

A group of young Black girls in school uniforms are sitting on the floor in a classroom, clapping and smiling. They are wearing white short-sleeved shirts and khaki shorts. The background shows a bookshelf with colorful books and other students. The overall atmosphere is positive and engaged.

# BUILDING OUR FUTURE

A GUIDE TO THE LONG-TERM FACILITIES PLAN

The logo for Boston Public Schools, featuring a stylized white figure with arms raised, symbolizing a person or a flame.

BOSTON  
Public Schools



# Table of Contents

<b>1. District Snapshot</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1: Our Students	6
1.2: Our Current Schools	8
<b>2. What Do We Want For Our Students?</b>	<b>10</b>
2.1: Engaging the BPS Community	12
2.2: Defining High-Quality Student Experience	14
2.3: Model Space Summaries	16
<b>3. Challenges to Overcome</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1: What the Data Reveal	20
<b>4. How Do We Create Change?</b>	<b>24</b>
4.1: Types of Capital Planning Strategies	26
4.2: Implementation Considerations	28
4.3: BPS Annual Timeline	30
<b>5. Appendix + Data</b>	<b>32</b>
5.1: Data Dive	33
5.2: Helpful Resources	38

# 1. DISTRICT SNAPSHOT

1.1: OUR STUDENTS

1.2: OUR CURRENT SCHOOLS

To keep its commitment to preparing young people for success tomorrow, Boston must act today. The BPS long-term facilities plan is the roadmap that will guide the district as it changes its physical footprint to meet the BPS community's vision of a high-quality student experience and the needs of BPS students for generations to come.

Moving forward in creating buildings that support a high-quality student experience for every student, BPS will need to overcome physical challenges that the current buildings present. A historical lack of investment in BPS school buildings has left many schools in aging and inadequate conditions. Small buildings are not providing spaces necessary to support the community's idea of a high-quality student experience, and despite a decline in enrollment the number of BPS schools has remained relatively unchanged resulting in under-enrolled schools.

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.



# 1.1: OUR STUDENTS

Boston Public Schools is committed to providing a high-quality education with state-of-the-art facilities for every student to learn and thrive.

BPS currently serves over 48,500 students, from early education through 12th grade, who are dynamic, diverse, and brilliant. The district is committed to celebrating students' gifts and recognizing their abilities, languages, cultures, and life experiences by giving every student the opportunity to flourish while honoring their individual needs and talents.

The long-term facilities plan is directly connected to BPS' work around implementing the inclusive education plan, a roadmap for how BPS will deliver on the promise of providing an excellent inclusive, and equitable education for all students. Shifting the physical footprint of the district is an essential component of supporting the educational needs of the full diversity of learners within BPS.

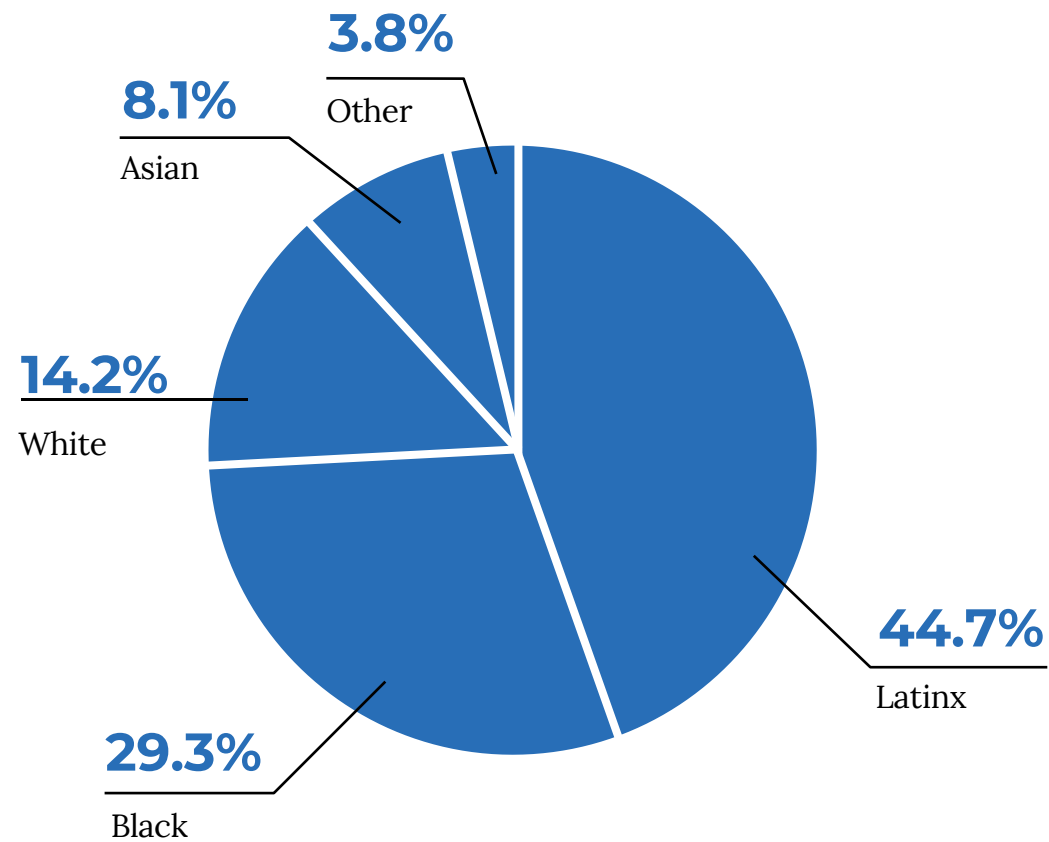


Fig. 1 : Distribution of population by race



Fig. 2 : Diversity of the BPS community

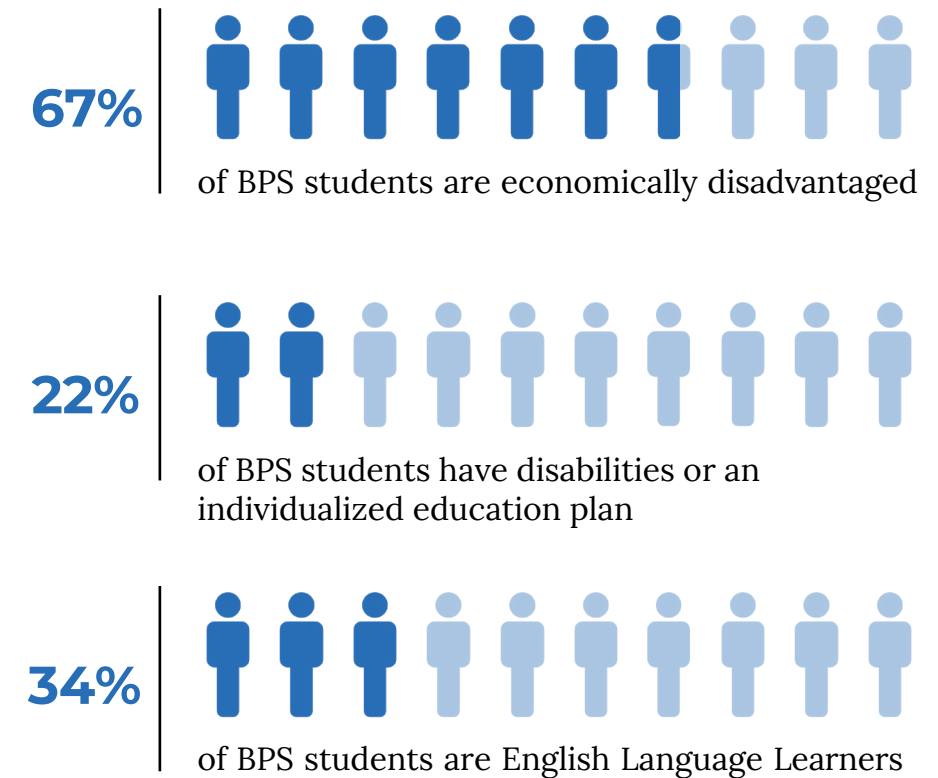


Fig. 3 : Percent of students requiring services for disabilities and multilingual learning

# 1.2: OUR CURRENT SCHOOLS

Working toward a BPS footprint that supports a high-quality student experience.

As of October 2023, BPS has 119 schools. Many of the buildings that BPS schools occupy are aging and have not seen significant upgrades. The long-term facilities plan focuses on creating or shifting spaces to support learning and a high-quality student experience for every BPS student. Investment in school buildings has not kept pace with the evolved needs of students and communities, leading to inequitable access, experiences, and outcomes for BPS students.

