

January 2013

## Now is Not the Time for Hybrid School Committee Proposal

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*Full attention should be kept on other issues that will directly benefit the BPS*

The home rule petition proposed by Councilor Frank Baker to move to a hybrid school committee structure is ill-timed. There are more important issues this year that require the full attention of city and school officials that will directly impact the School Department and its ability to improve student performance. Any action on the hybrid plan will be limited to the City Council since, as a home rule petition, it requires the approval of the Mayor before being submitted to the Legislature.

Councilor Baker has proposed a seven-member school committee consisting of four members appointed by the Mayor and three members elected at-large in the regular election to be held in November 2013 and all will serve four-year terms.

The plate is already full in 2013 with educational issues that will directly affect the BPS. A few examples include:

- **Student Assignment** – The External Advisory Committee is reviewing three options for a new student assignment plan that will lead to making a recommendation to the School Committee in February. The Committee will conduct its own review and will hold a public hearing before voting on a final plan that will take effect in September 2014.
- **Legislative Reform** – At least four bills will be submitted to the Legislature that will have a common theme of

proposing changes to improve underperforming schools. Of the 96 BPS schools ranked by the state, 48 or 50% are Level 3 schools. The issue of eliminating the charter school cap in Level 4 Districts, like Boston, is included in one of the bills.

- **BPS FY14 Budget** – Finalizing the BPS operating budget for next year will be very challenging through the end of June with projected increased costs due to contract salary increases, step increases, a new bus contract and K-2 enrollment increases. Also, a reduction in federal funds is expected.
- **School Facilities Plan** – The need for the BPS to develop a comprehensive multi-year facilities plan has been evident as a result of the school closing experience, Access to Excellence plan and the Student Assignment process. Work on such a plan is underway and part of the plan for budget purposes should be released by April.

### Final Thought

A second commission reviewing Boston school governance in 1991 recommended the options of an appointed or a hybrid School Committee. The hybrid option did not gain support because it was considered a divided entity and unworkable. The primary benefit of the appointed Board is that it holds one person accountable for Boston school performance – the Mayor.