Capital Planning:
Community Engagement Summary and Analysis

April 2024

Engaging our community

"*The most important responsibility we have as a city and a district is supporting our young people, ensuring they are connected to every opportunity that Boston has to offer. All Boston Public Schools (BPS) students and educators should learn and work in school buildings that inspire creativity and innovation, with spaces that foster a love of learning and community.*"

– Mayor Wu, Superintendent Skipper, Chair Robinson

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Engaging our community

At the end of 2023, we published the Boston Public Schools Long-Term Facilities Plan (LTFP). The LTFP serves as a framework to support our vision for creating an ecosystem of school buildings that support the High-Quality Student Experience we collectively envision for every one of our students.

Since January, we have been engaging our community to apply the data from the LTFP, identify themes to inform the development of specific proposals this spring, and to understand priorities related to transition supports.

In-person and virtual outreach efforts, including webinars, regional and targeted workshops, and a community-wide survey

Reached **nearly 3,000 community members** including students, families, staff, and partners

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Who we reached

12 community events since January
Approximately 200 community members participated in a workshop
1,874 survey respondents

LTFP Community Webinar (link)
- January 17: ~425 Participants

Community Workshops
- February 3: E. Boston, Charlestown, Fenway-Kenmore, Downtown, S. Boston, Allston-Brighton - 38
- March 2: N. Dorchester, Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Mission Hill- 62
- March 9: S. Dorchester, Mattapan, Hyde Park, Roslindale, W. Roxbury - 57
- March 13: Secondary Schools - 44

English Learner Advisory Councils
(Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Arabic, Cabo Verdean)
- March 20-April 23: 151 participants to date

Boston Student Advisory Council
- March 5: 35 participants

School Leaders Professional Development
- March 21: ~110 participants

Transition and Community Assets Survey
- February 26 - March 15: 1,874 respondents

About the Community Workshops

- 3 regional + 1 high school specific
- Explore data together
  - Implementation Exercise - *Simplified simulation of a decision process to build understanding and jointly question the process*
  - Neighborhood Data Activity - *Explore neighborhood and school data. What are the assets, opportunities, and challenges evident in the data? What else could we include?*
- Learn about current work in neighborhoods
- Opportunity to connect face-to-face, address questions, and gather feedback

What we heard: Workshop Themes

Themes

- Inclusion and school programming
  - College and career access
  - Sports
  - Language education
  - Special education
- Community engagement
- Transparency and communication
  - Clarity on what is fixed and what is flexible
- Equitable focus
  - Identify populations disproportionately impacted and address inequitable access
- Transition planning and support

"Construction projects are long – ensure students who experience disruption also experience benefit."

"High schools can be the heartbeat of the community and should be athletics hubs. Schools don't exist separate from their communities.

"Special attention should be paid to students with disabilities and multilingual students. When we're renovating schools, there needs to be swing space so they're not displaced across the City."

Workshop Themes

Themes

- Transportation
  - Clear plans and accessibility
- Data
  - Up-to-date information
- School culture
- Rebuilding trust
- Physical space
  - ADA compliance
  - Healthy, safe, and environmentally resilient buildings
  - Flexible spaces for extracurriculars and STEM/arts programming

"I feel like there are a lot of young parents who are looking at the process with skeptical eyes. I also want to acknowledge the people who have been here for many years. The history leads to a lack of trust in the process and the outcome."

"When you hear what other students have access to at their school, you're more willing to consider moving [if a school closes/merges]. I didn't even know these other schools have these awesome things."

Boston Student Advisory Council

Themes

- Transportation - clear planning
- Cultural values and environment
- Transition support and services
- Career and college access
- In-school opportunities
  - AP classes, sports, etc.
- Impact on and benefits for students
- Student demographics

"Considering student community and racial backgrounds is really important when considering relocating schools."

"When thinking about increasing opportunities I think you should start with sports because they build school community."

"How can you provide resources to future careers and colleges?"

"One important thing to think about is transportation, especially when moving a school."