The plan provides a framework to support the district’s long-term vision and approach to school building capital planning efforts going forward, as it works toward ensuring a high-quality experience for every BPS student. Capital planning strategies to achieve that vision include new building construction, major renovations, grade reconfigurations, expansions, mergers, consolidations and closures.



- Early Learning Centers
- Elementary Schools
- Secondary Schools

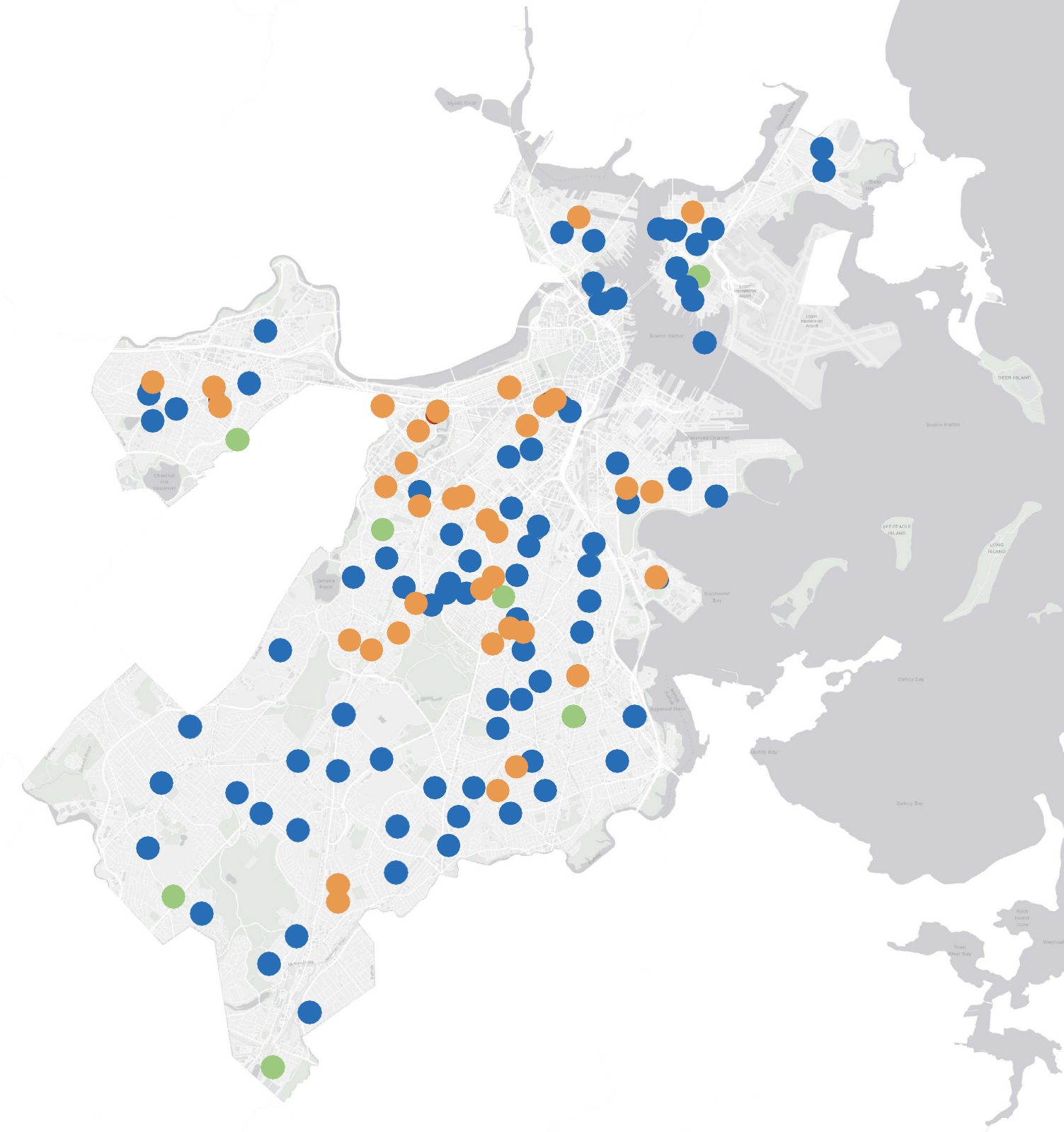


Fig. 4 : Geographic distribution of BPS schools

## 2. WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR STUDENTS?

2.1: WHAT WE HEARD FROM THE BPS COMMUNITY

2.2: DEFINING HIGH QUALITY STUDENT EXPERIENCE

2.3: MODEL SPACE SUMMARIES

Every BPS student must have equitable access to opportunities to learn and grow in school buildings that support and inspire creativity and community. Our shared vision includes:

- Rigorous and culturally affirming learning experiences
- Health, wellness, and enrichment opportunities
- A nurturing environment that promotes the well-being of students, teachers, staff, families, and other caring adults in our school communities
- Access to a high-quality student experience close to home
- Healthy, accessible, climate-resilient, and inspiring physical spaces that support individual student development

*“The hope for our schools is to get a better environment and improvement in all the public schools in our area so they can provide high quality spaces and environments for [all] our children and students. It’s important to be consistent.”*

- BPS Parent



## 2.1: ENGAGING THE BPS COMMUNITY

BPS undertook a six-month community engagement process to identify priorities across the district and ideas for the future.

### Listening Sessions

- 75 extended, small-group conversations
- 21 public listening sessions and community focus groups
- In-depth conversations with more than 500 students, families, staff, partners, and community members across Boston's neighborhoods

### Survey

- Reached **9,000** people, asking to identify which priorities should be addressed by the long term facilities plan
- At least **6,600** people who took the survey identified as belonging to one or more of the groups included in the BPS Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Policy

### High-Quality Student Experience

- Priorities identified during listening sessions and those revealed by the survey created a collective definition of what constitutes a High-Quality Student Experience
- The 4 components of the High Quality Student Experience are measured by the physical spaces and conditions of each school

### Model Space Summaries

- BPS created four Model Space Summaries that provide a set of standard physical spaces for schools of different sizes, to help guide future BPS building strategies
- Model Space Summaries are designed to provide the physical spaces that support inclusive and holistic high-quality student experiences.

The top priorities identified by BPS communities are:



**Maintenance of school facilities**



**Mental health** and social emotional supports



**Access to gyms, cafeterias, libraries, auditoriums, and other spaces that support a well-rounded educational experience**



**Consistent, high-quality academic programs and learning opportunities, including for students with disabilities and multilingual students**



**Outdoor space for learning, play, and sports**



**Indoor environmental conditions** (heating, cooling, air quality, lighting)



## 2.2: DEFINING HIGH-QUALITY STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Research shows that physical infrastructure is integral to providing students with a complete, accessible and inclusive high-quality education.

