The Path Forward

School Autonomy and Its Implications for the Future of Boston's Public Schools

Prepared by
Education Resource Strategies
and
Center for Collaborative Education

for
The Boston Foundation
and
Boston Public Schools

BOSTON Public Schools
Focus on Children

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June 2014

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Contents

Foreword

Boston is the birthplace of public education in the United States and, since the mid-1990s, has also been a leader in demonstrating the opportunities that school autonomy can offer. Last fall, nearly 20 years after we launched our first autonomous schools, we decided to tackle a critical question facing our system: *what role should school-based autonomy, in its various forms, play in improving student outcomes?* Linda Nathan, an early leader in the development of Boston's Pilot Schools, including as former co-headmaster of Fenway High School and founding headmaster of Boston Arts Academy, has been leading this effort.

Over the past eight months, members of our research team—comprised of professionals from Education Resource Strategies, the Center for Collaborative Education and BPS—have spoken with well over 100 school leaders, district leaders, teachers and others, reviewed existing data and conducted new analysis on student performance, student assignment and resource allocation. We have examined how five other large urban districts—Baltimore City, Denver, Lawrence, Los Angeles and New York City—assign and manage school-level flexibility, and consulted with an advisory group of local and national education leaders to inform the findings and recommendations.

Our study explores the question of how BPS can strengthen and support autonomy and accountability across its portfolio to promote innovation and expand access to equity and high performance. Some of the specific questions guiding this work are:

- Should all schools within BPS operate within autonomous structures?
- Is autonomy a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for success?
- How and under what conditions should autonomy be granted?
- Should autonomy be withdrawn based on certain conditions?
- In what areas should autonomy be granted (governance, curriculum/assessment, scheduling/calendar, staffing, budget, professional development)?

Notably, this is not a study about autonomous schools; it is a study on the role and impact of autonomy for school leaders and their teams across the system. Many of our highest-performing schools are traditional schools. Many of our highest performing schools are autonomous schools. Our goal is to outline a vision for if, how and when school autonomy can be used as a tool to help eliminate achievement gaps and improve outcomes for all students. Our obligation is to ensure that we determine and then provide the conditions for success in all schools so that every student in Boston achieves to his or her highest potential.

Effective autonomy must be paired with accountability. We must establish clearly-defined roles and boundaries for schools and central offices alike. From this research we will develop recommendations to help us create the conditions for success in *all* of our District's schools to serve *all* of our students and families well in the decades to come.

John McDonough
Interim Superintendent
Boston Public Schools

Preface

This important and detailed report on autonomy in Boston's schools, which we co-sponsored with the Boston Public Schools, brings the total number of reports the Boston Foundation has released on K-12 education over the last dozen years to 20. Our research and public policy work have helped to increase the number of autonomous schools in Boston and reflect our deep commitment to providing fresh information and civic leadership for what we consider to be the most important tool we have to level the playing field for Boston's population—a first-class education and a path to college.

We fully support the recommendations made in this report and commend Interim Superintendent John McDonough for commissioning it and his Special Assistant Linda Nathan for overseeing it. And we thank both Education Resource Strategies and the Center for Collaborative Education for their work.

The Boston Foundation seeks to extend the kinds of autonomies enjoyed by charter schools, Pilot Schools, Horace Mann Charters, Commonwealth Charters and Turnaround Schools to all schools in Boston. And at the state level, through the Race to the Top Coalition, we are working with civic, business and community organizations to expand the number of charter schools, provide turnaround powers to more schools, and give thousands of students who are stuck in underperforming schools or on charter waiting lists new hope across Massachusetts. Our efforts are grounded in the success we have seen.

Just last year, a Stanford University report that looked at our state's charter schools, which benefit from the autonomies described in this report, found dramatic results, especially in Boston. For instance, Boston charter students had gains equating more than 12 months of additional learning in a year in reading and 13 additional months in math. The report's authors actually said that Boston's charters have a real chance to "close the achievement gap."

But I want to be clear. Giving a principal power to make change doesn't guarantee success. Making the school day longer, or extending the school year doesn't guarantee success.

Success takes hard work. It takes visionary leadership. It takes partnerships and citizenship. And a growing body of evidence suggests that to move schools forward, you need to break the old command and control model. Autonomy is becoming a necessary precondition of success. That is what we're proving in Boston.

Boston has benefitted from talented district leaders over the years who have been reform friendly and focused on improving outcomes for students. We are a national leader because we have simultaneously been re-designing the governance and structures of public schools in our city, freeing up educators to develop structures and strategies that will meet the needs of their students.

We're unleashing the creativity of educators, and working to bring it to scale across the city. Pair this with a talented workforce, and Boston can be the first city in America to halt the epic catastrophe that has been urban schooling. If it is within our power to extend the extraordinary results we're seeing to more children—how can we possibly hold back?

Paul S. Grogan
President & CEO
The Boston Foundation

Executive Summary

Boston Public Schools is at a crossroads. Nearly one-third of the system's schools operate under one of several "autonomy" structures, where school leaders have increased flexibility regarding staffing and other resources, and choice data indicate parents are far more likely to preference these schools over so-called "traditional" schools.

However, the complex and varied rules governing the system's autonomous schools hinder the ability of district and school leaders to operate effectively. School leaders are increasingly dissatisfied with their experience in Boston, contributing to high leadership turnover. The system lacks a clear, coherent vision for how autonomy can empower school leadership teams in their efforts to improve educational outcomes for every student.

This paper explores the question of how Boston Public Schools can strengthen and support autonomy and accountability across its portfolio to promote innovation for equity and high performance. It is the culmination of eight months of "action research" that included hundreds of hours of one-on-one interviews, group discussions and workshops among district leaders, school leaders, teachers and others with a deep interest in the success of Boston's students. The findings and recommendations also draw on detailed investigations of how five other urban school systems are navigating many of the same challenges that Boston faces today.

This is a study on the role and impact of autonomy for school leaders and their teams across the system—not a study only of autonomous schools. This is an important distinction. District and state policies regarding school-based autonomy—whether that autonomy is provided to a subset of schools or all schools in the system—have an impact on *all* schools, *all* teachers, *all* administrators and *all* students.

For example, in Boston, traditional schools have less purchasing power and less formal flexibility than autonomous schools. Understandably, much debate focuses on this inequity, and Boston's leaders share a desire to create a more equitable system.

However, it turns out that leaders of Boston's most effective schools, measured by both student achievement and student growth and regardless of autonomy status, are organizing resources in their buildings in similar, strategic ways. The difference is, leaders at autonomous schools exercise flexibilities that have been formally granted to their schools (if not consistently recognized by the district), while leaders in traditional schools typically must develop "work-arounds" and "one-off solutions" to put many of the highest-potential strategies in place.

Therefore, the most critical question for Boston is, "how can the system provide *all* school leaders with the flexibility to execute resource strategies that, based on academic research and local experience, can have the greatest impact on student achievement?"

As the findings in Boston and elsewhere demonstrate, changes in district policy are only part of the answer. School leaders must have the capacity to take advantage of this increased resource flexibility. Today in Boston, nearly half of all district schools are led by a principal or headmaster who has been in her position for less than three years, including 27% of schools that employ a first-year school leader. In addition, district support for principals must improve; as few as 2% of principals rate the quality of some district services "excellent," while the district's new network structure has been stretched thin with many responsibilities, limiting its first-year impact. Autonomy works best in concert with rigorous, transparent accountability, applied consistently to all schools.

There is real promise in Boston. To a person, teachers, school leaders, district leaders and other stakeholders share the district's goal of "transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools." The challenge in Boston at this period of transition is to break out of historical patterns and create a new, shared approach that unleashes the potential of teachers and leaders at all levels. This includes:

1. Establishing the district's vision as a "system of schools" with consistent high expectations, support, and accountability for performance.
2. Extending maximum flexibility to all district schools, and encouraging any school that is ready and has capacity to pursue adopting an autonomous schools model.
3. Decentralizing non-core central services to the maximum extent feasible, and transitioning to a purchased services model for the remaining non-core central services.
4. Creating a Cabinet-level Office of Innovation, reporting to the Superintendent, to incubate and oversee development of new school designs and conversions to autonomous school models, and scale currently successful autonomous school designs based on community needs and demands.
5. Cultivating and supporting leaders and leadership teams to effectively use their flexibilities to make wise resource decisions that enable school and student improvement.
6. Further constructing and implementing a school accountability model for all district schools that emphasizes effective practice and student success, with clear supports and consequences based on school performance.
7. Prioritizing candidates for the Superintendent position who are committed to sustaining a system of high-performing schools that balances autonomy and accountability, with a track record of uniting people in a culture that values collaboration, leadership and performance.

Taken together, these actions have the potential to empower a force of increasingly effective school leaders, who will be able to more strategically organize resources to drive student learning across a diversity of programs, while fostering innovation, increasing teacher voice and ultimately, making it possible for all students to learn, grow and ultimately realize our vision for The BPS Graduate.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 1993, the Massachusetts Legislature passed the Education Reform Act, which created the first charter schools in the Commonwealth. Charter schools promised freedom from both union and school department rules and restrictions as a way to enable a more radical transformation in student progress. Faced with the potential for such flexibility for the first time, several BPS schools considered or applied for charter status.

However, many of these school leaders, valuing the collaboration and scale that a system could offer, preferred to remain in the district. As a result of discussions among district, school and union leaders, the Boston Public Schools created its first Pilot Schools[1] and granted them expanded autonomy over staffing, hiring, schedule, curriculum, assessment, professional development and budget.

As these schools' leaders worked together, they began to share their experiences—in how they were educating children, how they were organizing resources and, crucially, how they were engaging with the district office. They soon organized into their own network, facilitated by the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE), which provided crucial support for these schools and advocated on their behalf with the district.[2] Over time, Pilots were joined by other types of autonomous schools, including Horace Mann Charters (1998) and Innovation (2011) schools.

Next fall, 32% of Boston Public School students will attend some type of autonomous school, and choice data indicate parents are far more likely to preference these schools over so-called "traditional" schools **(**in **Appendices 1** and **10)**. Yet, school, district and community leaders all express widespread unease about the current approach, observing that:

- The rules governing flexibilities for different types of schools are confusing and difficult to uphold from the central office. As a result, autonomous schools must advocate for themselves in a bureaucratic system that, in spite of individuals' best intentions, imposes limits on school-level flexibility;
- Choosing "autonomy status" has become an escape valve for entrepreneurial leaders who want to free themselves from the constraints that traditional schools face;
- In spite of the district's moves toward equity with Weighted Student Funding, differential approaches to hiring and resource allocation across school types are creating resource inequities that disadvantage the two-thirds of students that remain in the traditional system.[3]
- It is particularly challenging, absent a clearly articulated vision, to find the appropriate balance between empowering school leadership teams with autonomy and holding those teams accountable for performance.

At the same time, out-of-district charter school enrollment is growing 15 times faster than the overall student-age population in Boston, while the Boston Public Schools' student population is growing at half the rate of the overall local student population. **(Appendix 2)** In other words, in a resource-constrained environment where funding generally is directed to where students are being educated, students and resources are flowing away from schools with the least flexibility over resources (district schools, especially traditional schools) and toward schools with the most flexibility over resources (Commonwealth Charter, Pilot, Horace Mann, and Innovation schools).

This study explores the question of how the Boston Public Schools "can strengthen and support autonomy and accountability across its portfolio to promote innovation for equity and high performance."[4] Over a period of eight months, researchers from BPS, Education Resource Strategies and the Center for Collaborative Education spoke with well over 100 school leaders, district leaders, teachers and others; reviewed existing data and conducted new analysis on student performance, student assignment and resource allocation; and examined how other large urban districts assign and manage school-level flexibility. The research team also convened a unique, cross-functional working

group of more than thirty district and school leaders who met monthly to discuss some of the most difficult questions Boston faces related to school-based autonomy, and consulted with an advisory group of education leaders from Boston and across the country to inform the findings and recommendations.

The team's research and analysis was grounded in a set of basic beliefs that were reinforced over the course of the study:

- **In Boston as in other communities, school-based autonomy is a crucial but not sufficient ingredient for creating and sustaining excellence in individual schools.** Success requires arming school leaders with the flexibility to use resources and supports strategically—along with talented teachers and leaders, high-quality supports and an equitable approach to allocating resources.
- **High-performing systems are a powerful force for student improvement on a large scale.** As one scholar observes, "Principals and teachers can do only so much by themselves."[5] A well-functioning system of schools provides many services at scale (e.g., human resource and budget processes, core curriculum[6]) while creating the conditions where school leaders and teachers can focus their energies on improving student outcomes.
- **However, there is a natural tension between autonomy and operating as a single system.** The dictionary definition of autonomy is "freedom from" something or someone. Much of the conversation among the cross-functional working group reflected this tension, and how to find what one observer calls the "thoughtful balance between customization and coherence."[7]
- **Boston needs a clear vision for the role of school-level autonomy in ensuring high performing schools for every child.** The absence of such a vision has created a void that makes it exceedingly difficult for school leaders and district leaders to stay on the same page about how they will collaboratively improve school quality and student outcomes.
- **To achieve its vision of becoming a "world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools," the system must adjust course in significant ways or risk becoming a relic of history.** This will require leadership and prioritization from the very top, a willingness among all parties to actively seek common ground, and an openness to the type of collaboration, teamwork and compromise that are hallmarks of all high-performing organizations. The stakes are too high—for students, staff and the district as a whole—for anything less.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology and Approach

This study has been conducted as "action research"—a mixed-methods, iterative approach to investigating the most important issues related to school-based autonomy in BPS even as they continue to rapidly evolve. The research team collected a large body of qualitative data, including interviews and focus groups with more than 100 Boston teachers, school leaders, administrators, and external stakeholders and surveys from more than 50 BPS principals. Observations and questions from the qualitative research informed analysis of multiple quantitative datasets, which allowed the team to test emerging findings and surface new questions throughout the project. Rich monthly discussions with a Cross-Functional Working Group of more than thirty school leaders and Central Office administrators allowed us to validate our findings against the experiences of seasoned practitioners. National research on comparison groups and a convening of an external advisory group injected outside perspectives to this iterative research process.

Cross-Functional Working Group

From the beginning of the research, the goal was not just to understand the issues but to facilitate problem-solving among a broad group of BPS stakeholders. The Cross-Functional Working Group of Central Office leaders and school leaders met monthly for two to four hours at a time, from October 2013 through April 2014, for a total of seven meetings. These discussions maintained a focus on the most difficult challenges in the system, including deep dives into staffing and hiring, discretionary services and accountability. While the research team planned the meeting agenda and facilitated the discussion, the school leaders and district staff generated questions for discussion and helped shape the recommendations within this report. **(Appendix 3)**

Interviews, Focus Groups and Discussions

To understand how school autonomy affects individuals across the BPS system, the research team spoke to more than 30 district staff representing almost every BPS department, along with 80 teachers and leaders from every school type. Most of these conversations were formal interviews with a standardized interview protocol. At the time of this report, we have conducted two teacher discussion groups, and plans for further discussions with teachers are ongoing. **(Appendix 4)**

Data Analysis

To provide a quantitative picture of the students attending schools of various types, the research team analyzed district and state data on student demographics, family choice data, and student performance and growth. BPS budget data was used to compare how schools used different resources, and the schedules and calendars of different schools were used to calculate the use of staff and student time.

Documentation of School-Based Autonomies

With the addition of new school types, each with unique agreements with the district or the state, it has become increasingly difficult for staff in schools and Central Office staff to track the current state of agreed autonomies at different schools. To inform the research and provide BPS with baseline from which to rebuild institutional memory, the research team reviewed language from the most recent collective bargaining agreements, MOUs, charters, innovation plans, and turnaround plans to document the autonomies held by schools of different types for key issues. **(Appendix 5)**

BPS Case Studies

While the question has been explored through other research, the team felt it was important to examine if and how school-level flexibility in resource use enables schools to organize for high performance using Boston school examples.

To identify the top-performing schools, the research team reviewed 2010-12 student Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)

assessment data at three different levels—grades 3–5, grades 6-8 and grades 8-10—in both Math and English Language Arts. The team specifically focused on schools with a critical mass of students (20 or more) who remained in the school over the full two-year period, and within that group, looked at schools where average student results were above the median as measured by gains and 2012 performance. Because schools serve different populations, the research team used growth rather than absolute achievement levels to provide an understanding of the relative value schools contributed to students' learning. To identify common resource practices at Boston's best performing schools, the research team then looked closely at six schools—three traditional and three autonomous—that came out at the high end on both student gains and student performance. **(Appendices 6** and **7)**

BPS Principal Survey

To supplement interviews with school leaders and conversation in the Cross-Functional Working Group, the research team administered an online survey of BPS principals. Fifty-six of 114 BPS principals responded to the survey between January and March 2014.

National Research

Many districts across North America have adopted autonomous schools policies; the research team examined school autonomy in the following five districts: Baltimore, Denver, Lawrence (MA), Los Angeles and New York City. All are urban districts with diverse populations. Most, like Boston, have implemented district-wide school choice.

This array of districts represents different models of autonomous school policy, from district-wide autonomy on most factors (Lawrence, New York City) to district-wide autonomy with limitations (Denver, Baltimore) to a district whose portfolio includes many models of autonomy while retaining centralized control over about 85% of the district schools (Los Angeles). These districts also are situated in diverse states that represent a range of policies around autonomy, from state-authorized charters (Massachusetts and New York), to district-authorized charters (Colorado and Maryland), state policies that encourage district-authorized autonomous schools that are not charters (Massachusetts and Colorado), as well as a state that primarily retains central control over schooling other than charters (California). This range helped generate a synthesis of lessons from diverse settings.

To understand school autonomy policies in these districts, the team reviewed district policy documents, interviewed current and/or former officials, and surveyed principals in autonomous schools. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. In addition to analyzing materials to develop a description of autonomous school policies, the team reviewed student achievement data to better understand the impact of autonomy in these districts. Full profiles of each peer district are available in **Appendix 8**.

Advisory Group

In March 2014, the research team convened an Advisory Group of 25 former superintendents, experts, and other experienced education leaders from across the nation and abroad to identify gaps in our research, comment on the findings and recommendations, and highlight considerations for the future implementation of the recommendations. **(Appendix 9)**

CHAPTER THREE

Findings from Boston

1. Flexibility enables strategic resource use, which enables improved student performance

Research shows that blanket autonomy for school leaders does not *by itself* lead to improved student performance. But research also demonstrates that flexibility *can* enable higher performance when leaders use it to design instruction and organize resources strategically, with the added benefit of fostering a more committed and cohesive school culture due to increased school-level ownership of those choices.[8] Though some types of flexibilities are consistently highlighted by high-performing school leaders as particularly critical to their success — for example, hiring and staffing flexibilities — many of these leaders also assert that the impact of multiple types of flexibility are intertwined.