English Learner Advisory Councils (ELACs)

Themes

- Language access
  - For students and for families
- Transportation - clear planning
- Supporting students' social-emotional needs
- Access to enrichment programs
- Bilingual staff

"In the prospect of consolidation or going to new schools, parents want to know if their children will be able to pursue the same programs they like at their previous schools, such as music, dance, gymnastics, etc."

"What will be the quality indicators to look for in a new school to ensure that the school is providing quality education to children, and treating parents well?"

"There should be more bilingual program access, especially for recent arrivals, and in several languages."

School Leader Professional Learning

Themes

- Centering students
  - Ground decisions in what's best for students
- Transparency
  - Commit to a transparent process
- Communication
  - Be clear on what people can expect
- Decision-making
  - Clarity on where there is or isn't room for decision-making
- Bring school leaders in early in the process
- Student transitions
  - Focus on students, especially students with disabilities and multilingual learners, with and without disabilities
- Staff supports
  - Have supports in place for staff impacted

"There's a process that people in the merger / closure go through – it's a loss, pain, hurt. Process doesn't account for what people feel. Need time for people to grieve the loss of something they owned and that you're taking away."

Survey – Demographic Data

Total Survey Responses: 1,874

Responses by Language:

- 1747 English
- 87 Spanish
- 16 Chinese
- 9 Portuguese
- 6 Haitian Creole
- 3 Vietnamese
- 3 French
- 2 Cape Verdean Creole
- 1 Arabic

Responses by Race:

- 824 White
- 312 Black/African-American
- 279 Latinx
- 122 Asian
- 112 Multi-race
- 104 Other
- 5 Native American
- 116 Not Stated

Responses by Neighborhood:

- 126 Allston/Brighton
- 66 Central Boston
- 77 Charlestown
- 360 Dorchester
- 144 East Boston
- 8 Fenway/Kenmore
- 99 Hyde Park
- 229 Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill
- 61 Mattapan
- 109 Other
- 208 Roslindale
- 69 South Boston/Seaport
- 46 South End
- 149 West Roxbury

Survey – Choosing a School

Question: What are the most important factors in choosing a school?

Top five factors overall:
- Positive school culture and values (**79%**)
- Positive academic reputation of the school (**61%**)
- Course offerings such as art, music, theater (**55%**)
- Proximity to home (**53%**)
- Strong safety and security measures (**52%**)

Bottom three factors overall:
- Access to other community assets such as library, youth center, green spaces, etc. (**20%**)
- Familiarity with teachers and/or school leaders (**20%**)
- School standardized assessment scores (**17%**)

Survey – Choosing a School

What are the most important factors to you when choosing a school?	All	ML	SWD	Black	LatinX
Facilities are updated, well-maintained, and/or new	6	7	7	4	7
Positive school culture and values	1	1	1	1	1
Special education programming	10	9	6	6	10
Multilingual programming including dual language programs	11	3	15	15	3
Proximity to home	4	6	4	9	6
Access to high school advanced coursework	9	11	10	12	13
Strong safety and security measures	5	2	3	2	2
Extracurricular activities including athletics	7	8	8	7	8
Course offerings such as art, music, theater	3	5	5	5	5
Access to high school College or Career Readiness Pathways	12	12	12	10	12
Familiarity with teachers and/or school leaders	15	16	12	13	16
Proximity of public transportation to school	13	13	11	11	11
Positive academic reputation of the school	2	4	2	3	4
Access to other community assets [library, youth center, green spaces, etc]	16	14	16	14	17
Access to before- or after-school programming	8	10	9	8	9
Siblings or family members attend the school	14	17	14	17	14
School standardized assessment scores	17	14	17	16	15

Families could select 6 of these 17 factors as the most important to them when they choose a school. We ranked the factors based on how often they were mentioned by various demographic groups:

Green = 5 factors most selected by that group
Orange = 3 factors least selected by that group

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Survey – Supporting Student Transitions

Question: When a school is closed or merged, what would be most helpful in making a transition as smooth as possible for students and families?