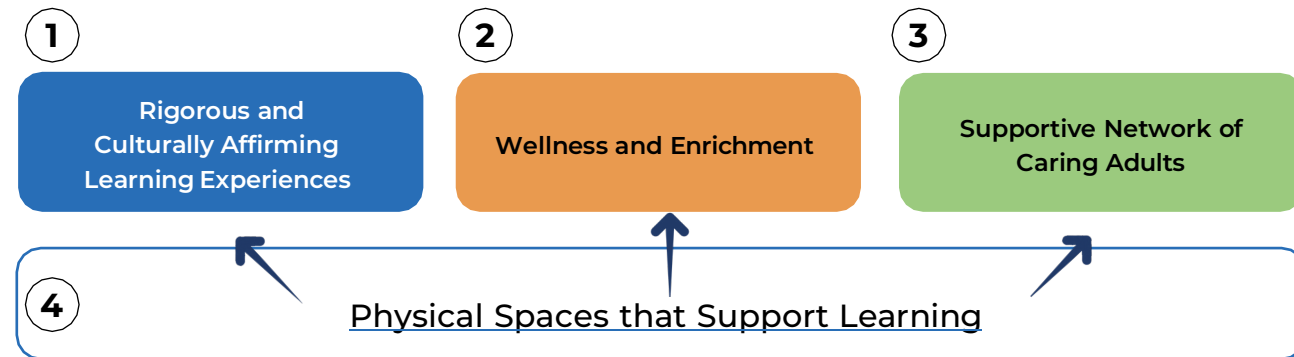
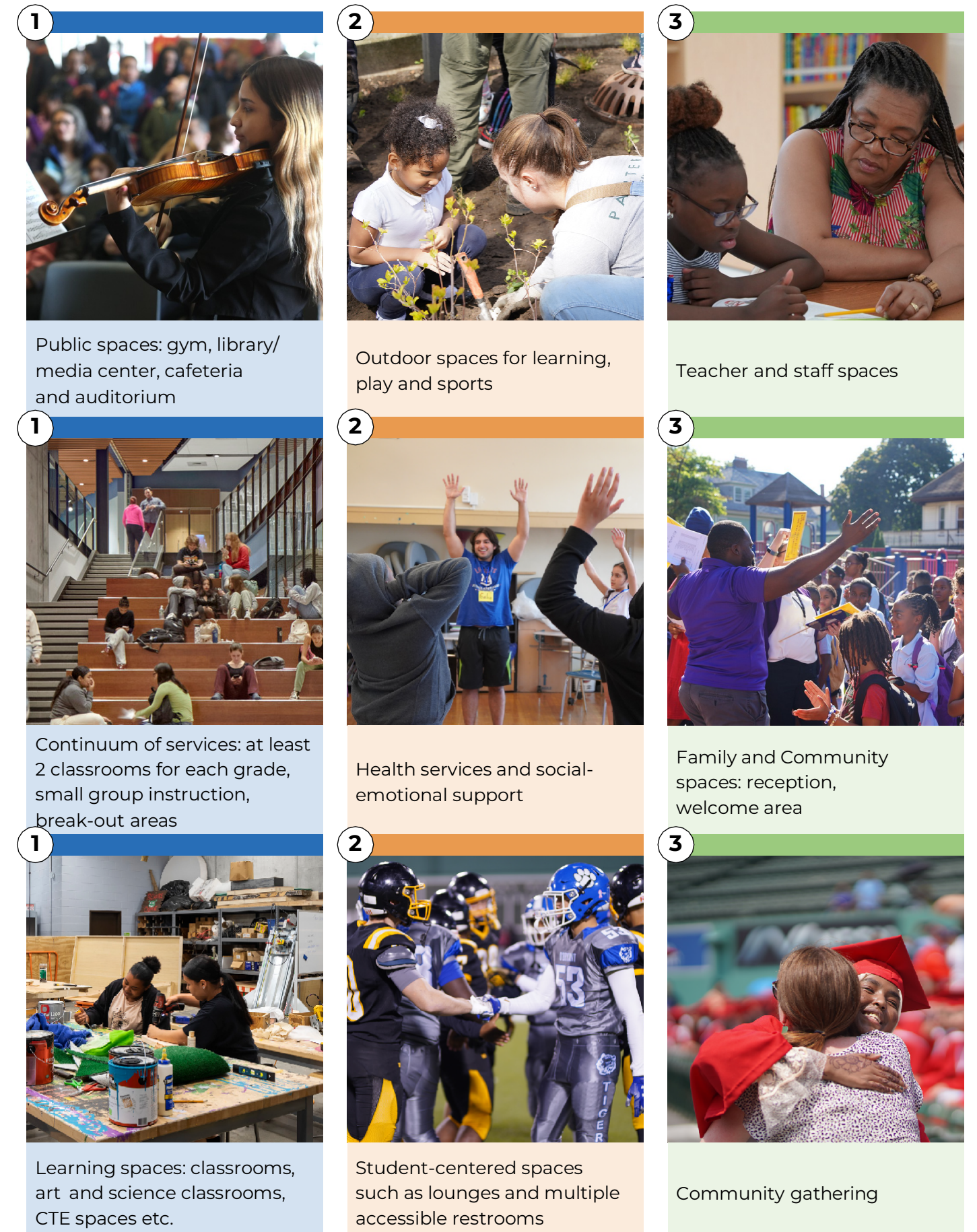


Fig. 5 : Components that make up the High-Quality Student Experience

The BPS High-Quality Student Experience, as defined by our collective community – parents and caretakers, students, educators, community members, and partners – is our vision for education in BPS, articulated by four interconnected components.

The Long Term Facilities Plan is centered around our commitment to the fourth component, strategically investing in the physical spaces shown in figure 5 to support each of the other components to realize the BPS High-Quality Student Experience for every student served by BPS.

- 1. Rigorous and Culturally Affirming Learning Experiences:** Ensuring that all students, including students with disabilities, and multilingual learners with and without disabilities, have access to high-quality instruction that is reflective of the diversity of BPS students' lived experiences and interests.
- 2. Wellness and Enrichment:** Elevating every child's health and wellness and engage students in enrichment opportunities outside of the classroom.
- 3. Supportive Network of Caring Adults:** Ensuring the necessary space and resources for educators and staff to be successful, and for families to actively engage in their school community.
- 4. Physical Spaces that Support Learning:** Accessible, inspiring, and healthy facilities that can support each component of the BPS High-Quality Student Experience.





## 2.3: MODEL SPACE SUMMARIES

Model Space Summaries offer a guide for the standard physical spaces needed in a school building to provide the BPS High-Quality Student Experience.

The Model Space Summaries are BPS-developed space standards, centered around providing high-quality learning opportunities and critical resources to significantly more students.

The Model Space Summaries are a helpful tool to evaluate each of our school buildings, allowing us to better understand the potential to renovate, expand, or rebuild our existing facilities.

Currently, only about half of our BPS facilities meet the minimum capacity of our smallest Model Space Summary, revealing an urgent need to shift our physical footprint.

The four Model Space Summaries include:

- Small preK-6 (~356 students)
- Large preK-6 (~712 students)
- Medium 7-12 (~1,150 students)
- Large 7-12 (~1,620 students)

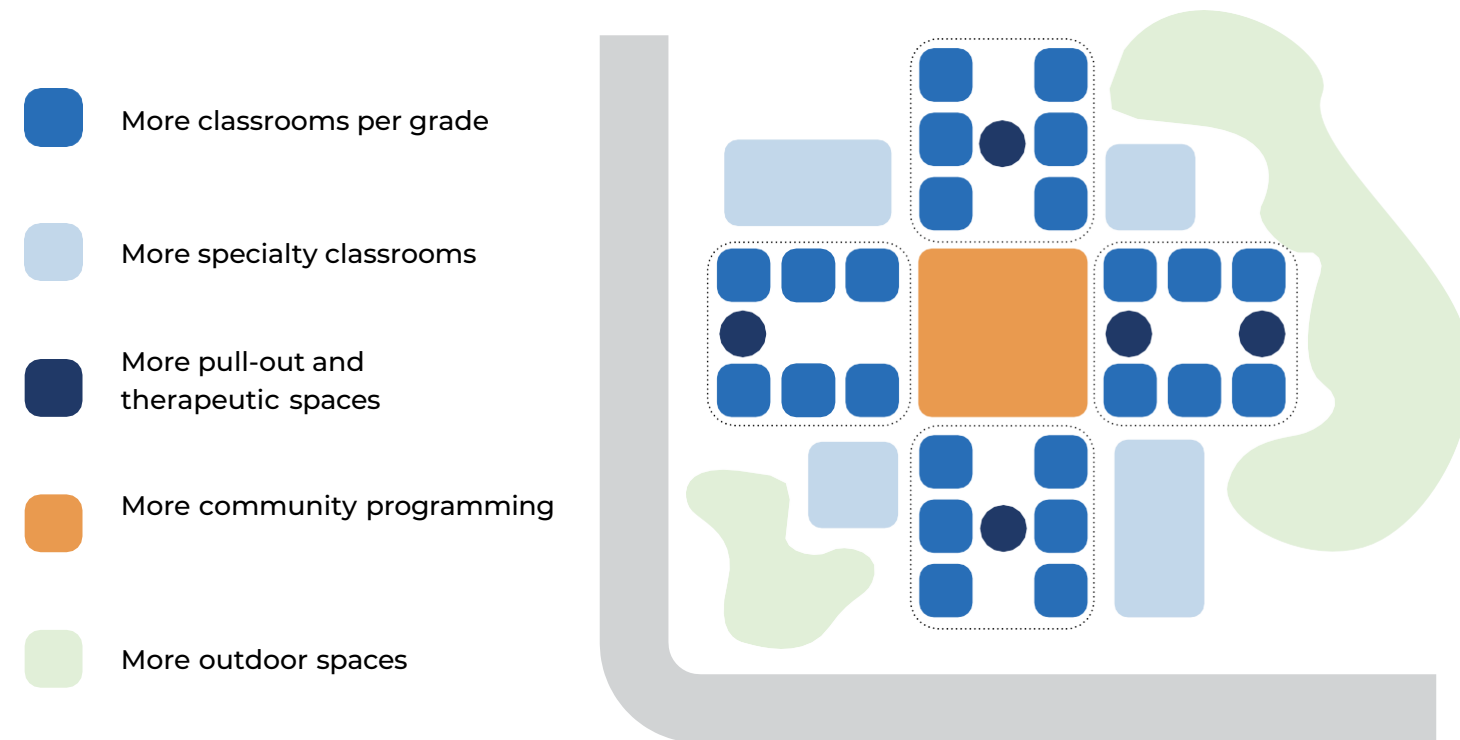
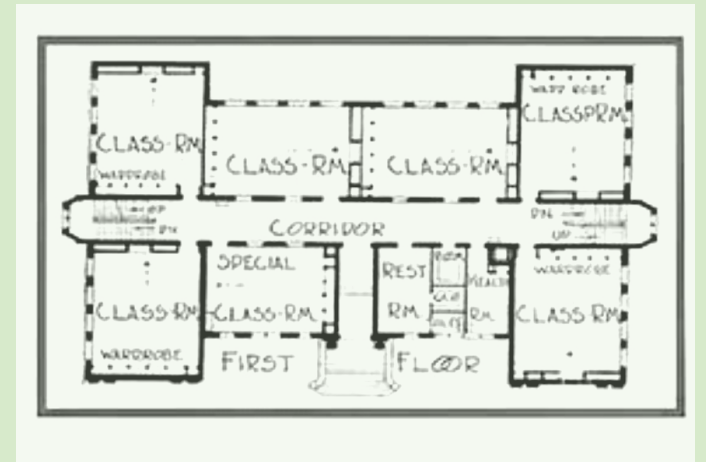


Fig. 6 : Illustrating the Model Space Summaries

### Traditional BPS School

More than 30 of the district's school buildings were built more than 100 years ago, with upwards of half constructed before World War II.

