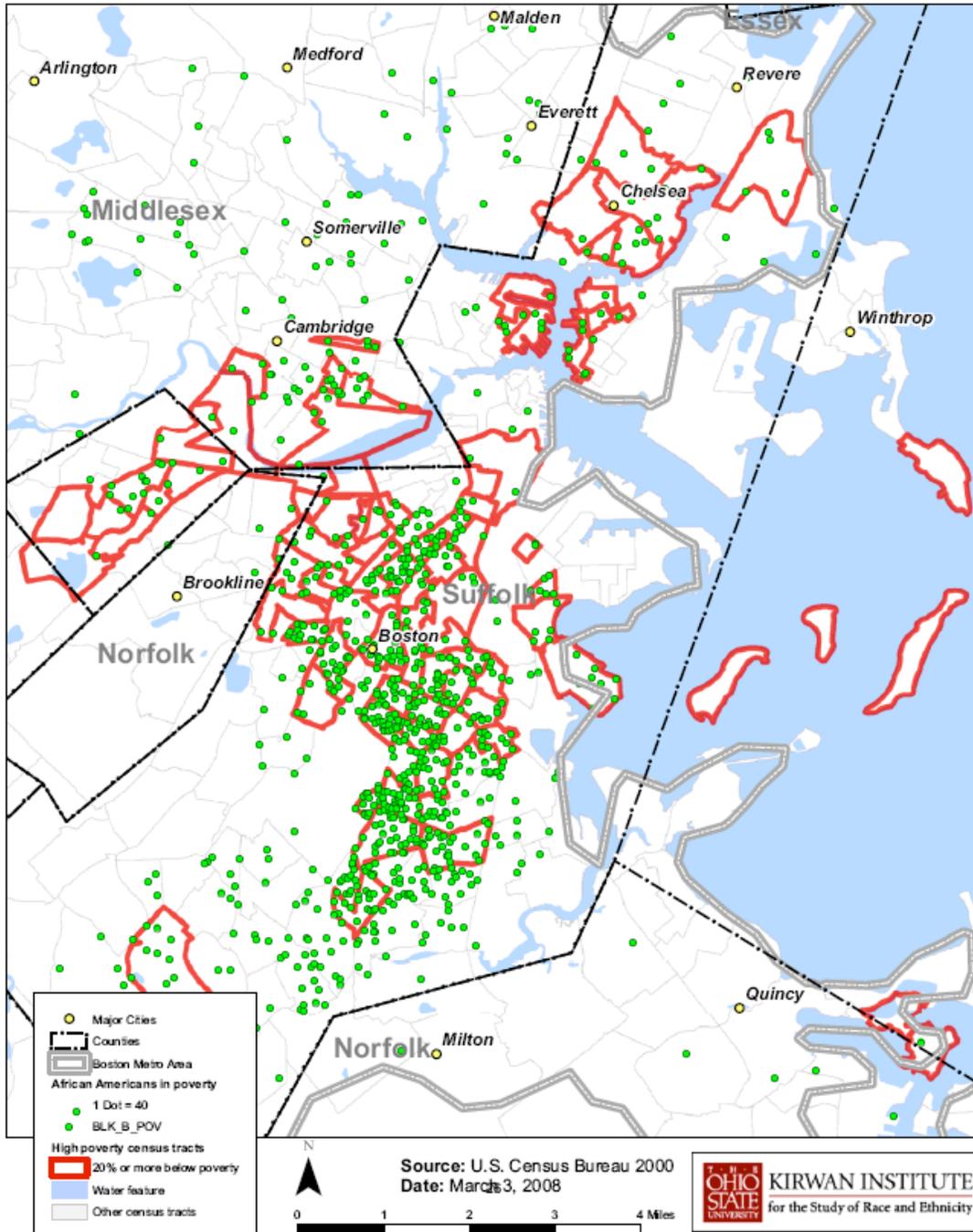


Figure 9: Poverty Concentration in Boston Metro Area (Non-Hispanic Whites)

Note: Kirwan’s use of the 20% marker for poverty rates based on research regarding the relevance of certain levels of poverty, and their impact on neighborhoods. For more information, see Kirwan Institute, *Strategies for Diverse and Successful Schools* at 5 (“Studies show that the effects of concentrated poverty rapidly increase at two thresholds: between about 7% and 20% (when a neighborhood is “tipping” into high poverty), and over 40% (at which point a neighborhood is in extreme high poverty). The USDA Economic Research Service has also used a 20% poverty rate to delineate areas of “high poverty” in the U.S.”) (citing George Galster, Roberto et al., *Identifying Neighborhood Thresholds: An Empirical Exploration* 11 HOUSING POL. DEBATE 701 (2000)).

**Map 2B: Poverty Map, Boston Metro Area, MA
non-Hispanic Whites in poverty and high poverty census tracts**