Top five choices:

- Having a clear point of contact for questions or concerns (**96%**)
- A clear transportation plan (**94%**)
- Knowing what programs and opportunities are available at the new school well in advance of the transition (**93%**)
- Having school assignment priority when looking for a new school (**92%**)
- Special transition supports for students with disabilities (**91%**)

Bottom three choices:

- One-on-one support with enrolling in the new school (**76%**)
- Having a buddy or student mentor at the new school to support students transitioning (**68%**)
- Being able to designate a friend to go through the school assignment process together (**57%**)

Percentage indicates respondents who selected "Quite Important" or "Extremely Important"

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Survey – Supporting Student Transitions

Question: When a school is closed or merged, what would be most helpful in making a transition as smooth as possible for students and families?

What would be most helpful in making a transition as smooth as possible?	All	ML	SWD	Black	LatinX
Having school assignment priority when looking for a new school	92%	88%	91%	87%	91%
One-on-one support with enrolling in the new school	76%	85%	77%	79%	88%
Having at least one full year to prepare for the transition	84%	80%	86%	82%	80%
Designating a friend to go through the school assignment process together	57%	63%	56%	56%	58%
Having a buddy or student mentor at the new school	68%	75%	70%	74%	72%
Knowing programs/opportunities available at new school well in advance of transition	93%	92%	94%	95%	91%
A clear transportation plan	94%	94%	94%	96%	94%
Special transition supports for students with disabilities	91%	93%	95%	96%	93%
Special transition supports for multilingual learners, with and w/o disabilities	86%	89%	86%	89%	90%
Special transition supports for students experiencing emotional hardships	87%	89%	89%	91%	90%
Having a clear point of contact for questions or concerns	96%	93%	97%	95%	94%
Meeting the school leader and/or staff at the new school before the start of the new school year	87%	85%	86%	88%	89%

Percentage indicates respondents who selected "Quite Important" or "Extremely Important"

Green = 5 factors most selected by that group
Orange = 3 factors least selected by that group

Survey – Community-Building for Students & Families

Question: What activities or resources should be in place during the planning year to support a smooth transition for students, families, and staff experiencing a school closure or merger?

Top five choices:
- Student visits to their new school site (**93%**)
- List of programs and activities that students will have in new/merged school (**91%**)
- Special transition supports for students with disabilities and multilingual learners (**89%**)
- Community-building activities with new school community (**78%**)
- Integration of School Parent and Site Councils for a merged school (**76%**)