As the oldest public school district in the country, many of our school buildings reflect the outdated values and pedagogy from the last century. Our model space summaries provide a north star for the future of BPS schools as inclusive and holistic teaching and learning spaces.



A traditional Boston floor plan

\*Not every school building should or will fit a model, but Model Space Summaries will serve as a guide for future new or renovated PreK-6 or 7-12 schools.

Model Space Summaries can offer each student not only more but also a wider range of resources than a traditional school:

- Libraries, gyms, cafeterias & auditoriums
- Specialty classrooms for music, visual & performing arts
- Science labs, makerspaces & Career and Technical Education spaces
- Flexible spaces & mobile furniture
- Healthy, resilient & energy-efficient facilities
- Outdoor spaces for learning & play
- Spaces that support inclusive education
- Community-building & experiential learning

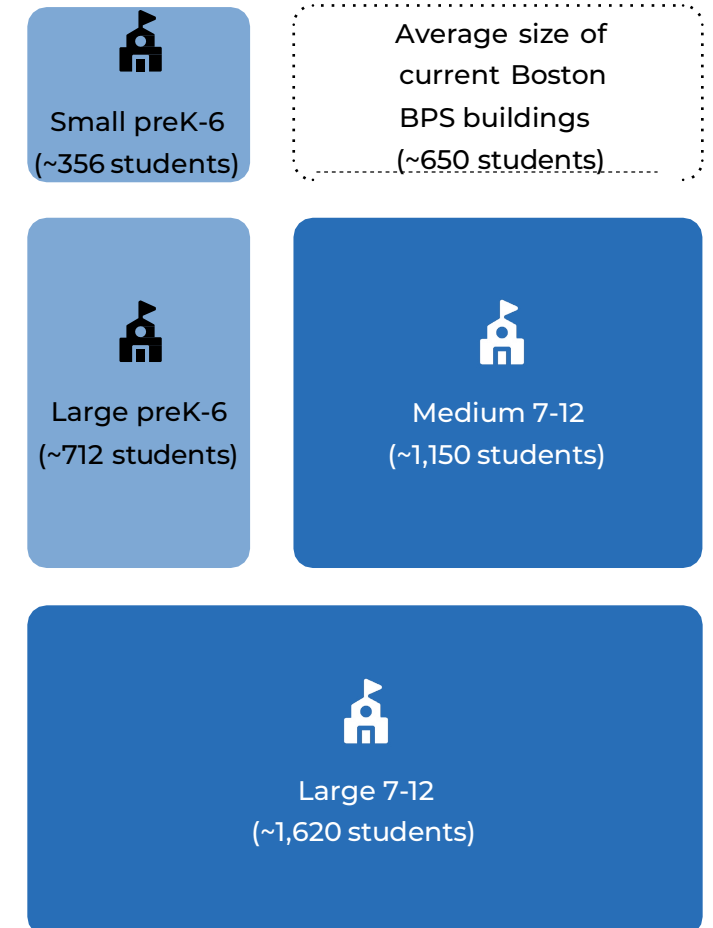


Fig. 7 : Types of Model Space Summaries by Area

# 3. CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

## 3.1: WHAT THE DATA REVEAL

Decades of limited investment and deferred decision-making in our schools has led to aging and inadequate buildings. The result has been inconsistent and inequitable student experiences, inefficient use of resources, and buildings that don't fully support a high-quality student experience for every student.

The barriers of our district's physical footprint are complex; there is not one single diagnosis with a single solution. This chapter underscores some of the challenges the district is working to address through its long-term facilities plan.

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**50%** of school buildings do not have auditoriums or cafeteriums

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**44%** of school buildings do not have full science labs

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**17%** of school buildings do not have art spaces

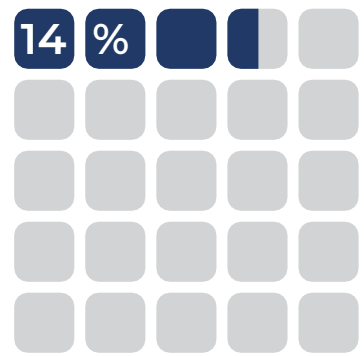
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# 3.1: WHAT THE DATA REVEAL

## Poor building facilities

Only **14%** of the BPS facilities fully support a holistic high-quality student experience.\*

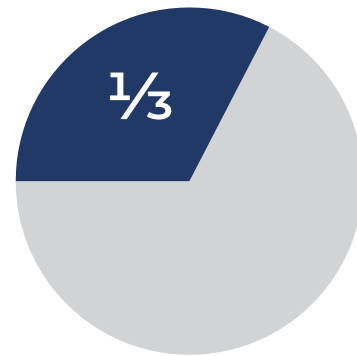


“What about special space for collaborations, or 1 on 1 teacher and student times, pull out, and also storage? Different types of spaces are needed based on the program. At some schools, all these happen in corridors.”

– Community Member

## Aged facilities

Only **1/3** of BPS schools have comprehensive heating, cooling and ventilation systems\*



“This school looks exactly like it did when I came here and lived in this neighborhood. And that is a problem.”

– BPS Family Member



### Small buildings

Only **21%** of 7-12 schools meet the minimum model space summary\*



Only **43%** of PK-6 schools meet the minimum model space summary\*

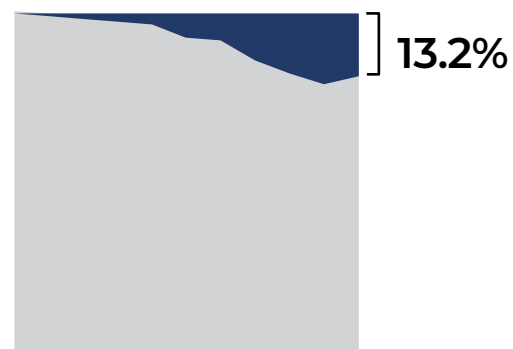


*I attended 10 schools in BPS and not all of them had the same things to offer students (library, gym). My hope would be each school in Boston offered all of the same for every student's enrichments and supports."*

– BPS Alum and Parent

### Declining enrollment

Since 2007, the BPS student population has declined by **13.2%**.



### Poor energy efficiency

BPS uses **54%** more energy on average than school districts across the country\*

\*See more information in the appendix for a deeper look at the data



# 4. HOW DO WE CREATE CHANGE?

4.1: TYPES OF CAPITAL PLANNING STRATEGIES

4.2: IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

4.3: 2024 TIMELINE

Transitioning our district to meet the current and future needs of our BPS student body will take decades. Construction and gut renovation projects typically take at least three years. This is long-term work that requires a collective effort.

Closures, mergers, or grade reconfigurations require extensive and thoughtful community-based planning to be successful, particularly when closing or merging heavily programmed schools. This work is also concurrent with the systemic changes to center inclusive education as foundational, across the district. Planning for both changes simultaneously will take meticulous coordination.

Not every BPS school will or should fit a Model Space Summary. Specialized day programs for students with very specialized needs, alternative education programs, and a mixed-delivery universal preK system that includes classrooms in BPS and community-based settings will continue to be part of BPS.

This long-term facilities plan is not a precise timeline for shifting our entire district, but it does provide the roadmap, tools, and the processes to move one step closer to that vision each year with urgency and transparency.



# 4.1: TYPES OF CAPITAL PLANNING STRATEGIES

A variety of strategies will help BPS move toward its vision of a High-Quality experience for every BPS student.