Autonomy and flexibility can have negative consequences when they reduce the advantages gained from collective knowledge, experience and action. For example, there are times when it makes little sense for a school team to invent new Common Core-aligned instructional materials when there are readily available materials that match the school's instructional philosophy. And there are times when a novice principal could use proven staffing models to create a more personalized, student-centered approach.

Research is also clear that leaders in high performing schools implement a common set of practices — together known as Strategic School Design — that require an ongoing level of flexibility in hiring, staffing, assignment and scheduling that does not exist for most BPS schools. These leaders focus on ensuring teacher effectiveness by creating collaborative teacher teams that use student data and expert guidance to tailor instruction. They maximize instructional time on core academic subjects, varying time based on subject and student priorities. And they ensure that students receive individualized attention through strategic scheduling, grouping and other structures to facilitate targeted interventions and strengthen student-teacher relationships.[9]

These national findings prove true in Boston. A careful review of student results across the district demonstrate that regardless of a school's formal autonomy status, the highest-performing schools are implementing resource practices that fall squarely in the category of Strategic School Design. For example:

- At Fenway High School (a Pilot School), **teacher teams work to define group goals** based on student need before they establish individual performance goals, which encourages collective responsibility for students.
- At the Quincy Elementary School (a traditional school), the principal is **creatively managing resources** by re-assigning personnel in order to lower class size in the Quincy's first and second grade classrooms.
- Staff at the Hernandez K–8 school (a Discovery school) have organized a **professional development (PD) institute** with curriculum developed and co-taught by the school's teachers and tailored for the Hernandez' team needs.
- At Charlestown High School (a traditional school), high performing teachers are offered **various leadership roles** in order to improve retention and teacher engagement. Teacher leadership roles include: Small learning community (SLC) leaders, content team leaders, school site council members and extracurricular activity leaders.

Although there are many factors that influence parents' choices for their children, data indicate that families are "voting with their feet" for schools that have a greater level of school-level flexibility. For the 2013–14 school year, autonomous schools received on average twice as many first-choice preferences compared to the total number of students they enrolled than traditional schools, *theoretically* making it possible for most autonomous schools (but few traditional schools) to fill every available seat with a student who listed that school as her top choice. In contrast, the district administratively assigned students, whose parents or guardians chose no school at all for their children, to traditional schools twice as often as to autonomous schools. **(Appendix 10)**

2. The district lacks a vision for how school-level flexibility can support strategic resource use to improve student performance

"There seems to be a dissonance in the district," according to one principal. On one hand, the district has offered some school leaders unprecedented freedom to shape their school's instructional model and culture; on the other hand, the district has maintained a strong affinity for centralized systems that leverage the scale of a 56,000-student district. The district has launched several efforts to bring certain roles that had previously been devolved out to schools back into the central office, generally through a narrow interpretation of state or federal regulations. For example, certain school-based special education positions—once known as ETFs and now known as COSESS—were at one point established by school leaders in response to school needs; in 2012, these positions were required for every school, along with a 0.7 FTE clerk position.[10] This action limited school leaders' flexibility over the resources dedicated to these roles. The district has also narrowed the scope of principal evaluation in response to new state regulations and limited the flexibility of governing boards to take a broader view in evaluating school leader performance.

The result has been a district where, both in schools and in the central office, there is no real understanding of how school-based autonomy fits into the system's vision for its students. "We could use more clarity," said one district staff member. "With all of these autonomous schools and innovations, we don't have enough guidance to work cooperatively."

Instead, the more common feelings are confusion and intense frustration that the district is squandering a precious opportunity to accelerate the education of its students—particularly those with the greatest needs. "The gray areas create too many opportunities for discord," said a district leader. One school leader pointedly observed that "BPS hasn't created a community of schools and leaders who really work together. The only way to survive is to be an outlier or go under."

3. Complex and varied rules limit potential impact

In the mid-2000s, the district made a strategic decision to shift away from adding Pilot Schools as the Commonwealth created other structures for enabling greater school-level control of resources, including Innovation and Horace Mann III schools.

Today, Boston operates as a hybrid system. Two-thirds of schools work in a "traditional" model while the rest retain varying forms of "autonomy." The rules governing the system's various autonomous school types are complicated and varied and include significant exceptions that further hinder the ability of anyone—but particularly district staff—to operate effectively:

- **Pilot Schools,** created by an agreement between the school district and teachers' union, are granted a set of autonomies and operate according to guidelines outlined in a Pilot Schools Manual developed by a coalition of school leaders.[11] Pilot Schools have freedom to diverge in their approach to how they operationalize those guidelines. Each Pilot School negotiates working conditions with its teachers through school-specific Election to Work Agreements (EWAs).
- **Innovation Schools,** created by the state legislature, operate under individual Memoranda of Understanding with BPS. Each Innovation School's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is established based on the school's Innovation Plan that was approved by the School Committee; therefore these agreements can range in scope quite significantly. Like Pilot Schools, each Innovation School also has its own EWA.
- **Horace Mann Charter Schools,** created by the state legislature, are authorized by the state to operate as in-district charter schools.[12] Each Horace Mann Charter School is granted a set of autonomies similar to that of Commonwealth Charter Schools. Operating conditions are further detailed in a MOU with the district
- **Turnaround Schools,** created by the state legislature, are selected by the district for increased support based on state designation as an underperforming "Level 4" school. These schools are granted some but not all of the budget, staffing and time autonomies that pilot and Innovation schools

receive, and staff receive stipends for the increased time requirements. While BPS' Central Office plays a prominent role in planning, hiring and evaluating school progress, Turnaround Schools do retain significant flexibility from the terms of collective bargaining agreements. Also notable is the fact that most schools that exit turnaround status move into one of the other autonomous school types described above, that is, these schools retain significant autonomy post-turnaround.

When evaluating the flexibilities available to these different types of schools, we considered several questions that enable us to more fully understand what school leaders can and cannot do in various contexts. **(Table 3.1)**

Based on these questions, two themes emerge. First and most prominently, traditional schools have less flexibility in each of these areas than any type of autonomous school. As one principal said, "When I went from a Pilot School to a traditional school, I was suddenly being told, 'You don't get what Pilot Schools get.'" Second, among autonomous schools, the rules of the road vary widely and in many cases, are not clear even based on a close reading of available documents. (**Appendix 5**)

For example, autonomous schools can determine the number and type of staff they hire by position, while traditional schools must first meet conditions outlined in the union agreement that ultimately leave them with

TABLE 3.1

Type of flexibility	Key flexibilities
Student selection, program offerings and school size	■ Determine how many and which students enroll
	■ Specify the student populations it will serve with special programs
Budget	■ Discretion on allocating the entire budget
	■ Budget using average or actual teacher salary
	■ Buy back certain discretionary services from the district
	■ Purchase certain services or staff from outside partners
Staffing	■ Convert staff positions to dollars
	■ Change the number and types of staff it chooses
	■ Re-define or expand individual roles
Hiring	■ Hire candidates of their choice
	■ Define roles and responsibilities for staff positions
	■ Interview and hire candidates from inside or outside the district
Schedule and calendar	■ Alter the master schedule
	■ Lengthen the school day or year without incurring significant additional costs
Curriculum and assessment	■ Decide which texts and supplies to buy
	■ Deviate from district-assigned curriculum and interim assessments
Professional development	■ Specify the amount of professional development and collaborative time teachers spend
	■ Determine the use of available professional development time
	■ Opt into our out of district-provided professional development services
Compensation	■ Vary base salary
	■ Increase teacher salary or stipends based on individual teacher responsibilities

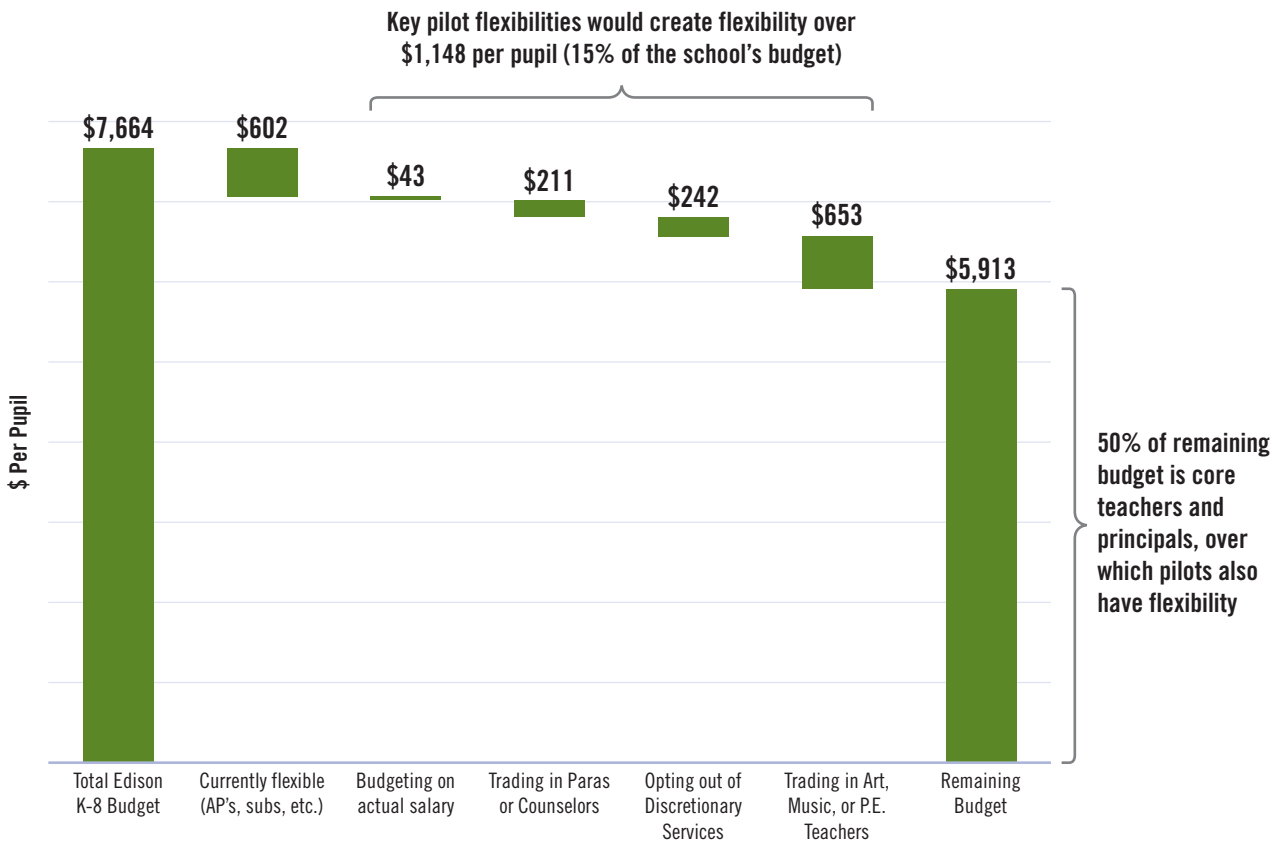
little staffing flexibility.[13] Autonomous schools are able to define their own curriculum; in most cases, create or choose their own interim assessments; and establish a professional development program that fits the school's vision and teachers' specific needs. Horace Mann Charters, like Commonwealth Charters, can specify the number of students they intend to support in their agreements with the district—a right that traditional schools do not have, limiting their opportunity to create organizations that optimize resources at a given size and plan for the long-term. Within autonomous school types, there are additional variations in budget, staffing, calendar, curriculum and assessment that create increased confusion across the system. Traditional schools retain none of these flexibilities.

In a typical BPS school, about 83 percent of school-based dollars are spent on teachers and other instructional staff. BPS has recently moved to a weighted student funding system which allocates dollars instead of staff to schools based on the number of students "weighted" for their learning challenges. In addition to promoting equity in resources across schools, this can also foster more flexibility, making it easier for leaders to direct resources to the most important priorities. But while most autonomous school leaders choose different staffing arrangements and convert existing staff positions for other use, traditional school leaders face a tangled web of district, state and contractual requirements that establish required positions at the school level as well as minimum staffing ratios. In addition, complicated rules around scheduling and hiring limit traditional school leader ability to organize time flexibly to meet individual student needs and concentrate time on the most important priorities.

Technically, any traditional school can work through its School Site Council (SSC) to "waive any provision of [the BTU contract] or any School Committee rule of regulation of Superintendent's policy." **(Appendix**

FIGURE 3.1

Edison K–8, a Traditional BPS School, Would Have 3 Times The Amount of Meaningful Budget Flexibility If It Were a Pilot School



11) However, this requires a clear vision of alternative ways of organizing, strong principal leadership and informed school councils, which BPS has not systematically invested to support (See Finding 5). Many principals and teachers observe that SSCs are often poorly developed and lacking in practical ability to make these changes. In contrast, one autonomous school principal who previously led a traditional school observed that currently, "I'm governed by a board [at my autonomous school] that has much more say than a School Site Council, much more oversight about my resources, and also more authority about shaping our direction. They aren't just advisory."

As a result of these factors, the proportion of resources over which the school leader has significant flexibility is far lower than what he or she would have at an autonomous school. For example, after complying with all of the district, state and union contracts only about six percent of the school budget at the Edison K–8 school (a traditional school) can be used at school leader discretion—that is, the school leader has flexibility over how some $500,000 of nearly $6.2 million (in per-pupil dollars, $602 out of $7,664) in school resources are spent. However, applying the conditions under which Pilot Schools operate, an additional $940,000 in resources (or $1,148 per pupil) would be flexible and available for re-allocation based on student and teacher needs at the Edison. In addition, if the Edison had the benefit of flexibilities available to Pilot Schools, about half of the remaining resources—representing salaries for core teachers and school administrators—would also be available for strategic re-allocation. **(Figure 3.1)**

Boston's traditional school principals and headmasters are craving increased flexibility to do their jobs well. In a survey of BPS school leaders conducted this year, 18 specific types of autonomies were cited by at least 95% of respondents as flexibilities they would like to have in their effort to use resources more strategically in pursuit of higher student achievement. However, as few as 25% of school leaders reported that they currently retain some of these high-impact autonomies. **(Appendix 12)**

District and school leaders have come to recognize the power that many of the flexibilities retained by autonomous schools—flexibilities first granted as part of an experiment with a group of Pilot Schools in 1995—enable leaders to organize resources and make decisions that maximize student learning. However, policies and practical factors are severely limiting the ability of school leadership teams to take the actions that research demonstrates can make a real difference for students.

4. Traditional schools have less purchasing power

An ideal funding system creates resource equity—that is, students and schools with comparable needs would receive comparable funding. For schools of different types to have equitable purchasing power, two conditions have to be in place. First, schools would have similar dollar resources for similar populations of students. Second, schools would be able to acquire similar services at similar rates.

Do schools get similar dollar resources for similar student needs?

The goal of Weighted Student Funding in Boston was to increase equity in resource allocation across the district. While some school leaders express that the district would benefit from re-visiting its current weights, district data indicate that WSF appears to be having the desired impact.[14] The district currently adjusts funding to reflect some categories of students with higher needs such as poverty, English language proficiency and special education needs. However, funding levels do not account for other factors like involvement with the courts, foster care, number of years behind grade level or the concentration of struggling students, creating the potential for an un-level playing field for schools.

A high-level analysis shows that though traditional and autonomous schools (with the notable exception of Exam schools) serve about the same percent of students living in poverty, traditional schools serve higher percentages of English Language Learners at all grades than autonomous Pilot Schools and Horace Mann Charters, and at the high school level, a higher percentage of low proficient students than Pilot Schools and Horace Mann Charters. **(Table 3.2)**

This is not to say that enrollment is otherwise perfectly equitable across the system. Notably, Exam schools serve a very different student population than other school types, including autonomous schools that have entry applications. **(Appendix 13)** In certain

TABLE 3.2

5+ points less needy than Traditional schools

Within 5 points of Traditional schools

5+ points more needy than Traditional schools

					Special Education		ELL	
School Level	School Type	# of Schools	% Incoming Proficiency[15]	% free or reduced lunch	% any level	% Level 4[16]	% any level	% Level 1–3[17]
ES/K–8	Traditional	53	64	78	19	9	33	19
	Pilot	8	63	70	25	12	24	11
	Innovation	4	62	75	20	11	26	15
	HMC	2	n/a	85	13	4	26	16
	Turnaround	6	57	85	18	9	38	22
			Gr 6	Gr 9				
MS/HS	Traditional	16	43	34	85	22	10	31	17
	Pilot	10	23	53	85	18	7	18	8
	Innovation	2	n/a	21	92	34	18	33	17
	HMC	4	41	46	84	20	5	15	3
	Turnaround	4	29	23	85	17	7	33	22
	Exam	3	n/a	n/a	53	2	0	1	0

instances, the district has created enrollment inequity by assigning specialized programs or students, including court-adjudicated students, to schools based on available seats rather than a school's ability to meet the needs of each program's students. This phenomenon could partially explain the differences in enrollment among school types, since, as noted above, autonomous schools are more likely to fill all seats due to over-selection during the assignment process. It also creates inefficiency and inconsistency for schools and students. As one autonomous school principal shared, "When I got my enrollment projections, I learned the district had decided that I'm not going to have an SEI program any more—after I spent the last three years building that program and getting my staff licensed."

Can schools buy what they need at the same rate?

Three sets of rules significantly reduce the purchasing power of traditional schools when compared to autonomous schools.

First, Pilot Schools—which make up about half of all autonomous schools—have the right to extend instructional and professional development time at lower cost compared with traditional schools.[15] For example, Pilot Schools can:

- Add up to 95 teacher hours at no cost to the school or district, plus 50 hours with costs picked up by the district, for a total of 145 extra teacher hours, nearly an hour a day. This flexibility enables Pilot Schools to extend teacher professional development

TABLE 3.3

Teachers, by years of experience & avg salary:	Traditional School A	Traditional School B	Autonomous School
< 5 years @ $65,000	5 $325,000	10 $650,000	10 $650,000
5–15 years @ $80,000	5 $400,000	5 $400,000	5 $400,000
15+ years @ $95,000	10 $950,000	5 $425,000	5 $425,000
Total teacher salary	20 $1,675,000	20 $1,475,000	20 $1,475,000
Average teacher salary used for budget	$79,405 District average	$79,405 District average	$73,750 School actuals
Total teacher salary used for budget	$1,588,100	$1,588,100	$1,475,000
Impact of average/actual salary in budget	$86,900 additional available for other purchases	$113,100 additional removed from budget	No impact

and common planning time beyond the standard 36 hours at traditional schools without additional pay.[19]

- Extend the school year and lengthen the school day, contingent on the district's ability to provide transportation for elementary and middle school students[20] and students with disabilities;

In FY14, the district paid a total of $2.6 million for added teacher time—$1.6 million from federal School Improvement Grants to fund stipends for additional teacher hours at Turnaround Schools and $1.0 million to enable increased teacher time at Pilot Schools.[21] In addition, without district or federal financial support, Innovation schools have negotiated an average of 123 additional instructional, PD, and common planning hours in their Innovation plans and ETW agreements. Benefiting from even greater schedule and calendar flexibility, Horace Mann Charters have added an estimated 422 hours per year.

