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BPS Provides Extra Support for 21 Underperforming Schools

Better use of data, support teams, and restructuring of resources targeted for these schools

As different student assignment plans are being reviewed by the External Advisory Committee, the issue of equity in the educational quality of schools that will be available in each neighborhood area of Boston is of high concern to parents and education advocates. Also, a bill has been submitted to the Legislature that would lift the charter school cap in Level 4 Districts like Boston. Tied to both issues is how successful the BPS will be in improving its 21 most underperforming schools.

To give parents and students more confidence that these 21 schools will be able to improve student achievement and make them more competitive with charter schools, the BPS has developed an educational improvement plan individualized for each school.

Rating of Schools

The BPS' school accountability system is based on two years of data with equal weight given to student performance and student growth scores. This system also differentiates among types of special needs students and levels of English language acquisition. This program identified 21 schools that are considered most in need of additional support. Enrollment in these 21 schools represents 16.9% of the BPS total. The difference between this system and the state's ranking of schools in five levels was described in a previous [Bureau Update](#) article.

The Improvement Process

From previous work with its Level 4 schools, the BPS learned that a tailored assistance plan must be developed for each. For each school:

- A data coach is assigned to work with the principal to determine the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- A team consisting of school staff and central office members from the offices of Accountability, Curriculum, Budget, ELL and Special Education meet to identify interventions required for the school and develop a targeted improvement plan.
- Performance evaluation and professional development support, the availability of literacy and/or math coaches, and partnerships with community-based organizations for tutoring and out-of-school learning will be provided.
- Student participation in vacation Acceleration Academies.
- Additional stipends for teachers in these schools are provided for targeted training.

Working within the Budget

Reallocating school budget resources and additional operational and capital funds over three years as announced by the Mayor will help with funding. A few steps taken by the BPS include:

- The Weighted Student Funding formula for SY2013-2014 will provide extra resources to schools with more than 60% of its students receiving Free and Reduced Price Lunch.
- Central offices sought ways to restructure resources to provide more support to the 21 schools. For example, the Curriculum Office modified its allocation of literary support.
- The eight social workers authorized in the 2012 teachers' contract were assigned primarily to work with these schools.