Mergers (including multiple-campus schools), closures, small-scale investments, large-scale capital investments, such as renovations, renovations with additions, and new buildings, are investment strategies to move us towards all students in BPS attending schools in buildings that have the physical spaces to support the BPS High-Quality Student Experience.

Buildings that can support a Model Space Summary may be candidates for large scale capital investments - gut renovations, renovations with additions, and new builds.

Buildings that cannot support a Model Space Summary require further analysis and are less likely to receive large scale capital investments. Regardless of whether a building can or cannot support a Model Space Summary, it will continue to receive regular maintenance and facilities updates.

Merging or consolidating school communities and closing schools are in service of moving towards a physical footprint that provides all students with access to a high-quality student experience.

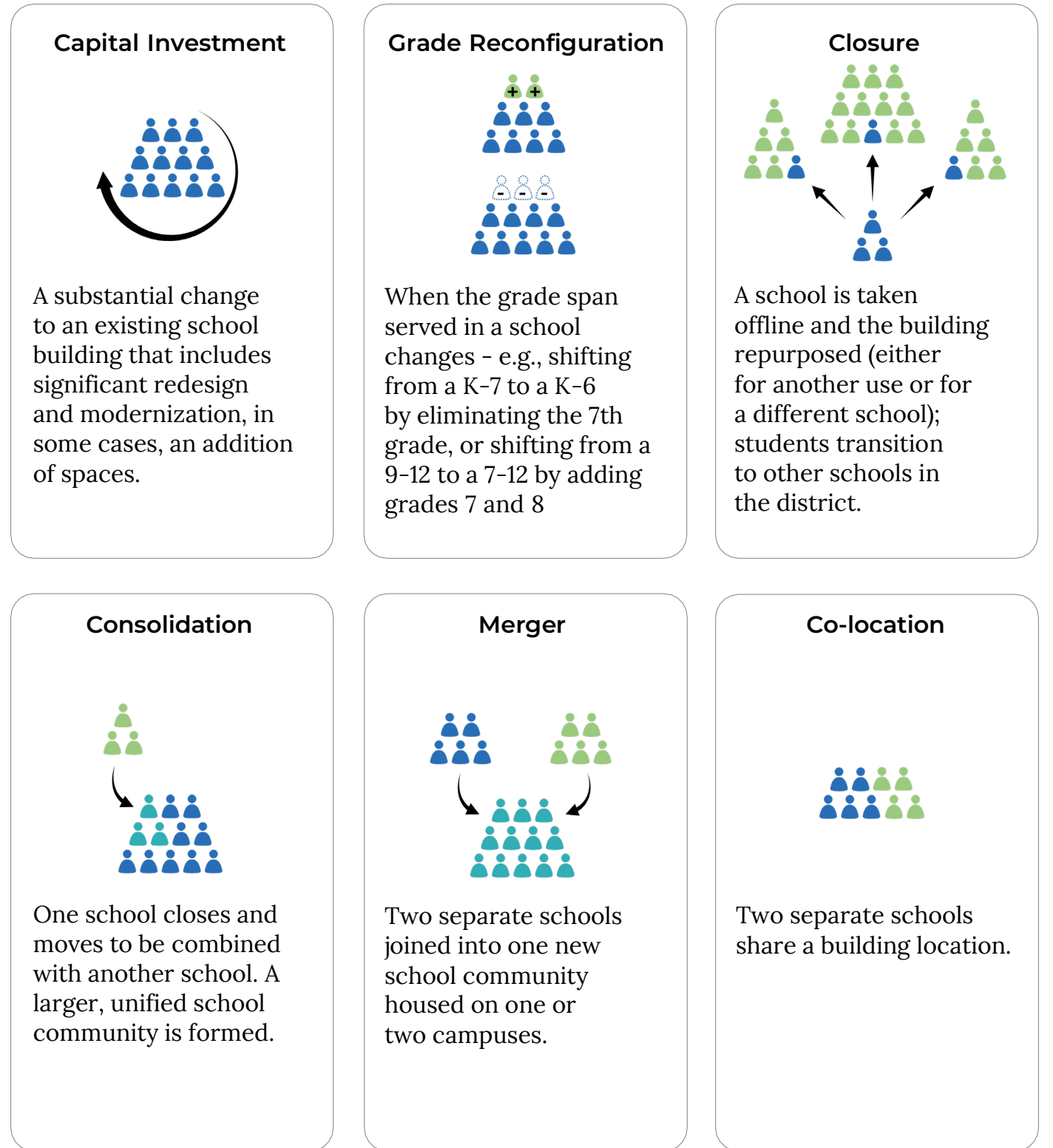


Fig. 8 : Types of Capital Planning Strategies

## 4.2: IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Factors from both an individual school and neighborhood level will guide the development of capital planning proposals.

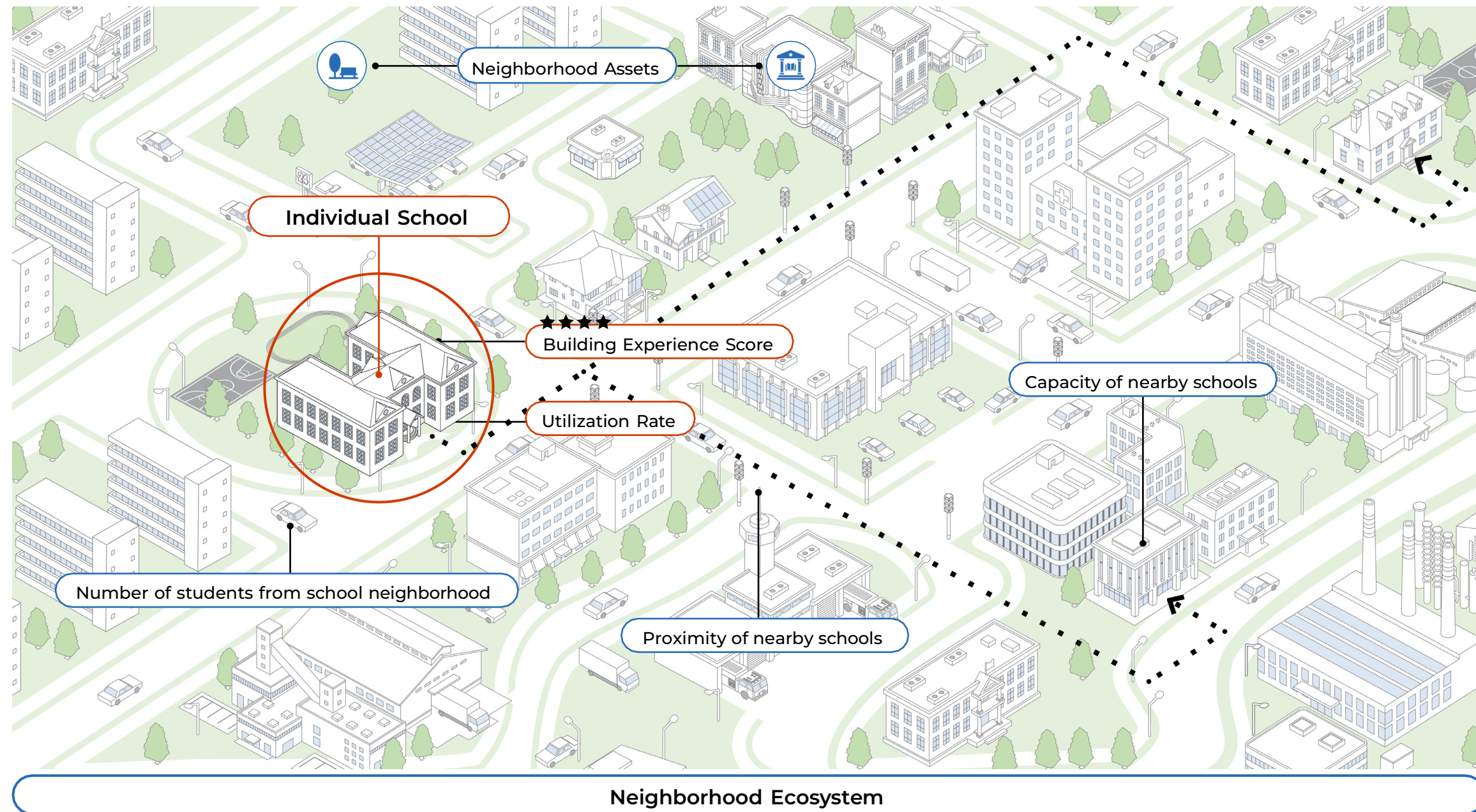


Fig. 9 : Factors to Consider for Implementation

BPS communities are deeply integrated into their neighborhoods. Therefore both individual school factors, the building experience score and the utilization rate, as well as ecosystemic factors that look beyond the school under consideration are equally important.