To be clear, students in schools that have the ability to act on these flexibilities or add time at this lower cost should benefit from the intended increase in instructional time. The challenge for the district is that traditional schools lack these flexibilities, limiting the learning and growth opportunities available to their students.

This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that the average Boston-area Commonwealth charter offers students at least 30% more time in school **(Appendix 14)**, putting BPS at a disadvantage in attracting students from high-poverty backgrounds as well as meeting the needs of students from low-income families that do attend district schools.

Second, leaders at different types of schools have varying authority over how they apply salaries for school-based staff to school budgets. Pilot, Innovation and Horace Mann Charter schools have the option to use their staff's actual salaries or a district average salary; traditional schools are required to budget using average salary. Pilot Schools may switch from actual to average salaries, but only after the school's average salary exceeds the district's average salary for at least three years. Traditional and Turnaround Schools lack the flexibility to budget using actual salaries.

To understand the magnitude of impact that this policy difference can have, imagine three schools with similar student populations and funding levels. One school is a traditional school with an experienced teacher force; the second is a traditional school with a less experienced teacher force; and the third is an autonomous school, which similarly has a less experienced teacher force.[22] When constructing the budget, the traditional school teams uses the district average teacher salary of $79,405, regardless of the actual salaries of their teachers, while the autonomous school can use its teachers' actual per-person salary of $73,750. **(Table 3.3)**

Traditional school A, with its more experienced teacher force, benefits from the current system. Although its teachers earn a total of $1,675,000, it only has to budget $1,588,100 for teacher salaries. The difference—$86,900—is essentially funded by the district, which spreads the cost of these higher salaries across the district by reducing the size of the overall Weighted Student Funding pool. These funds are available for the school to invest in additional services, such as an after-school program, additional professional development, or on-site specialists to supplement the full-time teachers.

In contrast, at traditional school B, with its relatively junior teacher force, this inflexibility amounts to a sizable budget penalty for the school. Its teachers earn a total of $113,100 less than it must budget to cover their salaries under district policy. Although this is precisely the type of school where an incremental investment in professional development and teacher support could make a big difference for both teachers and students, the school is forced to operate with a budget handicap.

The autonomous school, which has the option to budget using actual salaries, faces no such handicap. The same $113,100 that is by policy unavailable to traditional school B is still available to the autonomous school, which can then spend it on services with the greatest potential to improve student outcomes.

In spite of this level of impact, the decision to choose actual or average salary is not clear for all autonomous school leaders. One recognized that her choice might need to evolve over time. "Budget based on actual salaries worries me," she said. "As staff get older and gain experience [and therefore, earn higher salaries], I worry about having to cut staff." When this happens, autonomous schools must either deliberately manage their work force to maintain lower teacher salaries or reduce headcount as staff gain more experience.

Third, pilot, Innovation and Horace Mann school leaders have the flexibility to determine if they want to receive certain discretionary services from the district or "buy back" the services and take on responsibility for delivering the service within their school. By opting out of receiving a service from the district, a school can monetize the service and re-allocate any saved dollars for other purposes.

Further complicating matters, in recent years execution of this approach has become inconsistent, creating inefficiency in the system. For example, discretionary service buybacks are managed on an "honor system," but schools that opt out still sometimes benefit from district offerings. At one school that buys back virtually all discretionary services, the leader said, "We hire all our own curriculum facilitators and send them to the trainings that OEE offers." A district leader noted that, "Schools can opt out of district IT training. However, OIIT will still hold the trainings and any teacher can still come. We don't turn teachers away."

At the same time, district functions that theoretically should shrink in response to reduced demand from schools (i.e. increased service buybacks) are not in fact being reduced. So, while many schools receive funds when they opt out of certain district services, the district continues to incur central office costs to support the full district.

Taken together, the variances in these three areas—the ability to extend student and teacher time, decision power over whether to budget using actual or average salaries, and the ability to buy back certain discretionary services from the district—limit traditional schools' flexibility to deploy resources in ways that could increase their impact on student learning.

5. Widely varying capacity among school leaders and their teams

> *"Not every leader can do an autonomous school. It's much more complicated, with many more moving parts. You have to have real vision and integrity. You have to be able to plan out for years ahead. It's a different mindset than running a regular school."*
>
> —Principal with experience leading both traditional and Pilot Schools

School leaders and their teams are, by definition, at the center of any effort to leverage school-based autonomy, and research indicates that school leaders can have nearly as much impact on student achievement school-wide as any individual teacher has on a single classroom.[23] But their ability to do so varies greatly as evidenced by wide ranging performance growth across schools, and the potential for improvement is constrained by significant turnover and limited investment in school leader training.

Research and experience also demonstrate that early-career school leaders are far less likely to generate fundamental change in a school.[24] But in Boston, as of October 2013 nearly half of all district schools were led by a principal or headmaster who had been in that position for less than three years, including *27% of schools that employed a first-year school leader*. Anecdotal data indicates that principal attrition will remain high going into the 2014–15 school year. **(Appendix 16)**

The challenge of transforming struggling schools becomes more complicated as school leaders are asked to make the types of school design decisions that, as described earlier, are most critical to improving educational outcomes for their students. Some school leaders will bring relevant experience to these decisions, but most will require a level and quality of training and support that many districts have struggled to provide. Though current Human Resources (HR) leadership has bootstrapped new principal support during the recent school year, Boston's investment in professional development, including principal support, has lagged behind peer districts.[25] This makes it even more difficult for school leaders to succeed at fostering increased student achievement. Further, there has been no specific investment in developing a pipeline of leaders prepared through experience and support to excel as autonomous school leaders.

The district's recently implemented network structure was designed to strengthen the connections and information-sharing among schools, including among schools with similar needs and goals (i.e. "affinity groups") as well as between schools and the central office. However, based on the initial nine months since the new structure was rolled out, Boston is asking the networks to serve multiple purposes that spread the Network Superintendents thin and make it challenging for them to fulfill all of their responsibilities effectively. In theory, networks are supposed to communicate important information, ensure delivery of quality and timely central office services, ensure policy compliance, help schools navigate the bureaucracy, foster and share innovative practices, support school leaders in their own professional development and more. One Network Superintendent described a significant part of the role as "making sure [traditional principals] fully understand the collective bargaining agreement so they can take advantage of opportunities to get closer to autonomy than they may be."

In this early stage of implementation, network liaisons are still working to be consistently effective in the new structure. "The network is only as strong as the liaisons serving the network," according to one principal. "Not all liaisons have the same capabilities," said one Network Superintendent. "The best have capacities that cross functions, so they may be a budget liaison but they really know curriculum or HR too. We have to look more like a multi-talented, cross-functional team that takes on different roles, as opposed to the delineated roles we have now."

The networks were also designed to include all kinds of schools, thereby facilitating idea-sharing across a diverse set of school leaders. An unintended consequence of this design decision is that autonomous school leaders have few opportunities to collaborate and learn from each other. "It's important to have more networking of autonomous schools to learn from one another," said one Turnaround School leader. "But I don't really see this happening within the district." Similarly, a Network Superintendent observed that, "ideally, we would have had a lot more discussion about the network structure before we started it. When Pilots met among themselves, they felt it was a forum to grow and they enjoyed that space."

Network superintendents face the added challenge of providing an appropriate level of support for autonomous school leaders, whose issues and challenges are more often the exception than the rule in the context of all district schools. On the plus side, one principal observed, "We have a good Network leader who gets it and tries to listen to what schools need by being a facilitator, not working top down." However, that experience is not universal. "All schools with very specific programs need flexibility for so many things," said a leader of a dual-language school. "For example, in order to teach how the human body works in Spanish, I require materials at different times. No one in central office, least of all my network superintendent, understands this. So I had to explain this to everyone." School leaders attempt to fill the gap as well as they can. A traditional school leader offered that, "We have an unofficial network of dual language school leaders" operating outside the formal network structure.

"I get all sorts of ill will because I don't regularly go to Network meetings," said one autonomous school leader. "But they aren't useful for me at all. Network

meetings are about compliance. I want to see what other principals have to say. I want colleagues. Network meetings aren't about that at all."

6. Inconsistent central office support for schools

Interviews with both school and district leaders demonstrate that Boston's district office, historically organized to ensure compliance across the system, struggles to consistently and effectively provide support to meet the diverse needs of its schools. Reductions in staff and funds and the challenge of supporting schools with a wide range of needs and models have contributed to these struggles.

"BPS is a maze with no guidance," said one district staff member. School leaders and their teams feel this pressure particularly deeply. "No one in the district office really understands our challenges," said one traditional school leader. "We, principals, constantly have to educate them."

In some cases, perceptions of quality differ across the system. For example, one traditional school leader readily acknowledged that, "My school doesn't follow the BPS math curriculum. Why? Because we are getting better results without it." A district leader agreed, "Central office needs to provide higher-quality curriculum options." However, another observed, "Sometimes we have great options available but the schools don't know about them. We need to do a better job making sure schools are aware of what we've been working on."

At the end of the day, "We operate from a level of fear that we don't want any school to fall below a certain level," said one district leader. In that context, said another, "We have free-for-all autonomy that allows you to come in and out of the district to get what you need." This randomness extends beyond autonomous schools. "Many traditional school leaders take their own autonomies," said one such leader, "even when they're not formally granted."

In a system where it is common for schools to, in the words of one district leader, "keep pleading your case until someone says yes to something that resembles what you want," the quality of central office services varies widely by department and oftentimes within departments, with as few as two percent of principals rating the quality of some district services "excellent," or top box on a 1-to-5 scale. **(Appendix 17)**

Accountability for district functions is also sparse. In recent years, BPS has abandoned a system for gauging principals' perceptions of district functions—a process that created incentives for district leaders to adjust based on the feedback they received from schools. Unlike school leaders, district staff are not directly held accountable for student or school performance, creating a fundamental and damaging disconnect with schools. Further, the district lacks any formal capability for evaluating, capturing and spreading innovations being developed in schools.

Impact of These Challenges

Taken together, these factors—lack of a clear vision of how school-level flexibility enables resource decisions that support improved student learning; a varied and complex framework for autonomy; inequitable purchasing power for traditional schools; widely varying capacity among school leaders; and inconsistent execution of key district functions—have created an environment that one school leader describes as characterized by an "us-and-them" mentality.

In this context, it's sobering but not surprising that principals are far less enthusiastic about their roles than their peers in other districts. Using the research-backed indicator of employee satisfaction, Net Promoter Score, for every Boston principal who qualifies as a "promoter" there are six principals who are "detractors" when asked about working in the district. In other words, Boston principals are *six times more likely to discourage a peer from serving as a school leader in Boston Public Schools* than they are to encourage a peer to do so.

In this context, attracting and retaining top school leadership talent—a prerequisite for success in any school, let alone those with the greatest potential to transform student lives—is an uphill battle that ultimately could keep Boston's schools from ever realizing their promise and goal for every child.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings from Peer Districts

Across North America, school districts include or are working with many types of autonomous schools. The most well-known is the charter school, but in most states, charter schools are not under school district oversight. In response, as districts seek to keep students, families and accompanying revenue within their school systems, it is increasingly common for states and districts to include multiple models of autonomous schools.

In communities with many charter schools, and where school choice is common, autonomy can help schools create individual identities which may help district schools attract families. In other districts, autonomy is seen as a mechanism to foster innovation and school improvement. School autonomy is also appealing because it gives more responsibility to the educators closest to students.

Baltimore City Public Schools. Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) implemented a policy of "bounded autonomy" in 2009. At that time, 20% of BCPS schools were autonomous, which created inequity in the system. Today, principals have autonomy over a wide range of resource choices, from curriculum to facilities management. Autonomy is "bounded" in that the district has created detailed guidance documents. For instance, a principal has control over staffing but the district requires each school to fill a variety of positions (e.g. certified librarian). Often, district guidance means selecting options recommended by the district. While schools can propose their own alternatives, most stick with district options.

Denver Public Schools. In the Denver Public Schools (DPS) the default is providing autonomy to schools around people, time and money. DPS committed to pushing decision-making to the school level through a theory of action known as Performance Empowerment, which "calls for clearly establishing [a district level] instructional program, (including defined standards, baseline core curriculum, coordinated professional development and interim formative assessments) and emphasizes the essential roles of autonomy, empowerment and innovation to reach much higher levels of success."[26] As a result, DPS is managing a portfolio of schools with varying autonomies. All DPS schools have autonomy over their school budget, hiring and school schedules. Traditional public schools commonly propose additional autonomies to facilitate program implementation. In order to develop the capacity of schools to operate autonomously, DPS invests in building human capital across the district and promoting opportunities for cross-pollination of effective

TABLE 4.1

Districts in the National Sample

	Enrollment	White	African-American	Latino	Asian	Other*	ELL	F/RP Lunch
Baltimore	85,000	8%	84%	6%	<1%	<1%	4%	85%
Boston	57,000	13%	36%	40%	9%	2%	30%	75%
Denver	87,000	21%	14%	58%	3%	4%	35%	72%
Lawrence (MA)	13,000	6%	2%	91%	2%	<1%	28%	84%
Los Angeles	665,000	9%	10%	73%	6%	1%	33%	63%
New York City	1,030,000	14%	30%	40%	15%	1%	15%	72%

* Includes both multi-racial and American Indian. The district with the highest proportion of American Indian students is DPS with 1%.

Source: Data retrieved from district websites and reflect the most recent data available. Data for Lawrence was retrieved from the MA DESE website.

strategies to charter, innovation and traditional schools. In exchange for this autonomy, DPS holds all schools strictly accountable to a system-wide set of performance standards. DPS conducts a quality review process with each school and low-performing schools are regularly closed. Over the past five years, DPS has closed and replaced roughly 12% of its schools.

Lawrence Public Schools. The Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) are included in this study to provide a sense of what might be done within the context of Massachusetts' policies. Since the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education took over this failing district in 2011, Lawrence has ceased to operate a traditional central office. As much as possible, staff and resources were pushed down to the school level. All LPS schools have some autonomies, but the level of autonomy is determined by school performance. Higher performing Level 1 schools can opt out of most district supports. Lower performing Turnaround Schools have been given autonomy over their school's design when placed under management of a successful outside operator, such as UP Education Network. All principals have an academic advisor who provides individualized support.

Los Angeles Unified School District. Within the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) there are eight school models, including independent charters and traditional public schools. The 1992 California legislation creating charter schools specified that schools receive their charters from the local school board and, in Los Angeles, can be autonomous district schools (affiliated charters) or completely independent. LAUSD opened its first district-affiliated charter schools in 1993. In 2006, the first of LAUSD's schools converted to the Extended School-Based Management Model (ESBMM). LAUSD began authorizing Pilot Schools in 2007, which were modeled on Boston's Pilot Schools. LAUSD now manages six types of in-district autonomous schools: affiliated charters, ESBMM, Pilot Schools, Local Initiative Schools (LIS), network partners, and partnership schools.[27] In all, LAUSD has a portfolio of about 135 in-district autonomous schools: roughly 50 affiliated charters; 50 Pilot Schools; two dozen ESBMM schools, partnership schools, and network schools; and a dozen local initiative schools (LIS). Autonomous schools account for roughly 15% of LAUSD's in-district schools.

New York City Department of Education. After the mayor took control of the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) in 2002, policy began to shift in favor of school-based decision-making. In 2004, a group of principals volunteered to lead autonomous schools. In the early years of the pilot autonomy program, principals self-selected into networks of schools. Once principals had organized themselves into a network, they worked together to secure the resources and supports they needed. Network staff depended on allocations from principals to keep their jobs. Once autonomy was granted to every NYC DOE school, all schools self-select into networks. Most network staff are hired and supervised by the central office, while some networks are run by nonprofits. Network staff are now accountable to schools in that each year schools select their network and principals rate the quality of service of their network.[28]

Themes and Implications

Reviewing school autonomy in these five districts generated a set of six themes with implications for the Boston Public Schools: distinct theories of action for autonomy; variation in types and numbers of autonomous schools district strategies and structures to support autonomous schools; the need to develop leaders for autonomous schools; adequate support for human capital and instruction; district oversight of school performance; and student achievement since implementing autonomy policies.

A distinct district theory of action for autonomy. Officials in each district can articulate their district's theory of action. While they express it in different ways, the underpinning logic is the same: autonomy is viewed as a means to leverage innovative practices and improve student achievement. In New York City, Chancellor Klein's theory of action was that autonomy was a pre-condition for school improvement in schools and, accordingly, all schools were eventually granted autonomy. Under a similar theory of action in LAUSD, school autonomy is used as a mechanism to turn around under-performing schools. The district solicits proposals to redesign the lowest performing schools into new autonomous schools, sometimes with multiple smaller autonomous schools replacing large underperforming schools in the same facility.

In other districts, the theory of action is expressed as transferring control to the educators who work most closely with students. In BCPS, former superintendent Alonso declared: "The theory of action is simple: the action is in the schools. The resources should be in the schools." This is echoed in other districts. When the Commonwealth of Massachusetts took over the failing school district in Lawrence, the new management decided to push maximum resources to schools rather than re-creating a traditional district model of school management. The new vision for structuring the district focuses on what they call an "open architecture model," in which the district role is "to establish thin walls and foundations while providing white space for school design." High performing schools were given autonomy to make their own decisions about the direction of their school programs and the authority and budget to implement their programs. Low-performing schools were assigned an education management organization to overhaul their programming.

In Denver, school autonomy is an importance facet of school choice: autonomy helps schools distinguish themselves and attract students. Coupled with a strong accountability system, DPS is working to insure a variety of high-quality school settings for students. DPS provides performance targets and allows schools to meet them in the way that best meets the needs of their school community. According to a district official: "In high school, we have graduation requirements that are non-negotiable. But the manner in which the people meet the graduation requirements or how they build the staffing plan is completely decentralized in all types of schools."

Variations in levels of autonomy. Given differences in the state context and their theories of action, we were not surprised to see variation across districts in the approach to which schools are autonomous and the level of autonomy extended to their schools. What was more interesting was the variation within the districts: these districts have portfolios with several models of autonomy.

