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## BPS Prepares for Innovation Schools

### *Roger Clap Elementary Facility to be an Innovation School Next Fall*

One year after the passage of the 2010 Achievement Gap Act, the BPS is preparing to authorize the City's first Innovation Schools. As part of Superintendent Johnson's Redesign and Reinvest proposal, the Boston School Committee voted to close the Clap Elementary School and create an Innovation School at the facility. A major objective of the Innovation School legislation is to empower a range of stakeholders to take charge of school learning environments.

Innovation Schools are in-district schools, similar to BPS Pilot Schools, and are intended to provide greater autonomy and flexibility in the school's budget, schedule, calendar, staffing policies, and professional development. However, there are features of Innovation Schools that may make them more appealing to some applicants. Innovation Schools, unlike Pilots, do not have a uniform set of exemptions to the teachers' contract to follow. Rather, individual Innovation School governing boards negotiate waivers that facilitate the specific school plans. The application and contract waiver process is also more streamlined because it features an expedited arbitration process to modify any provisions of the teachers' contract.

A stakeholder group interested in establishing an Innovation School can be formed by teachers, administrators, parents, or non-profit leaders. The proposal must outline specific needs or challenges that the school is designed to address and to highlight the

autonomy and flexibility necessary to carry out the school's objectives.

### **What Is Happening In Boston**

Plans for 15 Innovation Schools were submitted to a three-member BPS innovation committee by the January 14 deadline and include the conversion of six existing schools and the creation of nine new schools. The three-member committee consists of Superintendent Carol Johnson, Boston School Committee Chair Rev. Gregory Groover, and Boston Teachers Union President Richard Stutman. The committee will select viable proposals for further development by a 2/3 vote on February 1.

Each applicant selected is required to create an innovation plan committee and, with a state-funded planning grant of up to \$15,000, develop the school's innovation plan. The innovation plan for a conversion school must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the teachers at the existing school. For a new Innovation School, proposed modifications to the teachers' contract must be negotiated among the applicant, Superintendent and Boston Teachers Union, utilizing expedited arbitration if necessary.

Once the school proposals are finalized, a majority of the School Committee can vote to approve an Innovation School for up to five years. The School Committee is expected to approve one to three Innovation School plans in late spring for the 2011-2012 school year.