The neighborhood factors range from the capacity of schools nearby and their proximity, how many students travel from outside the current neighborhood to attend school and assets the neighborhood currently has.

The **utilization rate** is one way to measure the building's excess capacity. The utilization rate is calculated by dividing the number of students enrolled in a school by the capacity of the physical school building.

The **Building Experience Score** assesses the current ability of the building and its physical spaces to support all different aspects that make up the BPS High-Quality Student Experience. It does not evaluate the school community or the quality of teaching and learning happening inside the building.

## 4.3: BPS ANNUAL TIMELINE

2024 is a learning year for BPS, starting with alignment of stakeholders, community outreach and transition planning for proposals. This will continue as an annual cycle of evaluations.

The chart below outlines a timeline for new 2024 capital planning proposals to continue our work toward ensuring that every BPS student has access to the BPS High-Quality Student Experience close to home. Proposals may include new investments,

mergers, and closures. The Racial Equity Planning Tool will be used for each proposal. We will set aside time for reflection and refinement on the process and outcomes to make revisions to the timeline and community involvement for future years.

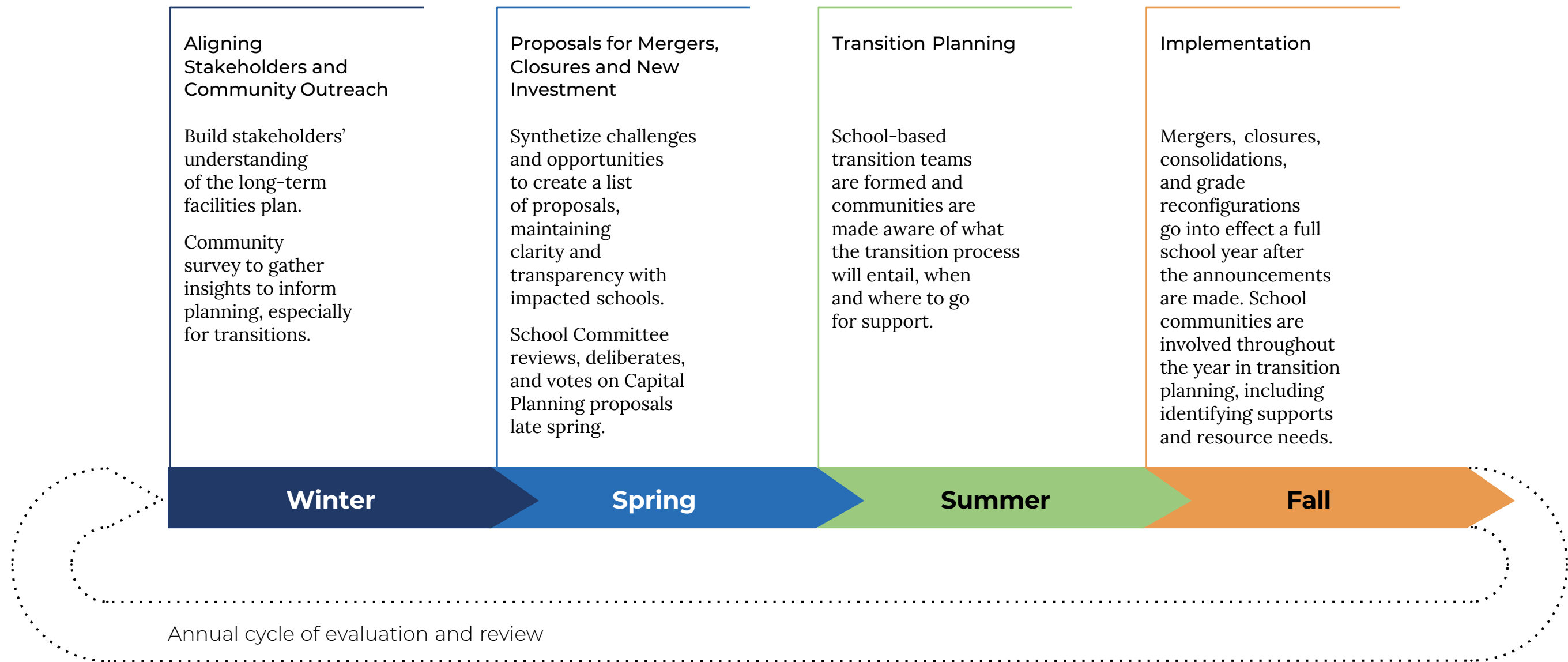


Fig. 10 : Timeline



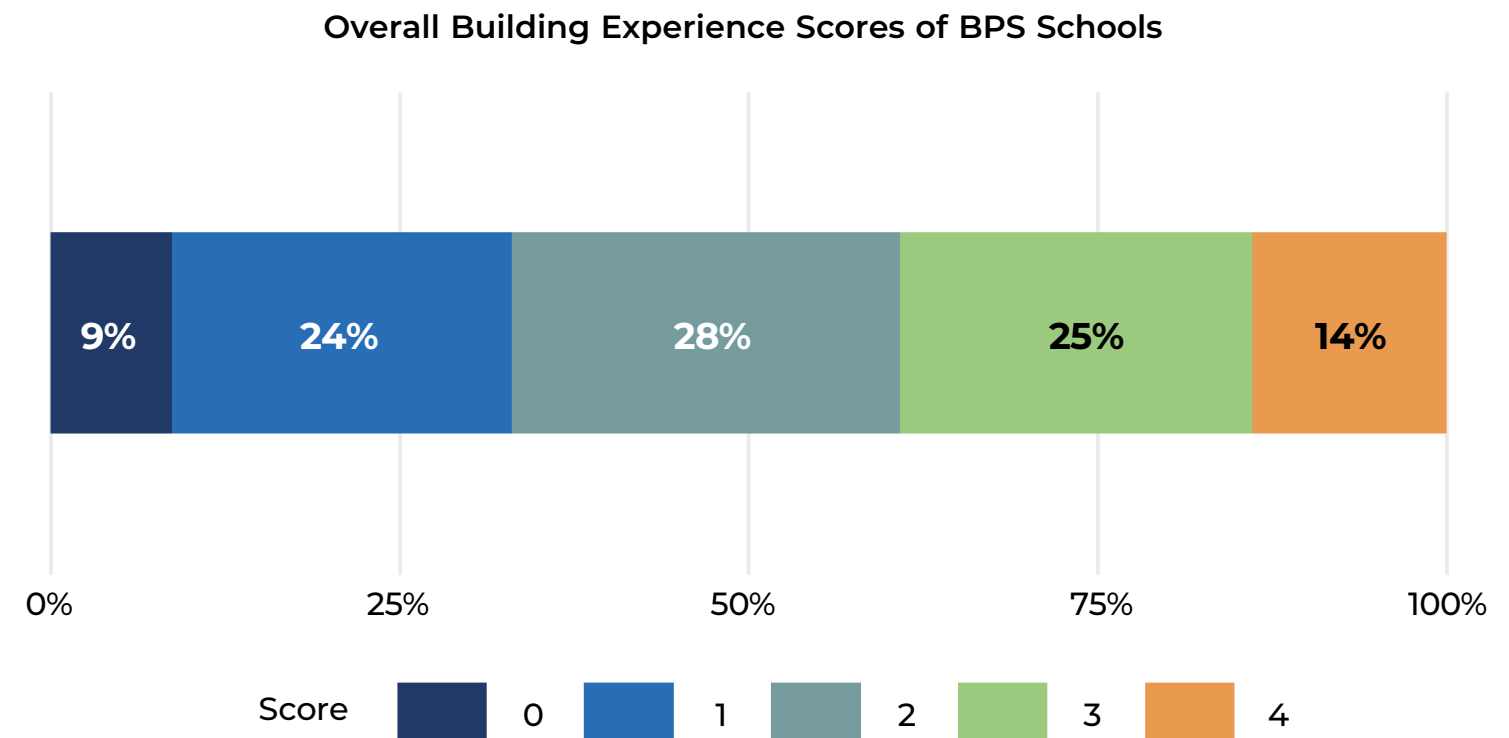
# 5. APPENDIX + DATA

## 5.1 DATA DIVE

## 5.2 HELPFUL RESOURCES

# 5.1: DATA DIVE POOR BUILDING CONDITIONS

▶ Only 14% of the BPS facilities are fully supporting a holistic high quality student experience.



To assess whether BPS school buildings can currently meet the High-Quality Student Experience, BPS developed the Building Experience Score.