In Lawrence and Los Angeles, autonomies are targeted at particular types of schools. In LAUSD, low-performing schools are targeted for conversion to autonomous status. Annually, the Public School Choice process enables new and conversion autonomous schools to be proposed in facilities housing low-performing schools. LAUSD has six types of in-district autonomous schools (in descending order of flexibility): pilots, district-affiliated charters, local initiative schools (LIS), partnership schools, network partners, and the extended school-based management model (ESBMM). Currently, the district has about 135 autonomous schools; the most common are pilot and affiliated charters, which have the most flexibility. In LPS, the amount of autonomy schools have is dependent upon school performance. Higher performing, Level 1 schools are given full autonomy. Low-performing Turnaround Schools have been placed under the management of an outside operator, such as UP Education Network, which is granted significant autonomy.

Even in districts where all schools have autonomy, there are variations in the level of flexibility. For example, while BCPS has granted "bounded autonomy" to all schools, 60 of the district's 195 schools have elected an autonomous model with greater flexibilities. These include Transformation, Innovation, Contract, New Initiative schools and charters, although in recent years many of these non-charter autonomous schools have converted to the charter model as it affords schools with the greatest autonomy. DPS also manages a portfolio of autonomous schools. All schools have autonomy over budget and staffing. In addition, about 45% of district schools are charter or innovation schools, which enjoy a wider range of autonomies. In New York City, too, all schools have been granted autonomy over budget, staffing, curriculum, schedule, and professional development, although curriculum and scheduling autonomies are somewhat limited. Most of these are "regular" district schools, although NYC DOE has also authorized some charter schools.[29]

District supports for autonomous schools. Each of the districts in the study re-structured their central office to provide targeted support to schools or groups of schools. The "open architecture" of LPS is one extreme where the district has few central office employees and a very lean structure. School leaders are assigned academic advisors and are expected to work with their advisor to implement the school program. Other districts in this study have organized schools into groups supported by cross-functional district teams who share responsibility for the success of their assigned schools. In BCPS, schools are organized into networks by geography and grade span. A nine-member team provides support to the network across all

program areas. In DPS, district staff are organized into cross-functional teams of "school partners" that serve about 10 schools each.

In New York City, the original autonomous zone principals self-organized into networks. Principals joined with like-minded principals and allocated money from their school budgets to hire specialists to provide professional development and other services to the schools in their network. Network staff were hired and fired by the network principals and were entirely accountable to the network. Once the NYC DOE extended autonomy to all schools, by and large the network staff became district employees, although some networks are run by education management organizations or other nonprofits. In those cases, network staff are employees of the organization that runs the network. Each network provides its schools with operational and instructional support.

Specialized offices to manage autonomous schools. Most districts have created an office or department to oversee the development and accountability of autonomous schools. (The exception is LPS, with its minimalist district structure.) In BCPS, the Office of New Initiatives oversees the application and startup of charter, transformation and innovation schools. Every year, the office reviews the portfolio of schools to maximize the number of seats in high quality schools. In DPS, the Office of Reform and Innovation manages the process of approving proposals for new charter and innovation schools and manages the review process for existing autonomous schools. In addition, this Office runs an incubator (called the "Imaginarium") to seed new school innovations and to replicate successful innovations across the district.

The NY DOE runs two offices focusing on school autonomy. The Office of Cluster Support provides oversight and support to the networks, annually evaluating them for quality of service. In addition, the NYC DOE Office of Portfolio Management oversees the city's mix of district schools, charter schools, and early childhood education programs and manages the process for developing new schools. This office also is responsible for coordinating intensive support for failing schools.

LAUSD has multiple offices, focusing on different autonomy models. There are three offices that approve proposals for expanded autonomy. The Local Oversight Committee conducts the proposal process to approve new LIS and ESBMM schools. The Charter School Division is responsible for approving new affiliated charters. Pilot School applicants are reviewed by a Pilot Schools Steering Committee, consisting of representatives of LAUSD, UTLA, the administrators union and community organizations. Autonomous schools receive support from another set of offices. The Intensive Support and Intervention Network (ISIN) supports Pilot Schools and Turnaround Schools through common accountability frameworks, tailored programmatic offerings and responsive oversight. Affiliated charters, LIS and ESBMM schools receive support through their local districts. Autonomous schools can also receive support from the newly developed Creating and Supporting Quality Schools Team.

Supporting instruction and human capital. Denver, Baltimore and LAUSD have all invested significantly to build strong instructional support and human capital systems that work for all of their schools—including fully autonomous schools that can choose to opt in to these services. They have aggressively invested to promote teacher and leader learning and readiness around the Common Core standards, adopted new assessments and evolved curriculum materials. In addition, each is currently working to overhaul their human capital systems focusing on rigorous, fair performance evaluation, revitalizing teacher and leader career paths, and creating compensation structures that reinforce strong results and leverage the most effective professionals.

Developing leaders prepared to lead autonomous schools. All of the districts studied focus on developing their human capital, particularly to develop the leadership skills of autonomous school leaders. For example, New York City's autonomy policy is designed to empower and support principals. The networks are designed to serve their on-going needs and are held accountable for principals' satisfaction. To further his goal of creating effective autonomous schools, Mayor Bloomberg created the New York Leadership Academy in 2003, with the goals of developing entrepreneurial leaders for the city's schools. LAUSD, in an effort to develop strong autonomous school leaders, has developed a partnership with CCE on a federal grant that will provide intensive leadership support for two years to newly-appointed autonomous

school leaders. In Denver, to ensure all school leaders are aware of innovative strategies and ready to run any model of school in an entrepreneurial fashion, the district has made a priority of cross-pollination of successful strategies across schools. To foster this cross-pollination, DPS created an aspiring principals program where teacher leaders complete a one-year practicum in a charter school, under a successful mentor principal.

Autonomy with accountability. In four of these five districts, autonomy is coupled with a strong accountability system that applies to all schools in the system. These systems enable leaders to identify low-performing schools, provide additional supports and close chronically underperforming schools. BCPS conducts an annual, high stakes portfolio review, which can lead to closing low-performing schools or replacing their principals. In LAUSD and DPS, new autonomous schools undergo a school quality review after three years and existing autonomous schools are reviewed every five years. Failure to meet school performance goals can result in support, intervention, firing principals, or school closure and replacement. Schools slated for closure are immediately replaced with new schools, usually within the same facility as the closing school so as to minimize disruption for students and families.[30] The NYC DOE creates annual progress reports for all schools. Schools receive an A-F grade, based on school environment (15%), student achievement (25%), and student progress (60%). Schools with grades or D or F receive intensive support. If they fail to improve within three years the schools are phased out and replaced. Out of the district's 1,700 schools, each year 25 or 30 schools are phased out.

Impact of Autonomy in Peer Districts

In four of the districts, there has been documented improvement in student outcomes. Test scores in BCPS are increasing. Scores on the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) have risen from 56.7% proficient or better in 2007 to 67.9% in 2013. In math, the percentage of students performing at proficient or advanced levels rose from 47.8 in 2007 to 58.9 in 2013. By 2013, the graduation rate for students who started high school in 2008-09 and graduated within five years (by June 2013) was 71.7%, up 5 percentage points from two years earlier. In Lawrence, in its first full year of state receivership, scores improved both for growth measures and absolute achievement. In fact, there were double-digit increases in math proficiency rates for grades 3, 5, 8 and 10.

There is some evidence that the overall quality of education in the New York City public schools has improved with expanded autonomy, which includes higher test scores, higher graduation rates and more students graduating prepared for higher education. Four-year cohort graduation rates have risen from 50% in 2005 to 65% in 2011. Three-quarters of schools that received a D or F on their progress report in 2011-12 saw an increase of at least one letter grade in 2012-13. Of those, 38% improved by two or more letter grades. In Denver, on the whole schools have shown strong improvement in test scores. Graduate rates are increasing, from 46.4% in 2009 to 58.8% in 2013 (the 2013 completer rate is 67%). The dropout rate has dropped considerably: from 11.1% in 2006 to 5.7% in 2013. While overall district scores still lag behind the state average, DPS charter schools appear to out-perform state averages. The increase in test scores and rise of innovation schools has, in part, led to an increased enrollment of 15,000 students over the past seven years.

Implications for Boston

In reviewing autonomous school initiatives in Baltimore, Denver, Lawrence, Los Angeles and New York City, the most dramatic changes may be the shift in district-wide culture and meaningful strategies to assess school performance—not only to hold schools accountable but also to differentiate support for individual schools. Structural changes in central office operations facilitate changes in the relationship between central office and schools. In a departure from the historical relationship between central office and schools, central cross-functional teams are responsible to—rather than for—a specific set of schools. Effective support for autonomous schools focuses on service rather than compliance. In addition to structural changes, developing a collaborative culture requires investments in professional development for both central office employees and school-level faculty and staff. The district has an important role in providing opportunities and resources to encourage cross-school professional collaborations, often through networks of

schools that are brought together for joint professional development.

To insure access to a high quality education in every district school, these five districts couple autonomy with a strong, uniform system to monitor performance. Performance monitoring increasingly takes the form of school quality reviews. These reviews do more than hold schools accountable for improved student outcomes: they identify areas for improvement and allow districts to tailor supports for each school. Increased autonomy doesn't mean the schools are on their own. Districts can play a vital role in coordinating increased support for schools that are struggling and, if necessary, the district is responsible for replacing the leadership and/or closing schools that remain stagnant over multiple years.

Even with consistent themes across districts, each of these five districts developed a unique autonomous school policy. Not only do they have district theories of action, but officials can articulate the district's theory. They have developed different models of autonomous schools. Districts approach the need to develop human capital in a variety of ways. And, while they may have different strategies to monitor school performance, student outcomes are improving since extending school autonomy. Comparison districts are striving to create a system of high-quality schools to address their community's needs. While not one of these districts has the exact same conditions as BPS, they offer a range of examples that may help develop a thoughtful policy and an effective implementation plan.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Proposed Path Forward

"We owe it to our students, parents and teachers to create successful schools for all students."

—Pilot School Principal

There is real promise in Boston. To a person, teachers, school leaders, district leaders and other stakeholders share the district's stated goal of "transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools." Yet, the findings from this report show that progress in creating a system of excellent schools is hindered by the lack of a clear vision of how school-level flexibility enables resource decisions that support improved student learning. The challenge in Boston at this moment of transition is to break out of historical patterns and create a new, shared approach that unleashes the potential of teachers and leaders at all levels.

Over the past nine months, Boston has taken crucial first steps toward empowering schools with the flexibility required to create optimal conditions for student learning. In addition to applying Weighted Student Funding to all schools, the district has extended hiring autonomy to all schools and begun the process of developing a new approach to school accountability. Collectively, these steps represent significant progress in a relatively short period of time.

Boston must build on these initial efforts and speed the pace of reforms that are grounded in a data-based analysis of the factors that correlate strongly with student outcomes. Specifically, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Establish the district's vision as a "system of schools" with consistent high expectations, support and accountability for performance.

"For those of us who are typically focused on 'my school, my school,' it is a shift and a really good exercise to start thinking about the whole system of schools."

—Pilot School leader

Operating as a system of schools is notably different from operating as a "school system." A "system of schools" recognizes the *school* as the unit of change for students, and organizes other functions to ensure that schools have the capacity, flexibility and support to make wise resource decisions on behalf of students. In this way, system-wide functions will have incentives to evolve as schools' needs evolve, creating a nimbler and more flexible system.

A system of schools works best if it is grounded in a clear vision for how schools improve and the role that school-level flexibility can play in stimulating those improvements. From a central office standpoint, as one district leader said, "We have to decide: Are we partners for schools? Are we service providers? Are we supporters? Each approach carries different expectations and assumptions about how we will work together."

Operating as a system of schools implies a portfolio strategy that incorporates district vision and a deep understanding of community need along multiple dimensions—population size, demographics, student demand and more. The district will need to develop a sophisticated long-range planning function that considers citywide population trends, student need, cost, school performance and choice patterns, among other factors, to outline the framework for a portfolio that effectively meets local needs. Boston's district leaders must clearly and pro-actively communicate their rationale for portfolio decisions to the community.

Operating as a system of schools also has significant implications for the system's network support structure, as evidenced by the various strategies implemented in peer districts. As Boston builds on its first year in the current network structure, district and school leaders should consider ways to evolve the network strategy and foster authentic conversations of shared practice and interest across schools. This could include adjusting the scope of networks and/or creating "affinity groups" for schools with similar needs and areas of focus.

Next steps:

- Reinforce through internal and external messaging that the Boston "system of schools" includes a broad array of school designs and themes that will evolve over time in order to meet community needs.

2. Extend maximum flexibility to all district schools, and encourage any school that is ready and has capacity to pursue adopting an autonomous schools model.

"Autonomy doesn't equate to success. It creates the conditions for success."

—Pilot School leader

"Autonomy allows teachers the opportunity to become better. You convey the message that 'we trust you.' You're including teachers in the mission of the school from the get-go, which requires staff to participate at a higher level. And they go beyond what's required."

—Pilot School teacher

To maximize their impact, school leaders and their teams require the flexibility, authority and supports to organize people, time and money to best meet student and school needs. If the unit of change is the school, then that is where significant power and authority should be. School leaders should be empowered with the resources and support necessary to drive change within the school community. As one district leader reflected on her experience as a headmaster of an autonomous school, "We could not have eliminated the achievement gap the way we did without the autonomies we had."

Boston school leaders overwhelmingly crave greater autonomy, particularly related to staffing and hiring. Nearly three-fourths of principals surveyed volunteered that autonomy in hiring and staffing is among those "most valuable in helping school leaders improve student outcomes." Similarly, of the 18 most desired autonomies, 15 were related to flexibilities in determining who works in the school building and how their roles are defined.

The hiring and staffing autonomies with the greatest potential impact on strategic resource use include:

- Hiring for the following positions by mutual consent:
  - General education teachers and aides
  - ELL teachers and aides
  - Special Education resource/inclusion teachers
  - School-based Special Ed coordinators (COSESS) and clerks
  - Guidance counselors
  - Short-term subs
  - Secretaries and clerks
  - Nurses
  - Assistant Principals
  - Social workers
  - Custodians
  - Food service workers
  - Librarians
- Determine the appropriate mix of these positions
- Trade out current staff roles for new/different roles
- Define specific staff roles and assignments
- Eliminate positions and exit staff under defined circumstances

Data from Boston indicate that extending autonomy to more schools will generate significant benefits for teachers. In district-administered surveys, teachers in autonomous schools more favorably rate the quality of their school leaders, the collegiality of their work environment and their influence over classroom decision-making. **(Appendix 19)**

Each of the districts in our national sample negotiated with their teacher unions to expand autonomy while retaining teachers' rights. In Los Angeles, the district has negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the teacher's union for each type of autonomous school. Each school then develops an "elect-to-work" agreement that enumerates the work conditions for faculty, including number of hours and days of work, additional duties beyond teaching, teacher evaluation measures, and a description of the school program. In Denver, Innovation schools offer employees one-year contracts that supersede the multi-year collective bargaining agreement.

In other words, precedent exists in other big-city districts facing similar challenges to those we see in Boston for the district and its unions to shift away from historical approaches toward strategies that enable school leaders and their teams to organize resources strategically for the benefit of students. As one traditional school teacher put it, when this happens, "we can create an open space for more teacher-leaders to take ownership of the school in a special way."

The district and schools already have many tools at their disposal to bring current traditional schools closer to the structure and rights that autonomous schools have. In addition to working to create the hiring and staffing autonomies described above, the district should move quickly to empower schools to:

- More strategically define use of teacher and student time (e.g. more collaborative planning time for teachers) in master schedules
- Plan explicitly how it will increase individualized attention to students
- Exert greater control over which curricula and predictive assessments they employ
- Opt out of district-offered professional development based on school and teacher need
- Sub-contract for specialized services (e.g. mental health, tutoring, food service, others)

The district's effort to extend early open posting to all schools, while creating new challenges for many autonomous schools, was an important first step on this front. One early lesson is to ensure that the rollout of specific autonomies to all district schools does not inadvertently constrain autonomous schools—in other words, "first do no harm."

Next steps:

- Collaborate with the Boston Teachers Union to expand flexibility to hire and organize staff and to enable all schools to increase student learning time, and use it more flexibly, to best meet school and student needs.
- While recognizing the value provided by a system-wide approach, support schools' efforts to exercise the high-impact autonomies outlined above.
- Complete and adopt the Autonomous Schools Manual currently in revision, which should be viewed throughout the district as the rules and procedures by which all autonomous school models operate. Provide central office departments, network superintendents, and autonomous school leaders and governing boards with a thorough grounding in the manual. Identify and remove any existing barriers to autonomous schools' ability to exercise the autonomies they have been granted.
- Encourage schools that demonstrate readiness to pursue Innovation or Horace Mann Charter status.[31]

3. Decentralize non-core central services to the maximum extent feasible, and transition to a purchased services model for the remaining non-core central services.

"Our central office does not have the capacity to impose its will. What we can do is regain the trust and respect of school leaders and arrive at a point that is more coherent and find different models of success that everyone is comfortable with."

—District leader

Even in a system that embraces autonomy for school leaders, there is significant scale and value in operating *as a system.* In such a system, the district provides core services from which few schools would choose to opt out, even given the choice.

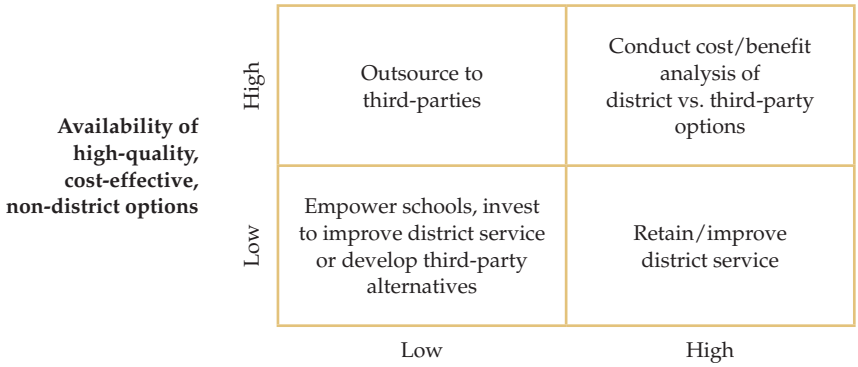
Notably, most autonomous school leaders in Boston want the district to continue to deliver many functions. "I would like BPS to cover some services, like insurance, budget support, legal, transportation and to a certain extent, HR," said one autonomous school leader. Core services that the district would likely continue to provide (and improve) include high quality, cost-effective human resources, finance, technology, and core curriculum, instruction and assessment support.

