

Three New Pilot Schools Approved for 2009

Plans for new Pilot schools and expansions fall short of BTU contract agreement

At its meeting on November 19, the Boston School Committee approved the formation of three new Pilot schools, an encouraging development after the delays of the past few years. However, the BTU contract provides for teacher salary increases of 14% over four years, rather than the standard 11% because of reform measures like the creation of seven new Pilot schools by September 2009. For that reason, failure to fulfill the agreement to establish seven new Pilot schools is disappointing. The three new schools will join the 20 Pilot schools that have been established since 1994.

Pilot schools enjoy autonomy from School Committee regulations and BTU contract provisions in key areas of budgeting, staffing, governance, scheduling, and school-based curriculum and assessment. This flexibility allows Pilots' Governing Boards to hire staff, structure longer days, establish their own curriculum and assessments, and exercise budget flexibility in allocating funds. Pilots must administer standardized tests like MCAS, meet state and federal requirements and undergo Quality Review evaluations every five years.

Twenty Pilot schools have opened in Boston since 1995 and pilot enrollment now accounts for approximately 11.8 % of BPS total enrollment.

New Pilot Schools

Pilot schools approved to open in 2009 include the BTU-sponsored, teacher-run K-8 school in Jamaica Plain that will start with grades K-2 and grade 6. The Mary Lyon K-8 full inclusion school in Brighton will expand its model to high school grades with a year-by-year rollout starting with grade 9 in September 2009. The high school will have its own Governing Board that will qualify as a new Pilot school. The Haley K-5 Elementary School in Roslindale will convert to a Pilot school next year with a curriculum based on the environment and the Roslindale community.

Discovery Schools

The current BTU contract also offers the possibility of Discovery schools, which would have the curriculum/assessment and certain budget autonomy of Pilot schools but not the same governance, staffing and scheduling flexibility. These schools would enjoy autonomy from School Committee regulations but not the BTU contract provisions. For a school to be converted to Pilot status, a 66 2/3% vote of the BTU staff is required. A majority vote of the staff is required to convert to a Discovery school. At present, eight schools have applied to become Discovery schools and all received staff votes of 80% or more. The Superintendent must approve the creation of a Discovery school and her review process is in the preliminary stages.

BPS Pilot Schools	
Level	Amount
Elementary	4
Elem./Middle (K-8)	4
Middle	2
Middle/High (6-12)	1
High	9
Total	20