The Experience Score is a comprehensive metric ranging from 0 to 4, with 4 being the highest possible score, achieving a satisfactory grade in all four components of the High-Quality Student Experience. The score is a combined metric measuring the number and quality of existing spaces, also

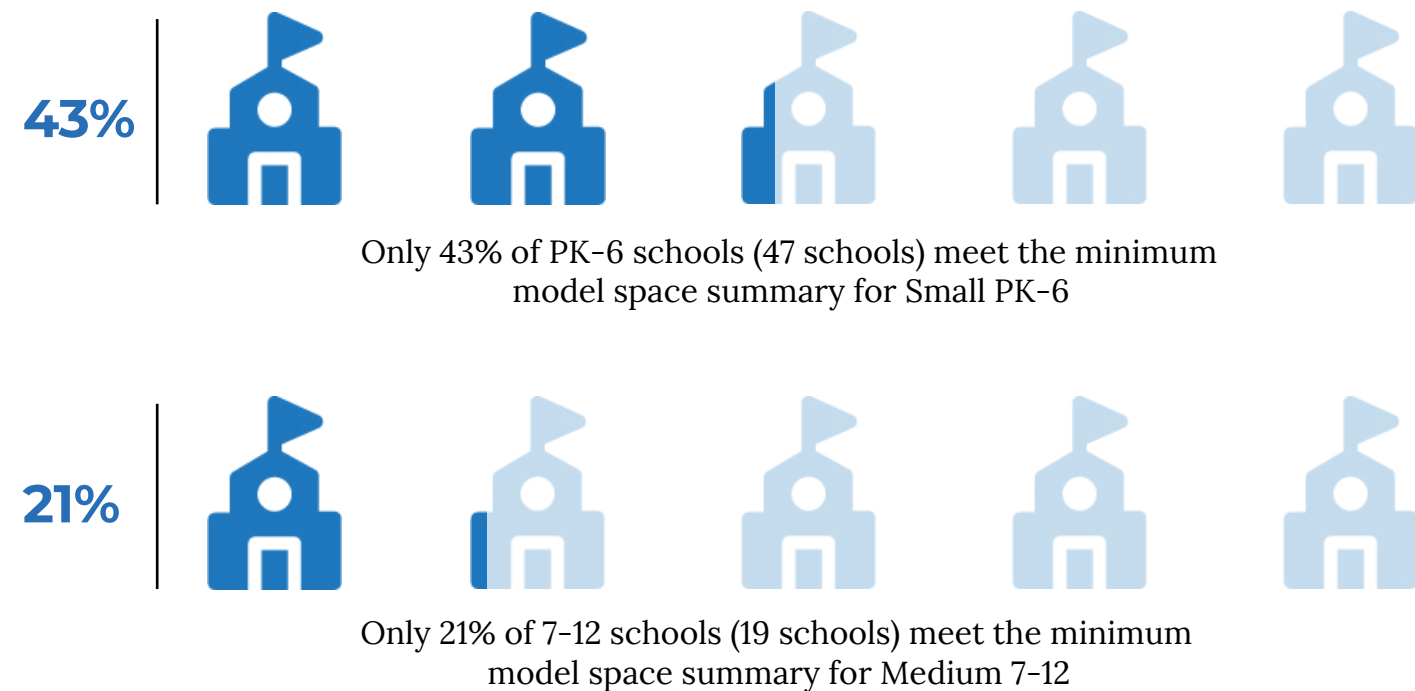
taking into account facilities conditions, modernization score and ADA accessibility.

More than 60% of the BPS schools received a Building Experience Score of 2 or below, indicating significant room for improvement in critical areas. Conversely, a mere 14% attained a satisfactory score in all four categories, underscoring the challenges and work ahead in ensuring equitable access to school buildings that support the BPS High-Quality Student Experience.

# SIZE OF BUILDINGS

Many of BPS buildings do not include the spaces necessary to support the High-Quality Student Experience as collectively defined by our community.

BPS Buildings and Model Space Summaries



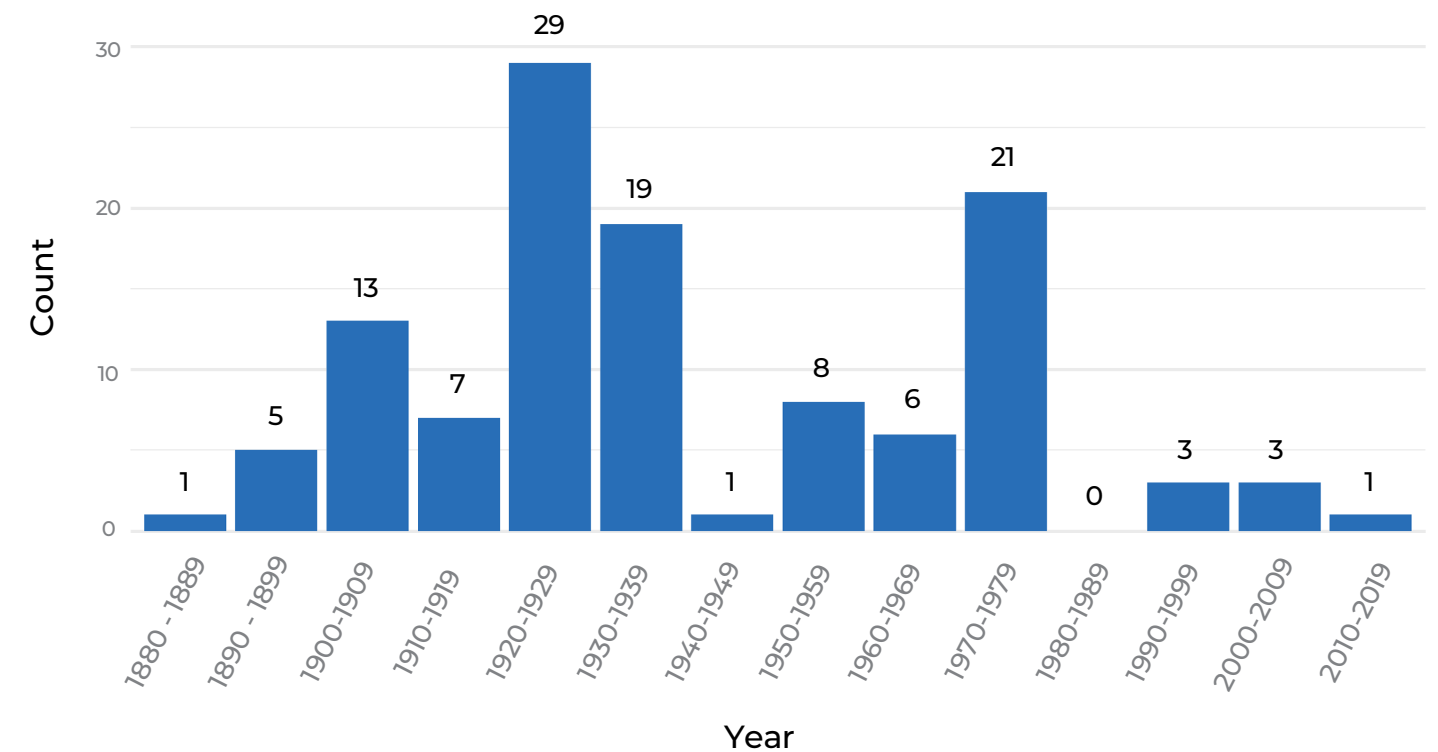
In some places, we have schools that are too small to host a range of programming and provide a continuum of services. In many areas of Boston, if students cannot access a high-quality experience close to home, they may attend schools across the city – particularly if they need specific programs or services. This has ripple effects throughout the system. Certain schools serve a greater number of students with

higher needs in order to compensate for district-wide inequities. For example, out of 33 high schools, only five serve a majority of students with disabilities whose IEPs require substantially separate settings (53%) and students in Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) or Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) programs (61%).

# AGED FACILITIES

Many BPS buildings are old and do not provide the spaces to support the BPS High-Quality Student Experience.