To refine this approach, the district and its schools should make an objective, clear-eyed assessment of where it is most and least capable of meeting the needs of schools and students. A strong framework for this assessment would consider district capacity to deliver a service at high quality as well as the availability of quality third-party options: **(Table 5.1)**

The five districts studied nationally have made a variety of choices about which responsibilities are best managed at the school-level and what the district can do best. Most importantly, each district has adopted a model that is consistent with its theory of action for how schools improve and the role school-level flexibility can play in strategic deployment of resources in the school.

New York City retained responsibility for transportation, facilities, food service, enrollment and certain kinds of technology, with the rest of the traditional district services decentralized to network partner

TABLE 5.1



organizations. According to one district leader in New York, the district has tried to "flip the performance management system so that people supporting schools were also partially evaluated on the feedback from principal as well as how the schools were doing—as opposed to whether they were effectively carrying out a central directive."

Baltimore pushed responsibility for operations and facilities to the school-level when the district released bounded autonomies to schools, while the central office focuses on providing human capital and curriculum and instruction support to schools and assessing the quality of schools. In Denver, the central office focuses on equity, accountability and fostering collaboration between schools. For schools that remain in the "traditional" part of its portfolio, Denver has invested in creating strong curriculum and instructional support and strengthening its human capital management and support.

Next steps:

- Define a strategy for which core functions the system should retain to ensure equity, excellence and cost-efficiency in the context of expanded autonomy and flexibility.
- Conduct an itemized central office budget analysis to determine all services provided to schools other than core services (e.g. accountability, human resources, finance, transportation, facilities). Determine which services can be decentralized to schools and include them in the Weighted Student Formula.
- For all remaining *non-core* central services that the district feels are best applied at a system level, implement purchased services agreements with schools that clearly articulate the service to be rendered and the cost per pupil for the service. Empower schools to either purchase the service or retain the funds. In particular, consider purchased services agreements with special education central services such as Related, COSESS, and clerk positions.
- Enable schools to sub-contract for specialized services (e.g., food, Related Services).
- Design and institute a process to annually evaluate each district department and service for quality, with evaluative feedback generated from school leaders. Assess whether services rated as low quality can be better provided through change in department staffing, reorganizing the service, decentralization to schools, or sourcing outside the district.

4. Create a cabinet-level Office of Innovation, reporting to the Superintendent, to incubate and oversee development of new school designs and conversions to autonomous school models, and scale currently successful autonomous school designs based on community needs and demands.

Recognizing that innovation can't be mandated from the top, the system will need to create structures for supporting new educational models generated from the field, while ensuring these new approaches match student need. Most districts in the national study have

created an office or department to oversee the development and accountability of autonomous schools. For example, in Denver an Office of School Reform and Innovation (OSRI) has two major responsibilities: coordinate processes for authorizing and reviewing the effectiveness of Innovation schools, and oversee an incubation lab. The incubation lab, called the Imaginarium, works closely with schools to identify and evaluate innovative strategies and to expand successful pilots district-wide.

In Boston, this office would also support school leaders in developing high-functioning governing boards. Governing boards differ from School Site Councils in that they actually have the opportunity to hire and evaluate the head of school, set priorities for the school, approve the annual school budget, and set the annual Election-to-Work Agreement for staff. Some of the healthiest autonomous schools, particularly those that have gone through leadership transitions, have done well in part because of strong boards.

Next steps:

- Annually assess enrollment trends, student assignment choices, population trends, and other factors to determine where the needs exist for new and conversion autonomous schools.
- Conduct an "incubation" program for new school design teams and conversion teams to consider and plan innovative school designs, as well as provide early support to newly launched new and conversion schools.
- Annually conduct requests for proposals for new and conversion schools for autonomous school models, along with a transparent, timely, and thorough review process that results in the selection of high quality designs and conversion schools to be added to the district's portfolio of autonomous schools.
- Work with Pilot Schools and other autonomous schools that have Election-to-Work Agreements to ensure sound and inclusive processes are in place for their annual revision and renewal.
- Provide annual professional development to autonomous school governing boards on all aspects of their vital role in guiding autonomous schools.
- Identify and share models for innovative budgeting, staffing, curriculum, assessment, professional development, and scheduling that contribute to professional growth and student learning.

5. Cultivate and support leaders and leadership teams to effectively use their flexibilities to make wise resource decisions that enable school and student improvement

"What does it take to run an autonomous school? A visionary leader who can look past the next year at what the school should look like in 5-10 years; someone who really understands what teachers need and who can marshal resources and deliver PD on their own; someone who knows how to build capacity within their own school and operate from a cycle of continuous improvement."

—Traditional School Principal

Research and practical experience reinforce the fact that the second greatest school-based contributor to student learning, after the quality of teachers, is the quality of school leaders. The role of a school leader operating with significant autonomies varies from the role of school leader as traditionally conceived. All of Boston's school leaders—those in traditional schools and those with formal autonomies—need cultivation and support to effectively use increased flexibilities to leverage accelerated student learning. "Autonomies aren't perfect," said one Pilot School leader. "The school leader and her team have to be flexible thinkers who don't see challenges as roadblocks."

In both Baltimore and New York City, officials noted that principals who were "noncompliant troublemakers" in the old system were particularly able to adapt to the new responsibilities that accompany having increased autonomy. In Denver, aspiring principals are released from teaching duties and complete a leadership practicum in a high performing charter school. Upon completion, they are then placed in leadership positions within district autonomous schools where they receive continued learning opportunities and support with strategic school design.

Boston should recognize that not all current school leaders will be well-equipped to succeed in a world where they are asked to make more decisions at the school level. As one Pilot School leader said, "How can 32 new principals be ready to embrace autonomy? I

had a long training period for this, and the founding heads of our school really 'schooled' us."

The district should also address the challenges highlighted by school leaders that are contributing to unacceptably high levels of attrition and creating a context where nearly half of BPS schools are led by a principal or headmaster with less than four years of experience as a school leader in the district. While current autonomous school leaders are united by a core belief in the value of the district as an organizing structure in public education, as the next generation of leaders grows, that will not be enough reason for many to continue to lead Boston schools.

Next steps:

- Support and train school and network teams to understand and leverage the flexibilities available to all schools to accelerate professional growth and student learning.
- Cultivate new autonomous school leaders through principal credentialing programs that place aspiring principals in BPS autonomous schools for their residency experience.
- Ensure that mentors for new autonomous school leaders have recent or current experience leading autonomous schools.

6. Further construct and implement a school accountability model for all district schools that emphasizes effective practice and student success, with clear supports and consequences based on school performance.

"We need to reaffirm that the intent of our system is to have an appropriate balance between support and accountability."

—District leader

Boston's schools will function best as a system under a single accountability model that promotes school and leader growth while holding schools to consistent and high standards of performance, with targeted support and intervention when needed. BPS has made notable strides in this area with a preliminary district-wide model of school accountability, building on the Pilot School Quality Review. For this system to work, *all schools*—not just a subset of autonomous schools—must participate in a regular, standard process like SQR, with a single set of rewards, supports and interventions applied in a customized way that is based on an assessment of an individual school's needs

For example, school leaders should know in advance why their school may be eligible for increased instructional support from the district (or a third-party partner), why they may be subject to more or fewer walkthroughs or evaluations, and why they may face consequences such as removal from their position.

The tone in which accountability and support are provided is important, too. Especially in the context of school-district relations described earlier, Boston's approach, in the words of one school leader, "needs to be less about 'I am evaluating you' and more about 'we have a system to help you be successful.'"

The Denver Public Schools offer an example of how in this model, autonomy and accountability go hand in hand. In Denver, schools are held strictly accountable for meeting their performance goals. A School Performance Framework (SPF) measures the performance of schools on an annual basis taking into account student performance status, student performance growth, attendance, college readiness and parent satisfaction. Innovation schools and charters are subject to a School Quality Review (SQR) every three years. Failure to meet the goals laid out in their proposal may result in support, intervention, or even closing the school.

Similarly, New York City implemented an A-F school report card, which is the result of a school review that combines both quantitative and qualitative data. Criteria include district predictive assessments, attendance, surveys of parents, teachers and older students, and observations conducted during a one-and-a-half day Quality Review site visit. The score is based on school climate (15%), student performance (25%), and student progress (60%). Schools get extra credit for closing achievement gaps. Those that fail to make progress after three years are phased out and replaced.

Next steps:

- Formalize the new system-wide school accountability model of annual school assessments of progress and categorizing of schools by performance, as well as multi-year cycles of School Quality Reviews.

- Develop a concrete set of measures of success, criteria for action, and potential supports and consequences, to be applied consistently across all schools under the new accountability system.
- Define the path to full, system-wide implementation of the new accountability model.
- Establish a team with the credibility and trust from their peers to lead these efforts.

7. Prioritize candidates for the Superintendent position who are committed to sustaining a system of high-performing schools that balances autonomy and accountability, and who bring a track record of uniting people in a culture that values collaboration, leadership and performance.

"Ultimately we all want the same thing—to jointly raise children who are successful in life. Given the time and place, people are willing to work together to make it happen."

—Pilot School leader

"In Boston, we rise and fall together."

—District leader

As described earlier in this report, a cross-functional working group of school and district leaders came together over many months to review data and provide input on these findings and recommendations. One theme that became clear was that most Boston team members operate in a world of "us" and "them," that is, "schools" and "the district." To move forward effectively, the team agreed that this dynamic must change. In the words of one participants, "we must build a culture of 'we.'"

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

Culture change is no easy feat. But Boston is at a turning point, with the progress described earlier and the opportunity to name a new leader to take the district forward beginning in 2015. We strongly recommend that this leader be a person who embraces the principles outlined above—autonomy with accountability in a high-performing "system of schools"—who has the ability to unite people around his or her vision, and who has a track record of building the type of culture that Boston will require to move beyond old debates and into a new era of collaboration and transformation.

The district's ability to make the most of this turning point will make the difference between maintaining the status quo and radically accelerating academic and life prospects for Boston students.

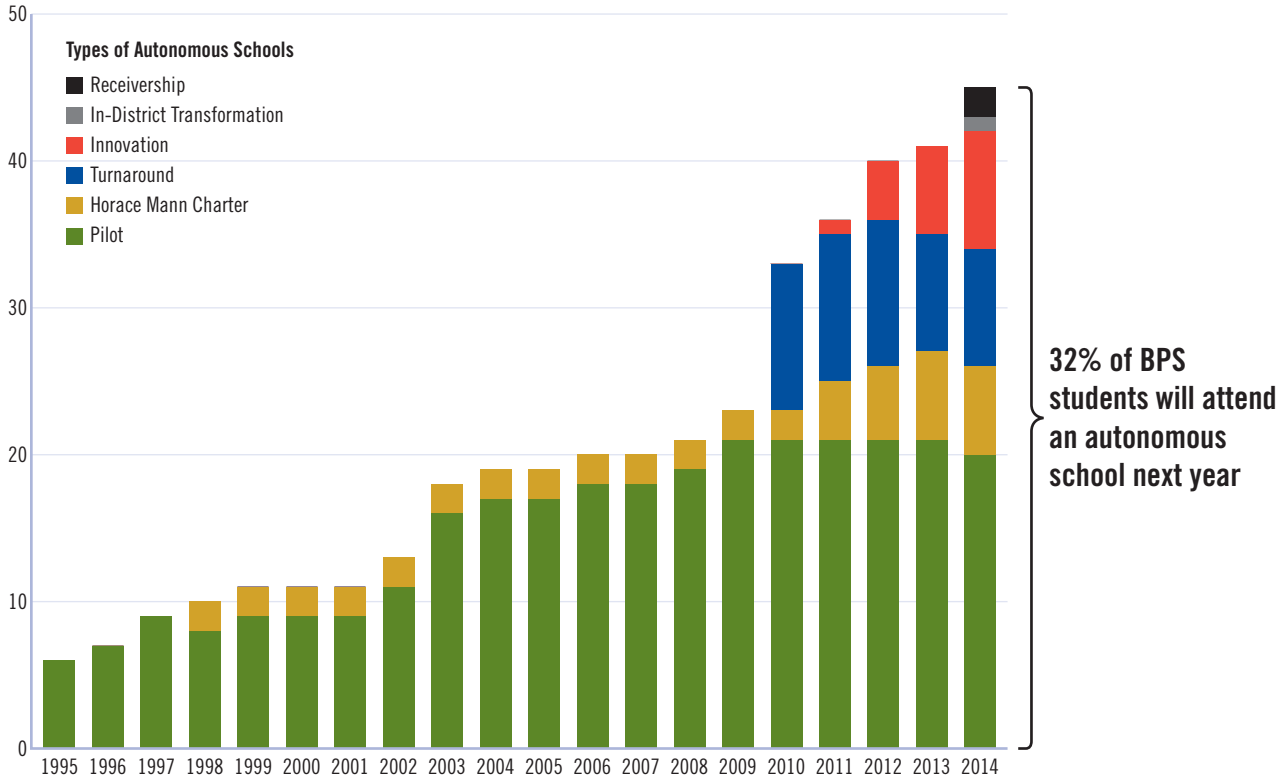
If Boston acts on the recommendations in this report, we believe:

- Schools will be empowered to more strategically organize resources to drive student learning
- The system will embody a diversity of programs that reflect the diversity of our communities
- The system will be better able to develop, evaluate and scale innovative practices
- Teachers will feel more ownership over instruction, be empowered via shared decision-making and grow as leaders in their schools
- Leadership capacity will increase through formal and informal professional development

And most importantly, we will make it possible for all students to learn, grow and ultimately realize our vision for The BPS Graduate.[32]

APPENDIX 1

Growth of Autonomous Schools in the Boston Public Schools

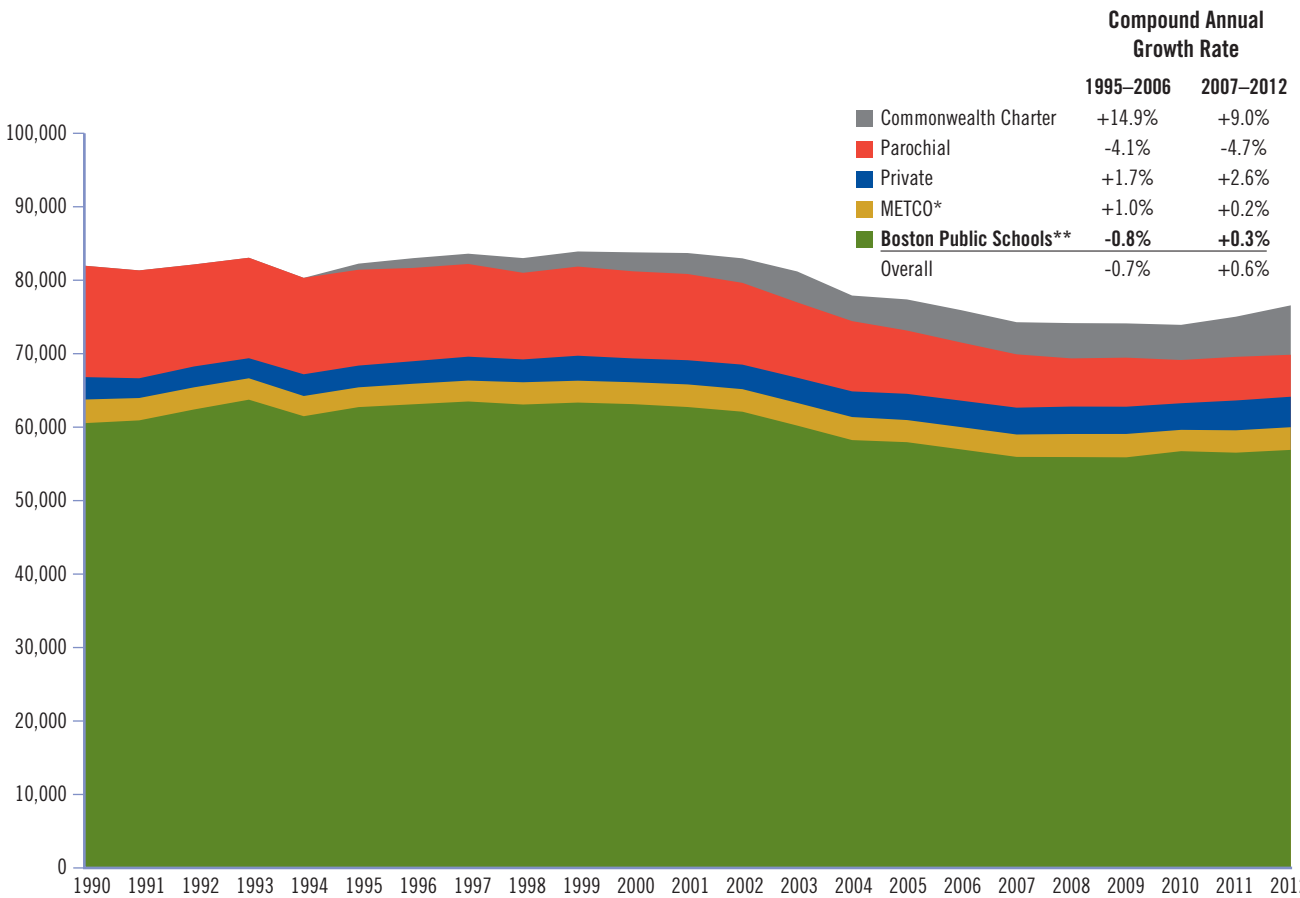


Note: This analysis assumes current enrollment of Mildred K-8 & Henderson Elem will be attending autonomous schools next year

Source: http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/941

APPENDIX 2

Growth of Boston Student Population, 1990–2012



* METCO is a state-run program that enables low-income minority youth from Boston and Springfield to attend school in "racially isolated" suburbs

** Includes Horace Mann Charters

Source: DESE, ERS analysis

APPENDIX 3

Members of BPS Cross-Functional Working Group

Hervé Anoh
Headmaster of Lyon High School

Antonieta Bolomey
Asst. Superintendent for English Language Learners

Catherine Carney
Assistant Chief of Curriculum & Instruction

Ann Chan
Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources

Kamal Chavda
Chief Data & Accountability Officer

Linda Chen
Chief of Curriculum & Instruction

Jill Conrad
Sr. Advisor for Human Capital Strategy

Corbett Coutts
Principal of Rogers Middle School

Eileen de los Reyes
Deputy Superintendent for Academics

Melissa Dodd
Chief of Staff

Mary Driscoll
Principal of Edison K-8 School

Laura Dziorny
Deputy Chief of Staff

Ayla Gavins
Principal of Mission Hill K-8 School

Scott Given
Chief Executive Officer of Unlocking Potential

Graciela Hopkins
Principal of Baldwin Early Learning Pilot Academy

Peggy Kemp
Headmaster of Fenway High School

Don Kennedy
Chief Financial Officer

Beatriz McConnie-Zapater
Headmaster of Boston Day & Evening Academy

John McDonough
Interim Superintendent

Lynne Mooney-Teta
Headmaster of Boston Latin School

Eileen Nash
Deputy Superintendent of Individualized Learning

Linda Nathan
Special Advisor to the Superintendent

Ligia Noriega
Headmaster of English High School

Sung-Joon (Sunny) Pai
Director of ELL & Alt Programs at Charlestown High School

Kim Rice
Chief Operating Officer

Joe Shea
Deputy Superintendent of Operations

Mary Skipper
Assistant Superintendent for Network G (High Schools)