Bottom three choices:
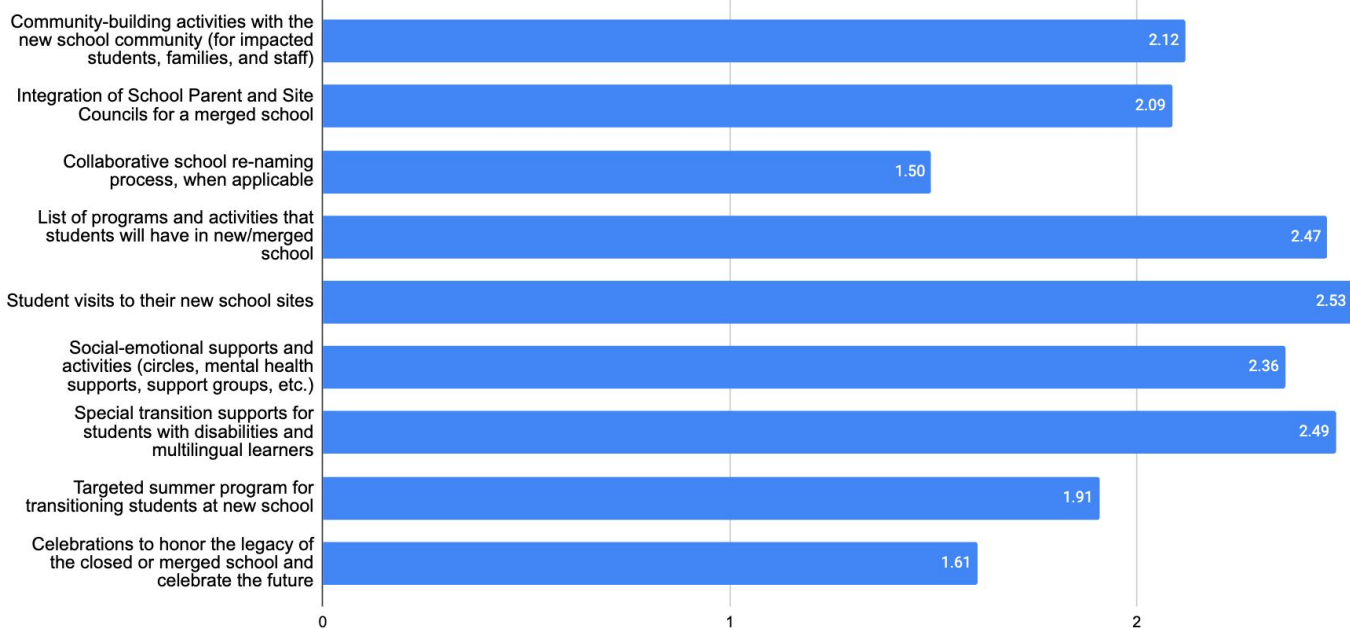- Targeted summer program for transitioning students at new school (**66%**)
- Celebrations to honor the legacy of the closed or merged school and celebrate the future (**52%**)
- Collaborative school renaming process, when applicable (**47%**)

Percentage indicates respondents who selected "Quite Important" or "Extremely Important"

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Survey – Community-Building for Students & Families

Question: What activities or resources should be in place during the planning year to support a smooth transition for students, families, and staff experiencing a school closure or merger?

Response	Score
Community-building activities with the new school community (for impacted students, families, and staff)	2.12
Integration of School Parent and Site Councils for a merged school	2.09
Collaborative school re-naming process, when applicable	1.50
List of programs and activities that students will have in new/merged school	2.47
Student visits to their new school sites	2.53
Social-emotional supports and activities (circles, mental health supports, support groups, etc.)	2.36
Special transition supports for students with disabilities and multilingual learners	2.49
Targeted summer program for transitioning students at new school	1.91
Celebrations to honor the legacy of the closed or merged school and celebrate the future	1.61

Each response was assigned a score of 0 to 3. Scores were then averaged to get an overall response score for each question.

0 = Not important at all
1 = Somewhat important
2 = Quite Important
3 = Extremely Important

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Survey – Community Assets/Services

We know from all the outreach that schools are embedded into communities and are just one important asset. Here are some other important assets that students, parents, and educators access and enjoy in their communities.

- **Libraries** - **74%** mentioned libraries as a community asset frequently used by BPS students
  - **58%** indicated that their neighborhood library is easy to access from at least one of their neighborhood schools
  - **51%** indicated that their neighborhood library is accessed frequently by students
  - **50%** indicated that they use their library regularly

Survey – Community Assets/Services

- **Parks** - **68%** mentioned parks as a community asset frequently used by BPS students
  - **62%** indicated that their neighborhood park is a safe place for school-age kids to play and connect
  - **56%** indicated that parks play an important role in building community in their neighborhood
  - **55%** indicated that their neighborhood park is easy to access from at least one of the neighborhood schools
  - **10%** indicated that their neighborhood park is not safe

How the data will be used

- Transition and community asset data collected over the last few months will be used to help inform our transition planning efforts and determine where to allocate resources.
- Understanding community assets gives us a broader ecosystem view of resources and supports that communities access and can help to inform resource allocation and partnership development efforts
- The rubric uses a variety of quantitative data to identify school buildings that do not currently support the BPS High-Quality Student Experience. Qualitative data we are collecting through our outreach efforts provides additional information to take into consideration as we develop proposals.