BPS Buildings Distributed by Age



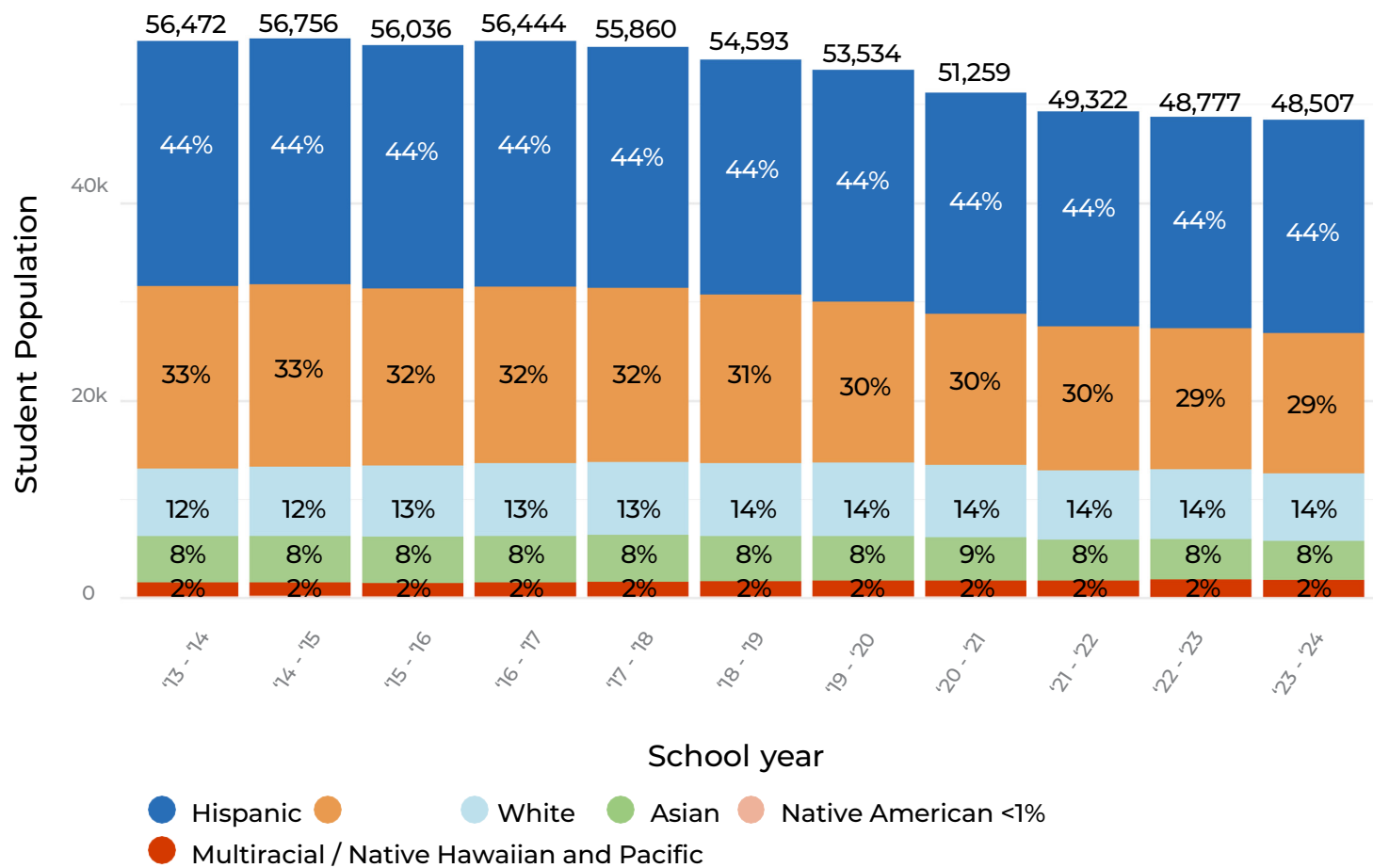
More than 30 of our schools (about 25%) are 100 years old or older, and only about one-third have comprehensive heating, cooling, and ventilation systems.

Many of our schools were not built to support the type of holistic and experiential learning that helps students build the skills they need to succeed in a constantly evolving world and rapidly emerging industries.

# DECLINING ENROLLMENT

BPS student enrollment has been declining, and demographics are changing.

BPS Student Population by Race, 2013 - 2023



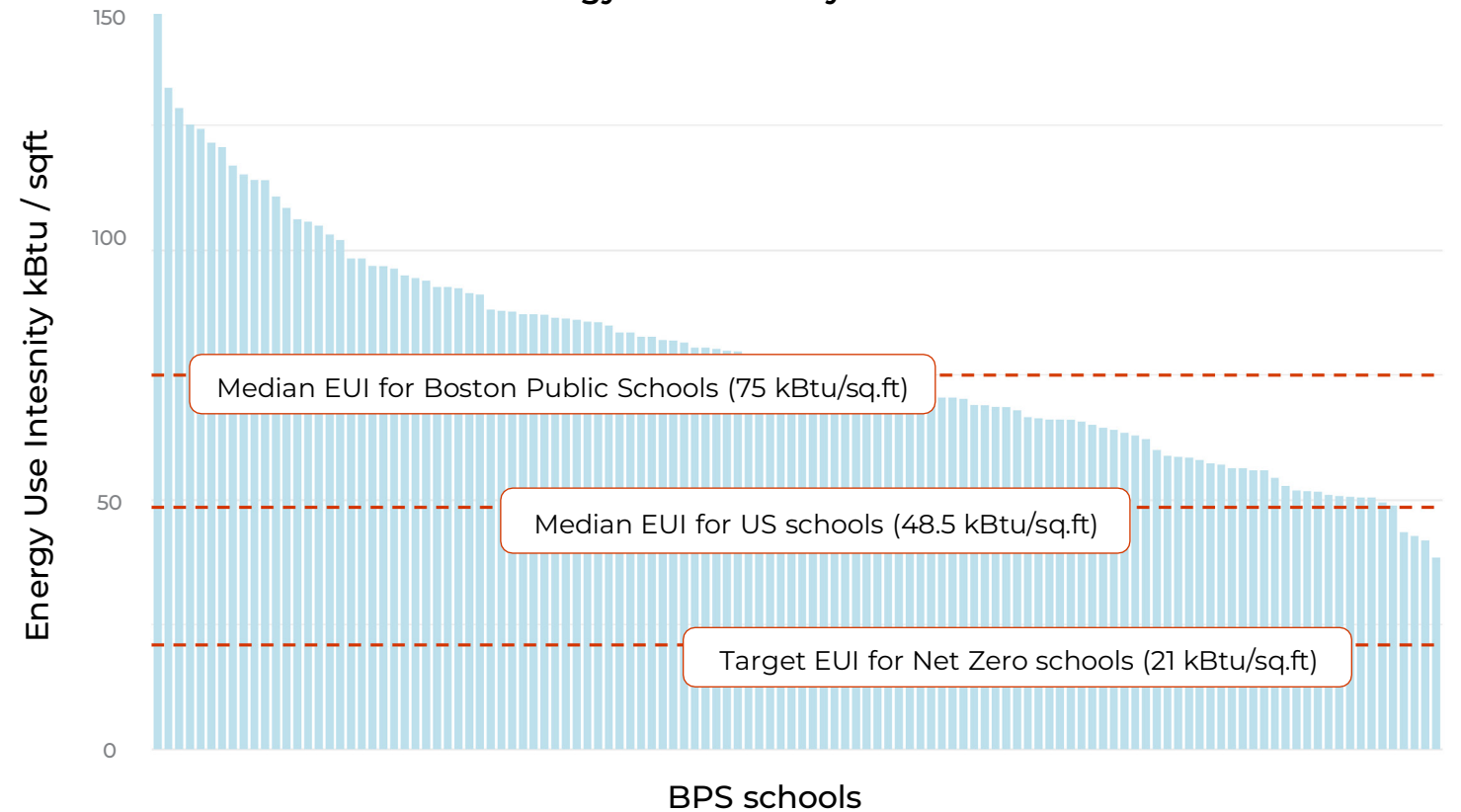
The figure above shows the changing racial composition of the BPS student population over a 10-year period from SY 2013-2014 to SY 2022-2023. Since 2007, BPS has seen a 13.2% decline in overall student enrollment, including a 12.4% decline in the percentage of Black/African American students. At the same time, the percentage of Latinx/Hispanic students at BPS has

increased from 34.2% in 2007 to 44.7% in 2023, a 10.5% increase. Despite a decline in enrollment, the number of BPS schools has remained relatively unchanged, resulting in under-enrolled schools and district resources stretched too thin across too many school communities. The implications of maintaining excess capacity are both financial and programmatic.

# POOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY

BPS buildings use much more energy than schools nationwide and are far from meeting modern sustainability targets.

Energy Use Intensity of BPS Schools



Currently, Boston Public Schools use more energy on average than other US school districts. The graph above illustrates the 2022 Energy Use Intensity (EUI) distribution across Boston Public Schools, with each bar representing an individual school. EUI, measured in kilo British thermal units per square foot (kBtu/sq ft), quantifies a building's energy consumption relative to its size.

**Net Zero** means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible, with any remaining emissions re-absorbed from the atmosphere. **Target EUI** is the amount of energy divided by the area of the building needed to achieve Net Zero in Boston.

## 5.2: HELPFUL RESOURCES

BPS provides online resources to better understand the material presented in this booklet and to answer any questions you might have.

Click the link or scan the QR code below to find information online.

[www.boston.gov/gnd-bps](http://www.boston.gov/gnd-bps)



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Icons: Noun Project