Aaron Stone
Teacher Leader at Boston Day & Evening Academy

Arthur Unobskey
Principal of Irving Middle School

Traci Walker-Griffith
Principal of Eliot K-8 Innovation School

Ann Walsh
Governing Board Chair at Lee Pilot Academy

Naia Wilson
Headmaster of New Mission High School

Ross Wilson
Assistant Superintendent, Human Capital

APPENDIX 4

Boston Public Schools and Related Staff Interviewed for the Research

	Total	School Leaders	Teachers	District Leaders	Others
Total	**116**	**38**	**33**	**31**	**14**
Traditional	20	12	8	n/a	Includes reps from BTU, CCE, DESE, Mass Insight, and teachers from Commonwealth Charters and traditional schools outside of BPS
Pilot	30	12	18		
Innovation	7	5	2		
Horace Mann Charter	11	8	3		
Turnaround	3	1	2		

APPENDIX 5

Current Boston Public Schools School-Based Autonomies

TABLE A5.A

Staffing

Decision Type	Schools can…	Traditional	Turnaround	Pilot	Horace Mann	Innovation
HOW MUCH	decide number of staff for each instructional position	limited by ELL rules, IEPs, & class size maxima		yes, w/in ELL rules & IEPs		depends on IP
	decide number of staff for each non-instructional position	only for AP's or increasing above required positions		yes, except SPED coordinator, nurses, and 1 clerical guild position		depends on IP
	determine staff compensation	stipends only	significant stipends and performance bonuses	significant flexibility for stipends and setting salary above schedule		yes for stipends, IP may specify flexibility to raise salary
HOW	create new staff positions, job descriptions or hiring criteria	set by district/BTU		yes for teacher/ clerical positions (others negotiated)	yes	depends on IP
	assign existing staff new roles and duties	voluntary basis only	yes, w/notice	yes	yes	depends on IP
	determine teacher load and/or class size	limited by CBA class size maxima		yes	yes	depends on IP
	determine staff evaluation criteria/process	no	no	may use unique process or add criteria (w/district forms & w/in state regs)	flexibility w/in state regs (most use BPS system)	IP may specify unique process or add criteria (w/in state regs)
	establish dispute resolution process outside of BTU grievance system	no	no	yes	yes	depends on IP
WHO OR WHAT	market vacancies to external candidates (open-posting)	with 60% faculty vote or $1250 stipend per position	yes (through BPS website)			
	hire teachers & paras best suited to school needs, regardless of seniority	limited for paras, yes for teachers w/ "bumping"	yes (often district-managed)	yes (except when para "recall lists")	yes	depends on IP (most same as pilots)
	hire non-instructional staff (nurses, clerical, custodians, security, SPED compliance)	some vacancies and non-shared student support positions (no custodians or security)			yes	possible in IP (none currently specify)
	hire licensed non-district itinerant staff (therapists, etc.)	no	no	unclear	yes	unclear
	excess permanent teachers who are not a good fit to district pool	no	yes	only proficient teachers (others must be evaluated)		depends on IP (most do)
	dismiss permanent teachers from school (& district)	only through evaluation process			yes	possible in IP (none currently specify)
	dismiss paraprofessionals or non-instructional staff	only through evaluation process	yes	unclear	yes	possible in IP (none currently specify)
	opt out of union seniority requirements during layoffs	no	yes	no	yes	possible in IP (none currently specify)

TABLE A5.B

Budget

Decision Type	Schools can…	Traditional	Turnaround	Pilot	Horace Mann	Innovation
HOW MUCH	receive funds according to student needs (WSF)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	opt out of district services and receive dollars to school budget instead	very limited (i.e., some school materials)		limited (total discretionary services are ~<5% of school budget)		
	choose whether to budget on actual or average salary	must budget on average district salary		yes after y1 (w/limits on switching back)	yes after y1	depends on IP (currently all specify actual)
	rollover funds allocated by district from year to year	no	no	no	yes	depends on IP (currently 1 school)
	form a 501c3 for fundraising	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	receive Title I, IDEA, & other grants directly from state/fed. gov't	no	no	no	yes, except nutrition programs	no
	keep funds allocated due to enrollment over-projection	no	no	up to 5% over-projected funds	no (except 1 school)	no

TABLE A5.C

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Decision Type	Schools can…	Traditional	Turnaround	Pilot	Horace Mann	Innovation
HOW MUCH	determine number & range of electives	range/content only (not number of courses)		yes	yes	yes
HOW	set curriculum sequence & timing	no	yes			depends on IP
	determine instructional & pedagogical practices	most but not all	yes	yes	yes	yes
	select & monitor ELL/SPED services	no	no	"collaborate" w/district (w/in IEPs & DOJ Agreement)		
	opt out of district Student Information System (grades, etc.)	no	no	unclear	depends on Charter	unclear
WHO OR WHAT	set standards for Core subjects (Math, ELA, Science)	no - accountable to MA tests and standards				
	set standards for non-Core subjects	no - must use MA frameworks		yes	yes	depends on IP
	choose/design curricular content to meet state standards	no - must use district curriculum		yes	yes	depends on IP
	choose instructional materials (textbooks, software, etc.)	district may dictate some materials	yes	yes	yes	depends on IP
	use alternative summative student assessments	no - all students take state tests				
	opt out of/use alternative predictive student assessments	no - must use district assessments		yes, historically – currently unclear	depends on Charter	depends on IP
	use alternative ELL assessments	no	no	unclear	no - must use district assessments	
	set more rigorous graduation requirements	no	no	yes	yes	depends on IP
	set promotion requirements	no	no	yes	yes	depends on IP
	determine ELL program, service model or curriculum	no	no	"collaborate" w/ district (w/in DOJ Agreement)	depends on Charter	depends on IP
	determine SPED program, service model or curriculum	no	no	"collaborate" with district to promote inclusion	depends on Charter	depends on IP

TABLE A5.D

Schedule & Calendar

Decision Type	Schools can…	Traditional	Turnaround	Pilot	Horace Mann	Innovation
HOW MUCH	increase teacher summer PD/planning time	no	up to 5 days	yes, with pay for >95 extra hrs/yr	yes	yes, w/varying extra pay
	lengthen teacher work day	very limited	stipends cover 30 more min/day	yes, with pay for >95 extra hrs/yr	yes	yes, w/varying extra pay
	increase teacher PD time	may add 10 extra hrs at real hrly rate	stipends cover up to 100 extra hrs	yes, with pay for >95 extra hrs/yr	yes	yes, w/varying extra pay
	adjust the amount of Common planning time	very limited	yes	yes	yes	yes
	increase work hours for non-teaching staff	no	extra 30 min/day for some staff	yes, with pay for >95 extra hrs/yr	yes	yes, if in IP
	determine number of school days/year	no	yes – min. of 180 days w/last day before June 30			
	establish/manage independent summer school	no - managed by district	yes	yes, with pay for >95 extra hrs/yr	yes	yes, w/varying extra pay
	extend the official school day (for all students)	no (w/few exceptions)	yes, w/funding, staff capacity & district approval for transport			
	establish optional before/after school programs run by partners, volunteers or school staff	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
HOW	open on BPS closed days (evacuation day, etc.)	no	no	yes, but district may require payment for transport cost		possible if in IP (may require payment)
	opt out of mandated "on-the-clock" hours for teachers (flex time)	limited, w/consent	limited, w/notice	yes	yes	yes
	adjust the length of instructional blocks	w/55% BTU staff approval	yes	yes	yes	yes
	set the Master Schedule (which students are taught what, when, and by whom)	w/55% BTU staff approval	yes	yes	yes	yes
	set high school start & end time(s)	no	yes, w/transport constraints		yes	yes, if in IP
	set ES, MS & K-8 start & end time(s)	no, w/a few exceptions	significant flexibility (w/in transport cost)		yes	yes, if in IP
	set different start/end times for different days of the week (early release periods, etc.)	no	some flexibility	yes, w/transport constraints		possible if in IP

TABLE A5.E

Professional Development

Decision Type	Schools can…	Traditional	Turnaround	Pilot	Horace Mann	Innovation
HOW MUCH	increase summer PD/planning time for teachers	may not require w/o teacher vote	up to 5 days, w/notice	yes, with pay for > 95 extra hrs	yes	yes, w/varying extra pay
	increase teacher PD time	max 10 extra hrs w/ pay at real hrly rate	stipends cover up to 100 extra hrs	yes, with pay for > 95 extra hrs	yes	yes, w/varying extra pay
	increase common planning time	very limited	stipends cover up to 100 extra hrs	yes, with pay for > 95 extra hrs	yes	yes, w/varying extra pay
HOW	set PD schedule	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	set common planning time schedule	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	determine PD/common planning time format	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
	use non-district PD providers	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
WHO OR WHAT	opt out of state/federally mandated PD	no	no	no	no	no
	exchange PD time for Common Planning Time, and vice versa	no	yes	yes	yes	yes, if in IP
	determine PD needs/objectives of PD and Common planning time	yes, w/some BTU & district requirements		yes	yes	yes, if in IP
	select or develop non-district PD materials/content	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

TABLE A5.F

Governance

Decision Type	Schools can…	Traditional	Turnaround	Pilot	Horace Mann	Innovation
HOW MUCH	decide how many students to admit	no	no	some schools have negotiated w/district	yes (locked into charter)	depends on IP
	decide how many/which ELL/SWD students to admit	no	no	no, but may establish programs/models catering to specific student needs (e.g. inclusion model)		
HOW	Increase the authority of the school governing board/council (budget approval, etc.)	no	no	yes	yes	depends on IP (most do specify)
	set working conditions for teachers	no	for some conditions, w/notice	yes, negotiated annually w/teachers	yes, w/notice	yes, negotiated annually w/teachers
	supervise & evaluate principal	no	no	yes, but supt. may intervene	yes	depends on IP (currently 2 schools)
	establish a separate admissions process	no, except exam schools	no	high schools may, but no academic screening	state lottery system	depends on IP
WHO OR WHAT	select principal	yes, with supt. approval				
	fire principal	no	no	yes, with supt. approval	yes	no
	determine school governing board composition rules	no – set in BTU contract		no - set in Ed Reform Act & BTU contract	yes, with some exceptions	

Appendix 5 Sources

- BTU 2010-2016 Contract
- "How Long (Days, Hours, PD) is the School Year?" (BTU, 2012)
- Boston Autonomous Schools Manual, April 2014 (draft)
- MA Horace Mann Charter & Innovation school legislation:
  - http://www.mass.gov/edu/docs/2013/20130626-2013-innovation-schools-legislative-rpt.pdf
  - http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/tech_advisory/03_1.html
- MA curriculum frameworks: http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html
- Horace Mann Charter schools' MOUs (both A & B)
- Innovation schools' Innovation Plans
- "District Turnaround Plan & School-Specific Key Features" (6/29/2010)
- BPS, BTU & Joint Resolution Committee Arbitration, (2009)
- "School Site Council Manual" (BPS/BTU, Oct 2013)
- BPS Superintendent's Staffing Circulars
- Settlement Agreement between US Dept. of Justice & BPS (re: Language Learners), 2010
- "Comparison of Innovation Schools, Pilot Schools, Horace Mann Charter Schools and Commonwealth Charter Schools" (CCE, 2010)
- "Overview of Language Governing Autonomies--for Each Type of School" (BPS, 2013)

APPENDIX 6

Growth in Scores by School Type and Subject

FIGURE A6.A **Elementary ELA**

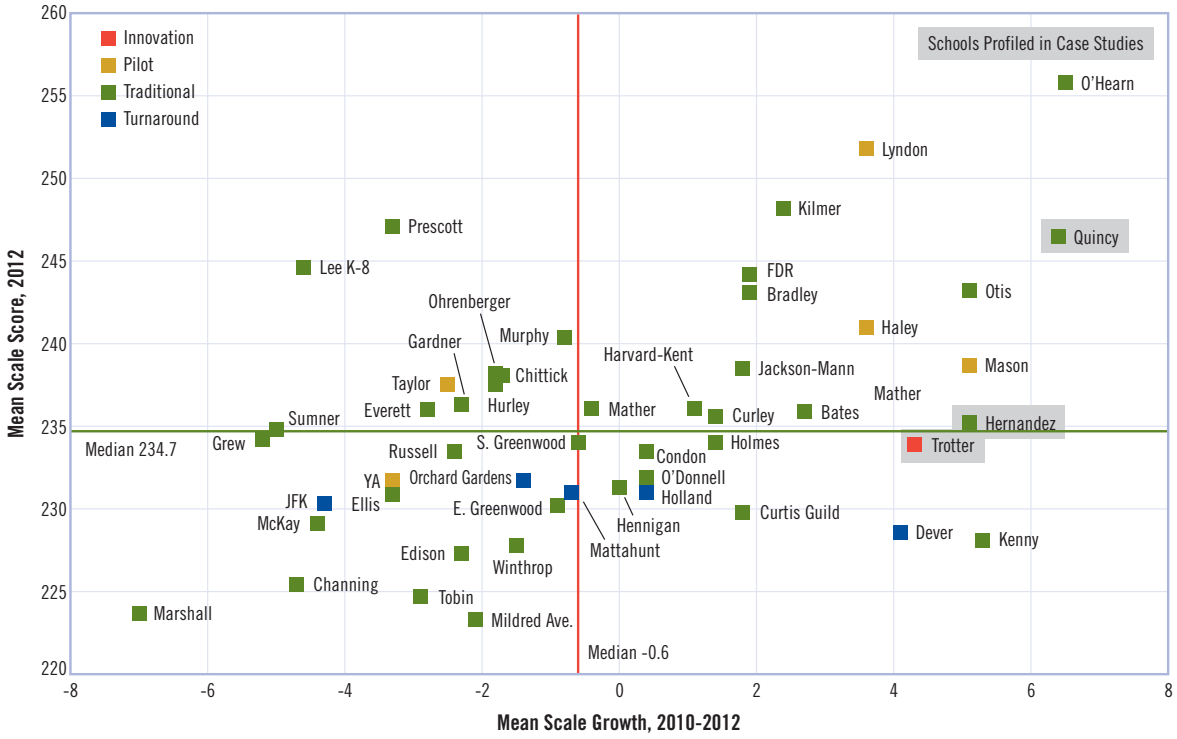


FIGURE A6.B **Elementary Math**

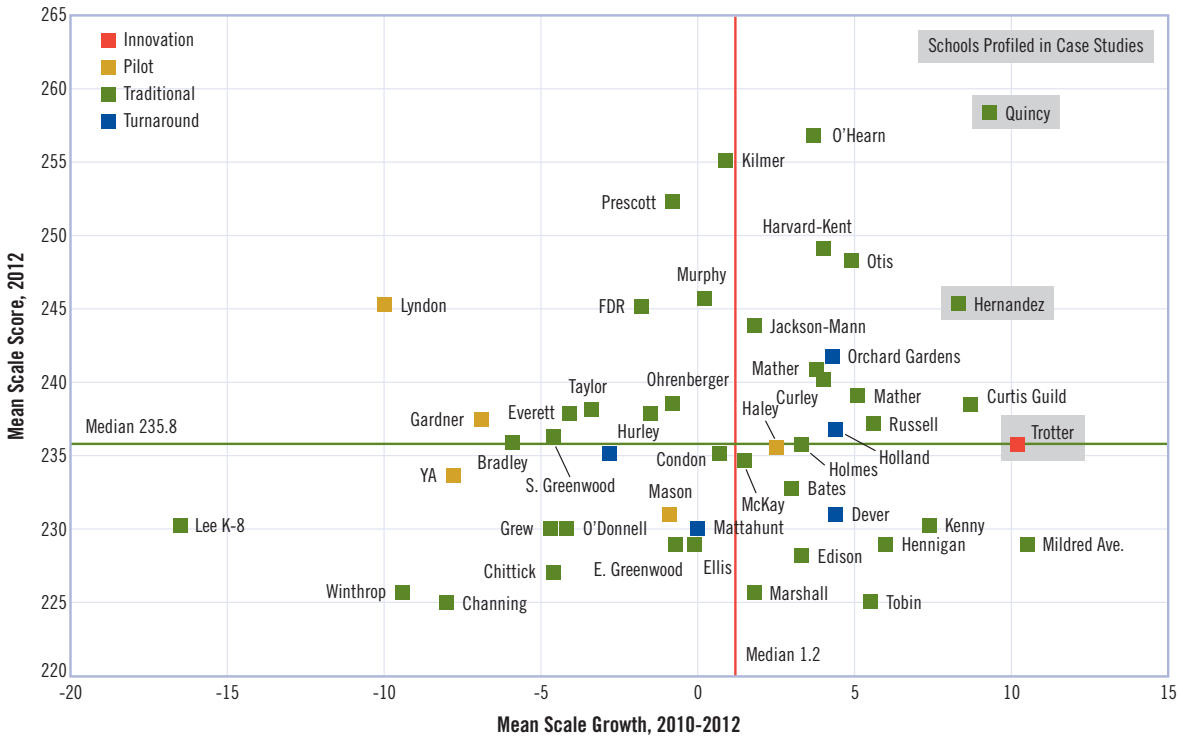


FIGURE A6.C **Middle School ELA**

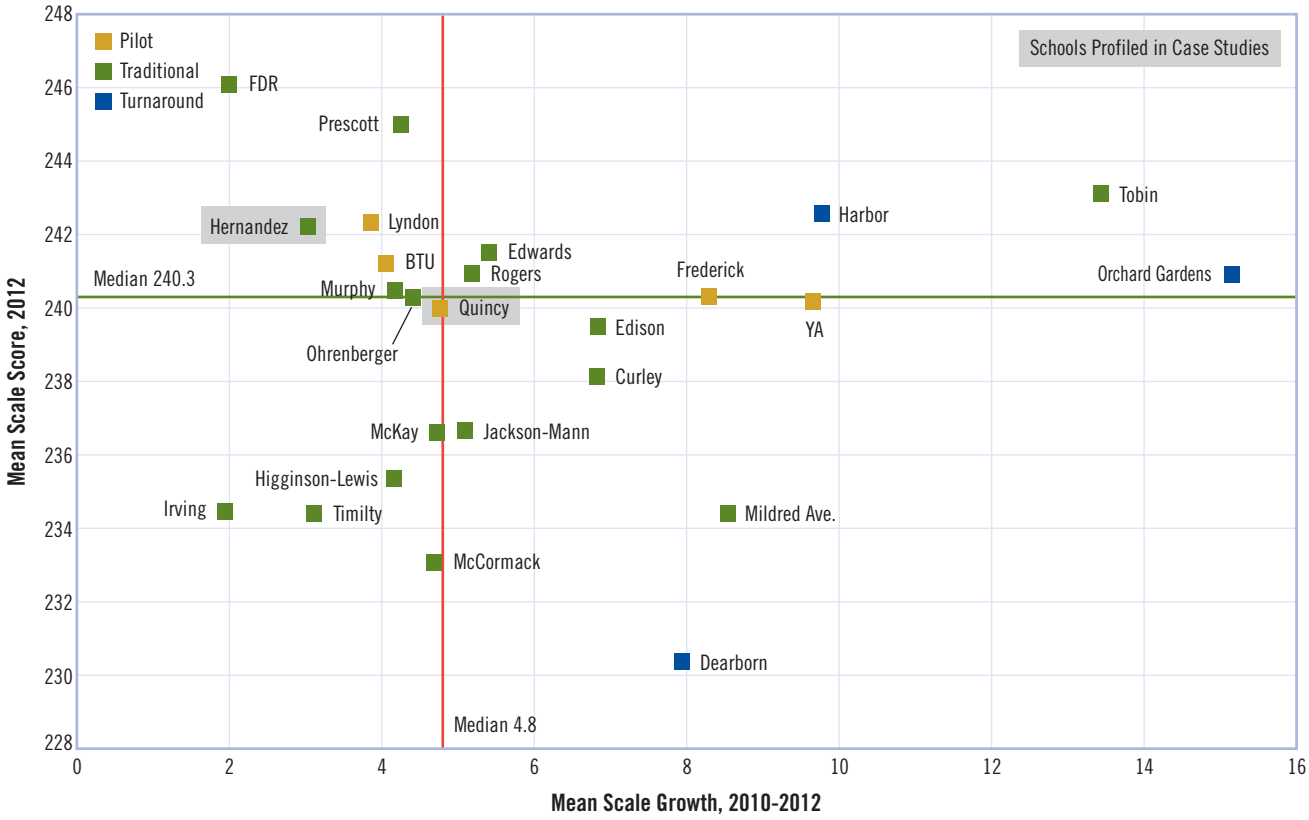


FIGURE A6.D **Middle School Math**

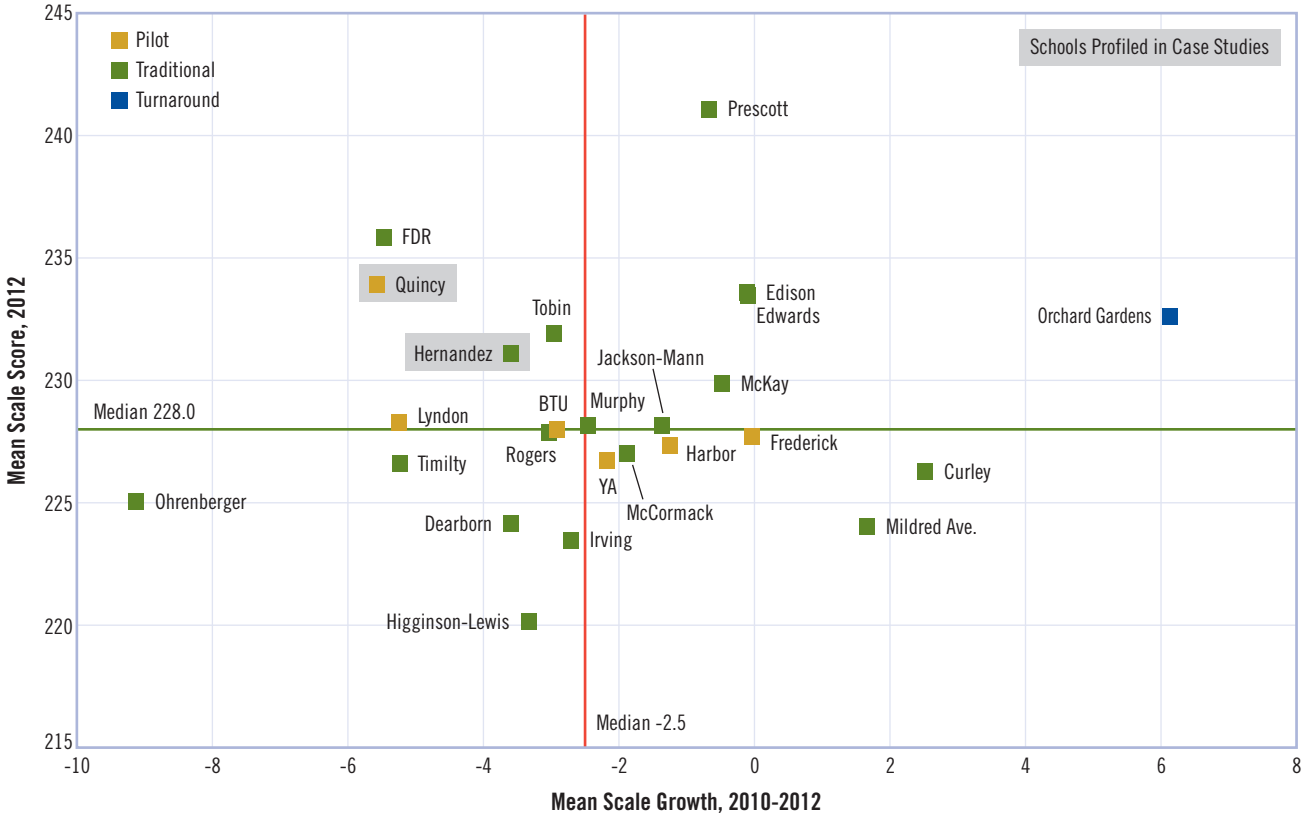


FIGURE A6.E **High School ELA**

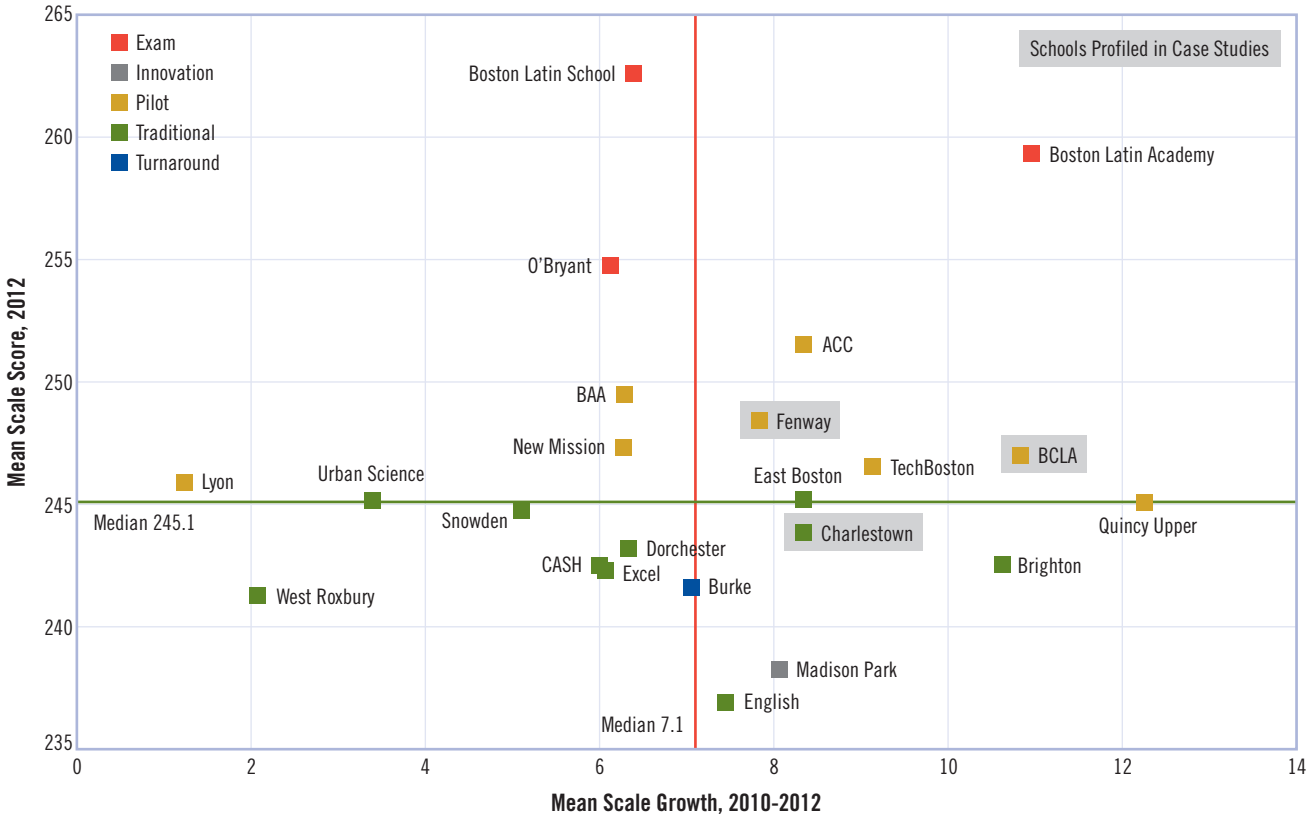
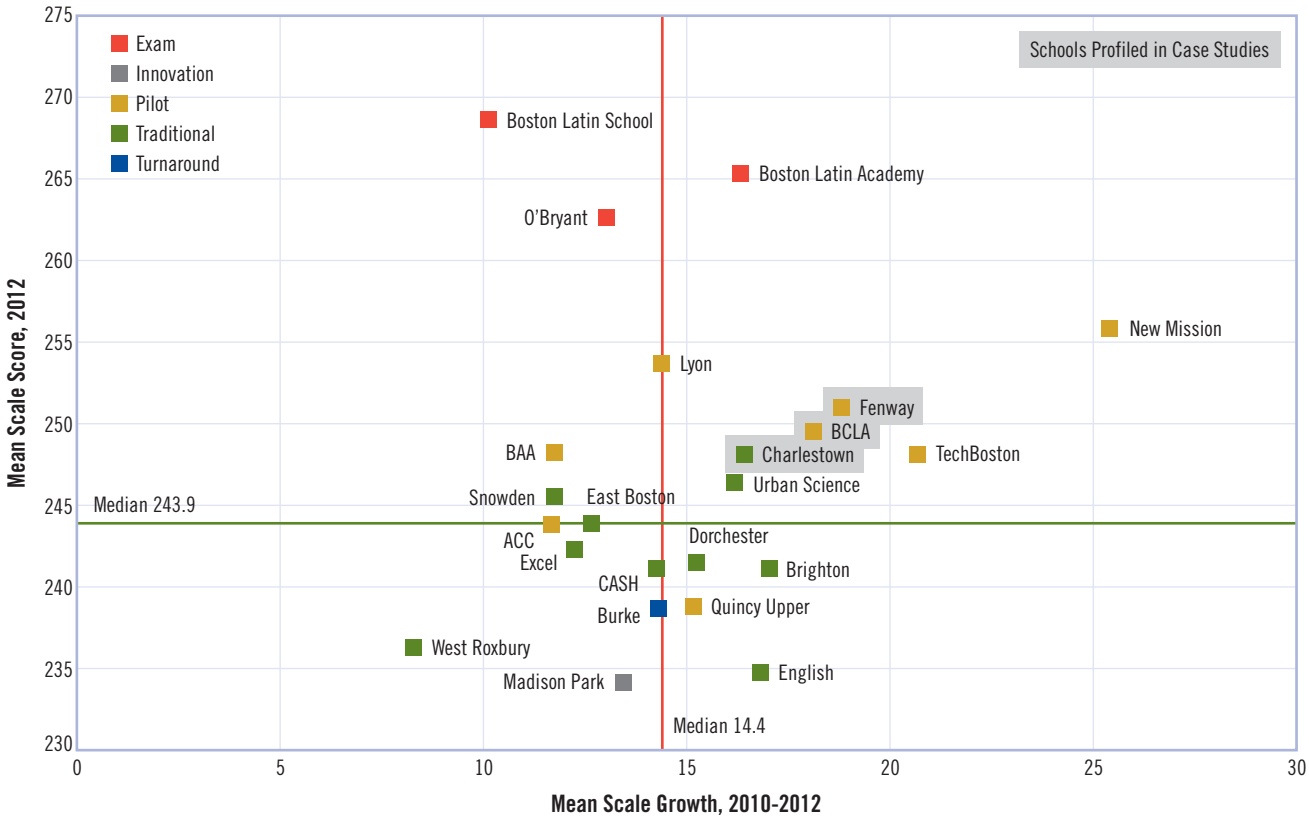


FIGURE A6.F **High School Math**



APPENDIX 7

Case Studies of BPS "Top Quadrant Schools"

Boston Community Leadership Academy

Background

The Boston Community Leadership Academy (BCLA) is a Pilot high school serving 521 students in grades 9-12 in Hyde Park. With a "college preparatory curriculum" and a "community leadership theme," BCLA strives to provide personalized instruction to its highly diverse student body[1]. BCLA was chosen as a case study site because of consistent high performance and student growth as measured by MCAS. The principal, Brett Dickens, has been at BCLA for 4 years.

Key Strategic Practices

- The school provides motivated teachers with **a variety of school leadership** positions (e.g. mentor teachers, instructional leadership team members). This practice serves two primary purposes: (1) it channels the talent of high quality teachers toward school-wide improvement; and (2) it gives gifted teachers a sense of career progress and thus a compelling reason to stay at BCLA. Always on the lookout for leaders, principal Brett Dickens says she finds teachers with "academic passion or a desire to re-invent the school" and offers them leadership positions.
- Teachers plan professional development for the school that is tailored to the school's mission and focus. The current focus is **cross curriculum literacy**. Teachers commit to 72 hours of professional development time outside of normal school hours as part of their pilot school election to work agreement (EWA). All professional development is targeted at "empowering all students to become leaders and closing achievement gaps," in the words of the principal.
- Teachers have **ample time to collaborate with their peers**. Teachers meet regularly in a variety of groups: curricular teams, student success teams, school-provided professional development sessions on the literacy and the Common Core State Standards.
- Teachers offer students **thematic advisory periods** that are focused on issues such as hunger and homelessness or youth advocacy. Multiple advisory teachers that share a focus area coordinate advisory instruction across their classrooms.

How do they do it?

Speaking about her own leadership, current principal Brett Dickens says that she "focuses on empowering staff to take the lead—I set high expectations and I don't micro-manage."

A current teacher at BCLA expanded on the positive benefits of teachers having instructional autonomy. He discussed how he and his colleagues constantly adjust their unit and curriculum planning in response to assessments of student understanding. He credited teachers' freedom to BCLA's status as an autonomous school, "Most of my colleagues in non-autonomous schools do not have very much pedagogical autonomy. A lot of the stuff I've done in past years would not be possible in a non-autonomous school."

Charlestown High School

Background

Charlestown High School (CHS) is a traditional district school that serves about 940 students in grades 9-12. As a comprehensive high school, CHS prides itself on offering a wide variety of academic and enrichment opportunities to its highly diverse student body. This school was chosen as a case study because of its consistently high performance and student growth as measured by MCAS.

Key Strategic Practices

- CHS is divided into seven small learning communities (SLCs) that **provide students with personalized attention and support**. Each SLC has specialized staff (a teacher leader and an assistant SLC leader). SLCs are given significant autonomy, which enable groups of teachers to take ownership of a unified and thematic course of study and provide tailored student supports.
- The principal at CHS, Will Thomas, offers high performing teachers **various leadership roles** in order to improve retention and teacher engagement. Teacher leadership roles include: SLC leaders, content team leaders, school site council members, and extracurricular activity leaders. Many of these roles are rewarded with stipends.
- Drawing on teacher surveys, **CHS devises customized professional development "mini courses"** for their teachers. Based on their own interests, teachers choose which courses to attend.
- CHS leadership has designed a schedule that allows **lots of time for teacher collaboration**. Schedule creation, which is a complex process that is currently managed by a highly skilled math teacher, allows teachers to meet once a week in content teams, and twice a week as part of their SLCs, in addition to contractual meeting times that occur after school hours. Teachers in SLCS have common planning periods which allow for spontaneous collaboration.
- The school is led by a high-functioning, highly collaborative **leadership team**.
- An **internal teacher evaluation team** meets weekly to calibrate their assessment of teacher performance, and visits classrooms together in order to jointly reflect on and refine their practice.
- The school constantly **adapts class size and course offerings** in order to respond to student need.

How do they do it?

- When asked to comment on CHS's success, Principal Will Thomas said, "**Our biggest asset is always personnel**." He added, "All schools need talented and hardworking people who are supported by both the school and the district."
- According to Principal Will Thomas, "Having the autonomy to build a good staff around you is key," for building a successful school. Commenting on **BPS's recent extension of hiring autonomies** to all district schools, he said, "It has been great this year to be able to hire strong candidates early. It gives us time for planning and summer professional development."
- One administrator at CHS emphasized the fact that **many of the school's leadership team members were trained by leaders of autonomous schools** within BPS. This training allowed CHS administrators to "find creative solutions" to problems and be highly resourceful in the BPS context.
- CHS is **able to use resources flexibly because of its large size and high-need student population**. With more than 930 students, and a higher percentage of English learner, low income, and students with disabilities compared to the district average, CHS receives additional resources that it can use creatively[2]. For example, the school provides stipends to many of its teacher leaders by leveraging these additional resources.

Fenway High School

Background

Fenway High School is a small Pilot high school that serves about 330 9th–12th graders. Recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a Blue Ribbon School, Fenway offers a personalized environment combined with a wide variety of alternative learning options for students. It was chosen as a case study school because of its consistently high performance on MCAS and its above average levels of student growth. The principal, Peggy Kemp, has been leading Fenway for 11 years.

Key Strategic Practices

- Fenway staff designs **tailored professional development offerings** that are specific to their needs, and teacher content teams develop their own curricula. In the words of the principal, "When we see a need to go beyond [existing curricula] . . . we go beyond."
- Principal Peggy Kemp emphasizes that her **approach to retaining high quality teachers** has three primary components: (1) "Creating collaborative learning opportunities for adults;" (2) giving teachers "independence over decisions in their content area;" and (3) offering leadership roles.
- Teachers who take on leadership roles (e.g. content team leaders, house leaders) **are offered a high degree of responsibility and autonomy**, and some are offered stipends.
- Teacher teams **work to define group goals** based on student need before they define their individual performance goals—this practice encourages collective responsibility for students.
- **Fenway is organized in a "house" structure**, which gives students the opportunity to loop with their teachers over a three year period. This structure encourages personalized student support, a strong sense of community, and more time spent on learning.
- **Students are grouped into advisory periods** that last for four years—this allows students and staff to develop strong connections and provides students with high levels of social support.

How do they do it?

When discussing her school's success, Principal Peggy Kemp emphasizes the importance of Fenway's autonomy under Pilot School status. "Autonomies have communicated to our administration, our faculty and our board that we can take ownership of our success," she said. **Budget autonomies** make her, "more efficient with my resources," and **curricular, assessment and scheduling autonomies**, "allow us to think about what skills we want to teach, how we want to assess them and what is the most supportive setting in which students can learn."

Principal Kemp also discussed the importance of **governance autonomy**. She made it clear that having a strong advisory board has been a tremendous boon to the school. It is a "resource, an advocate and a fundraiser," and it "makes a huge difference."

Hernandez K–8

Background

The Hernandez serves about 420 students in grades preK–8 in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood. As a "Discovery" school, it has autonomy over curriculum and instruction. The Hernandez is a bilingual demonstration school where all students learn in both English and Spanish. The Hernandez was chosen as a case study site because it had high student performance and high student growth rates based on MCAS scores. The principal, Ana Tavares, who previously worked as director of operations at the Hernandez, is currently in her first full year leading the school.

Key Strategic Practices

- Principal Ana Tavares organized a professional development institute for her staff in the summer of 2013 that was teacher-developed and, in large part, teacher-led. **The training was tailored for her teaching staff**. During planning, teachers' "voices and needs were in the forefront."
- **More than half of the teaching staff take on leadership roles** of some sort, such as organizing fundraisers or leading a content or instructional leadership team—leaders are given stipends to compensate them for their time.
- Teachers have **ample meeting time**: multi-grade professional learning communities are given time to meet twice a week to jointly plan and discuss student work.
- The **school is drawing on the Data Wise process** to guide the work of their teacher teams. This process helps teachers focus on collaboration on joint analysis of student work and targeted instructional improvement.[3]
- The Instructional Leadership Team—which is staffed by administrators and teachers— **jointly decides on the instructional focus of the school**. This year the Hernandez is focusing, in part, on bringing up the performance of their lowest performing English Language Learners (ELLS).

How do they do it?

- Tavares emphasized the **importance of curricular autonomy,** saying, "As a Discovery school the Hernandez has autonomy over our curricular development. This has allowed us to align our work in two languages and provide project based learning to students. We would not be able to do the work we do and provide the highest quality curriculum without this autonomy."
- Tavares also discussed **the value of BPS central office's training and support for new school leaders**. "The creation of a new principal's cohort and professional development specific to entering a building and creating structures has been extremely helpful," she said.

Quincy Elementary School

Background

Josiah Quincy elementary school is a traditional district school that serves over 830 students in grades preK-5th. A "level one school that serves as a model for other Boston Public Schools," the Quincy offers a wide variety of academic options to its students and community, such as: robotics classes, dance troupe, orchestra, and visual arts classes, and workshops for parents in both Mandarin and English.[4] The Quincy was chosen as a case study school because of its consistent high performance and high student growth as measured by the MCAS. The principal, Simon Ho, has been leading the Quincy for 5 years.

Key Strategic Practices

- Principal Simon Ho **keeps teachers engaged** and committed to the school by "giving them . . . voice and responsibility." Teachers can exercise leadership through committees: such as the English language development, technology, planning and school climate committees.
- **Teachers largely volunteer to participate in extensive leadership opportunities** that "all happen outside of school hours," said one Quincy teacher. Teachers volunteer because "folks are engaged in the projects being done."
- **Customized professional development** (PD) offerings are created by the school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) as well as teacher committees. For example, this year the technology committee developed 10 hours of PD to enhance teacher use of technology. This PD was led by in-house instructors in order to "build capacity and ownership," in the words of the principal.
- The principal is **creatively managing resources** and re-assigning personnel to lower class size in the Quincy's 1st and 2nd grade classrooms.
- Student scheduling is driven, as much as possible, **by student need and desire**. "Kids are so receptive to diverse learning," said the principal, who emphasized the school's wide array of enrichment activities, which this year included horseback riding, various musical opportunities and a swimming program.

How do they do it?

- In the words of principal Simon Ho, school leaders at the Quincy are, "**Always thinking outside the box and being proactive**." This type of innovation is necessary, because, "As a traditional school, the Quincy is always tied up with limitations and constraints." For example, **the school must engage in extensive fundraising** ($60,000 so far this year) to support the enrichment opportunities it provides for students. It also receives strong financial support from the parent-organized Josiah Quincy School Association.
- The Quincy's high-need student population and large size **allow it take advantage of flexibilities that not all schools have**. At more than 830 students, Quincy is one of the largest K–5 schools in Boston. In addition, because the Quincy has a far higher percentage of English language learners compared to the district average, it receives significant additional funding which can be combined in unique ways.[5] The Quincy's large size necessitates a relatively large number of classes per grade, which gives the school flexibility to group students and teachers in novel ways. In addition, the number of teachers in each grade level creates unique opportunities for teacher collaboration, sharing of work, and teacher leadership.

Trotter Elementary School

Background

Trotter Elementary is an Innovation School that serves about 400 students in grades K-5 in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood. The Trotter was formerly designated a Turnaround School and given autonomy because of low student performance. However, as of September 2013, the Trotter successfully "exited" turnaround status and is now considered a level one school—Massachusetts' highest-performing accountability category.[6] As an example of its success, the school-wide failure rate in math MCAS went from 57% in 2008 to 5% in 2013. The Trotter was chosen as a case study because of its impressive transformation. Mairead Nolan, the principal, has been at the school for 6 years.

Key Strategic Practices

At the Trotter, the leadership has put in place strategies so that, "**teachers feel they can grow without leaving the classroom**," says the principal. For example, teachers are given opportunities to serve as mentor teachers to Boston University Intern teachers.

In addition to within-classroom leadership opportunities, the Trotter also offers **formal leadership positions to certain teachers**, who are asked to be "new teacher developers." These strategies keep teachers engaged in their work at the Trotter and helps retain them.

The Trotter has very strong structures for **teacher collaboration**. Grade level teams meet twice a week, once to jointly plan, and once in "progress monitoring meetings" to discuss specific students and make suggestions for support. In addition to grade level meetings, there are other forums for teacher teamwork, such as weekly faculty meetings.

The Trotter provides **customized, needs based professional development to its teachers**. "Teachers say which topics they want [to work on] and we find the people," said the principal. Based on their self-identified needs, teachers choose from a menu of professional development options.

How do they do it?

Principal Mairead Nolan gives a large amount of credit for the school's success to the autonomies that it enjoys. Speaking about the different types of autonomies, Mairead said that **freedom to hire her teachers** was, "the first [autonomy] in order of importance." She also valued being able to provide her teachers with the "**Extra time we had for professional development**." This time was used for the progress monitoring meetings and "teachers felt that [progress monitoring] is what led to our initial success." Finally, she mentioned the importance of **curricular freedom**. "We moved away from the district's curriculum and tried to teach more towards the common core," she said. "We had huge gains—no one [in third grade] failed math."

APPENDIX 8

Case Studies of Peer Districts

Demographics of BPS & Comparison Districts:

	Enrollment	White	African-American	Latino	Asian	Other 7*	ELL	F/RP Lunch
Baltimore	85,000	8%	84%	6%	<1%	<1%	4%	85%
Boston	**57,000**	**13%**	**36%**	**40%**	**9%**	**2%**	**30%**	**75%**
Denver	87,000	21%	14%	58%	3%	4%	35%	72%
Lawrence (MA)	13,000	6%	2%	91%	2%	<1%	28%	84%
Los Angeles	665,000	9%	10%	73%	6%	1%	33%	63%
New York City	1,030,000	14%	30%	40%	15%	1%	15%	72%

Source: Data retrieved from district websites to reflect most recent data available. Data for Lawrence was retrieved from the MA DESE website.

Comparison Districts Summary Table:

	Theory of Action	Date of 1st autonomous school	Types of schools	Autonomies	Student achievement
BCPS	"The action is in the schools" and decisions should be made near the action	2009	Charter schools Pre-charter independent schools Autonomous district schools	Full slate of autonomy Full slate of autonomy Full slate of bounded autonomies	Test scores up Graduation rates up
DPS	Autonomy provides families with more high quality choices.	1995	Charter schools Innovation schools District schools	Full slate of autonomy Full slate of autonomy (most opt out of facilities management) Budget, hiring, schedule, can petition for additional autonomies	Charter schools outperforming state averages on test
LPS	Push as many resources as possible to the school level	2012	Autonomous district schools Schools managed by EMOs	Full slate of autonomies Managed by EMO	Scores up across district
LAUSD	Autonomy can turnaround low-performing schools	1992	Pilot Affiliated charters Local Initiative Schools (LIS) Partnership schools (mayoral initiative) Network schools Extended School-based Management Model (ESBMM)	Full slate of autonomies Most, no waiver from Collective Bargaining Agreement Waiver process Staffing, calendar, curriculum Managed by external partner Managed by school council	
NYC DOE	Autonomy is a pre-condition for school improvement	2004, pilot 2007, district-wide	Autonomous district schools	Wide range of autonomies District provides food services, transportation, technology, security	Graduation rates and college readiness improved

* Includes both multi-racial and American Indian. The district with the highest proportion of American Indian students is DPS with 1%.

Baltimore

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) has an enrollment of 85,000 students. Students in BCPS are 84% African-American and 85% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Of the 195 public schools in Baltimore, 31 are district-authorized charter schools, 19 schools run by outside organizations, and 10 Transformation Schools. In addition, since 2009, all schools have "bounded autonomy."

Development of autonomy in Baltimore City Public Schools

When Maryland enacted a charter school law in 2003, BCPS included three models of autonomous schools: Innovation High Schools, New Initiative and Contract Schools. Since 2003, most of those schools have converted to charter status. These five school models have differing levels of autonomy.

- **Innovation High Schools.** Innovation high schools began in 2001 as small independent schools. They are run by a nonprofit governing board. All but one has converted to charter status.
- **New Initiative Schools.** These schools existed before the Maryland charter school law went into effect. New Initiative Schools were small schools, usually including grades K-8, that had autonomy in hiring, finance and instructional focus and practice, with an increased level of accountability. All but one has converted to charter status.
- **Contract Schools.** BCPS has a few contracts with external organizations to run schools. For example, Johns Hopkins University has a contract to run a school. Another example is New Hope which is a special education school run under a contract.
- **Transformation Schools.** Transformation Schools were created as part of Alonso's reform initiative. These schools usually include grades 6-12 and offer a unique curriculum guided by a theme. Independent education entities run these schools.
- **Charter Schools.** Under Maryland law, charter schools are authorized by a district and can be closed by their district. In Baltimore, charter schools are managed by a variety of management organizations—both national and local nonprofits. Teachers at charter schools in Baltimore are district employees and members of the local bargaining unit.

The expansion of autonomies to all schools began in the 2008-2009 school year, one year into Andrés Alonso's tenure as CEO of the Baltimore City Schools. As CEO, Alonso focused on empowering schools: "The theory of action is simple: the action is in the schools. The resources should be in the schools." Dr. Alonso believes that schools have always had agency and that he was only recognizing and extending a *de facto* situation many schools. With bounded autonomy, Alonso intended to introduce transparency into a historically gray area of traditional school autonomy and address an illusion of consistency that enabled the district to overlook the enormous variety of implementation. While autonomy is a fact of school life, there has to be clarity about district priorities and guidance, schools need consistent guidance and support and there must be accountability that makes it clear which areas should in fact be oriented to the system.

With the Initiative Schools, Baltimore had already been providing autonomy to certain schools for more than a decade. Since then, community perceptions of autonomous schools soared but there was no faith in traditional district schools. Alonso saw autonomy not only as a lever to increase student outcomes but also to rebuild the community's ownership of the schools. Dr. Alonso was adamant that schools were run in a collaborative fashion, focused on the needs of the community. To insure parent and community involvement, a schools budget could not be submitted to central office until five parents signed off on it.

Before Alonso came to Baltimore's schools, the enrollment had been declining for decades, so when schools needed be closed, low-performing schools were discontinued. In addition, he focused on expanding successful

programs so that when a failing school closed, students could transfer to a high performing school. In addition, since 2010, there is additional pressure in the form of district-wide school choice for middle and high schools. This provided another outlet for community feedback on schools—and, by requiring schools to recruit students, made schools more responsive to community needs.

Specific autonomies

All schools in Baltimore have "bounded autonomy." Principals have a wide range of autonomy, from curriculum to custodial services. Principal choices are bound by district guidance, which often means selecting options recommended by the district. While schools can propose their own alternatives, most stick with district options.

Budget. Principals have had control over about 80% of their budgets compared to 3% before bounded autonomy. There are very specific district guidelines that structure school budgets, which include programmatic requirements but very few staffing numbers. Still, the district provides approved options and many principals simply select from the list rather than justify individual decisions.

Staffing. Although some staff positions are dictated by district guidelines (e.g. each school is required to have a certified librarian), principals have hiring and exit rights. Tenured teachers with a satisfactory rating can transfer to another school and, if they cannot find another position, enter the excess pool indefinitely. While hiring autonomy was initially very expansive, with recent layoffs schools are expected to hire from the excess pool. In BCPS, even charters operate within the collective bargaining agreement.

Another reform implemented by Alonso is a new district-teachers union contract, which has replaced a conventional seniority system with career pathways. Educators have more control over the pace of their own career advancement and associated salary increases.

Curriculum. There is a district curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Implementation of the curriculum includes using district-selected assessments and participating in district provided professional development. Schools can elect to opt out of the district curriculum for literacy and math if they complete documentation of their planned curriculum. There are also district programmatic requirements that guide curricular choices (for example, World Languages beginning in middle schools and an art program).

Scheduling and Calendar. Baltimore bell start and end times vary, but the amount of instructional time is consistent, except for some charter schools. All schools, regardless of school model, are granted the autonomy to deviate from the district calendar.

District Support of Schools / Networks

To support individual schools, Baltimore has created an Office of New Initiatives and networks of schools. The Office of New Initiatives oversees the application and startup of charter, transformation and innovation schools.

School support is organized by networks of 15 networks of approximately 13 schools each. The network structure was implemented in 2009 to address the expansion of autonomy and resulting need for a different form of district support. School networks are determined by grade levels served and geographic region. Schools get all technical assistance and support from the networks. School principals are made aware of the services available and are expected to ask for support as needed. Network staff meet school leaders at the school site.

Each network is headed by a Network Facilitator, who reports to a Chief Schools Officer. Each network has a staff of nine people with the following roles:

- **Facilitator** who focuses on team management and development of instructional leaders
- **Academic Content Liaison** who provides instruction support, monthly PD, and support of district initiatives

- **Special Education Liaison** who oversees IEP chair development, SPED data analysi, and inclusive instructional support
- **Student Support Liaison** who manages student attendance and school climate
- **Data Specialist** who supports data analysis as well as budget and procurement
- **Family & Community Engagement Specialist** who works with developing partnerships and communications
- **Human Capital Specialist** who supports school staffing and provides technical support for evaluations
- **Educational Building Supervisor** who oversees facilities issues, maintenance inspections, and custodial evaluations

Impact of Autonomy

In exchange for greater flexibility, schools were held to higher standards of student performance. In the first year of Dr. Alonso's tenure, the district developed the School Accountability Framework. The framework includes two components: a School Effectiveness Review (SER) and a School Progress Report. SERs are conducted by trained observers who measure the school's effectiveness against the district's School Effectiveness Standards. School Progress Reports consists of a quantitative analysis of a school's progress toward meeting key performance measures. New autonomous schools are subject to a similar renewal process at the end of their initial five years. Their effectiveness is based on ratings in three areas: academics, school climate, governance and fiscal management. Ratings are based on quantitative and qualitative data, including an extensive school visit (observations and interviews), surveys and state test results. Effective schools receive five-year renewals. Struggling schools are reviewed again in three years. Chronically underperforming schools are closed.

Each year the district conducts a portfolio review of all schools. Based on this review, in conjunction with more in-depth reviews of outside-operator schools (EMOs or local nonprofits or Johns Hopkins) every 3–5 years, the district selects schools for closure or identifies the need for new schools. Students attending schools that are up for closure are redistributed to other schools through the school choice lottery. Because the district grants and holds charters, opening of new schools is determined within the context of the portfolio review based on the needs of particular grade spans and neighborhoods.

In addition to the SER process, principals are also held accountable for school performance. To augment an existing evaluation system, Alonso implemented a new monitoring system to track principals' performance on an ongoing basis. By the end of Alonso's second year, 40% of principals had been replaced. This sent a message that Baltimore was serious about putting children first. Since Alonso came to BCPS, there has been nearly 100% turnover of principals.

Since BCPS implemented bounded autonomy and the school review process, student outcomes are improving. By 2013, the graduation rate for students who started high school in 2008-09 and graduated within five years (by June 2013) was 71.7 percent, up 5 percentage points from two years earlier.

Test scores are also improving. Results on the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs) have risen from 56.7% proficient or better in 2007 to 67.9% in 2013. In math, the percentage of students performing at proficient or advanced levels rose from 47.8 in 2007 to 58.9 in 2013.[7] In addition, BCPS is taking part in the Trial Urban District Assessment (TUDA, part of NAEP). Results from that assessment show BCPS students holding ground since 2009, when the district became a part of TUDA reporting. In 8th-grade reading, students showed a statistically significant gain, the largest among all TUDA districts. In fact, Baltimore has the second highest score for 8th grade math (only 2 points behind first placed New York City). Overall, proficiency rates as measured by the NAEP are lower than those reflected in MSA results and are anticipated to be closer to those shown in assessments now in development to align with the Common Core State Standards.[8]

Denver

The Denver Public School district (DPS) has extended autonomy to all schools in the district, though the level and types of autonomy vary by school type. The expansion of autonomy began with the state's Public Schools of Choice Act of 1990, expanded with the development of district-authorized charter schools in the mid-1990s, and continues with the more recent Innovation Schools Act of 2008. Through this most recent legislation, any school or group of schools can submit a proposal requesting waivers to gain greater autonomy from either district policies or union contracts. While the resulting 35 Innovation Schools have specified freedom from district regulations, the district has moved to provide flexibility over people, time, and money to all schools.

Evolution of autonomy

District officials believe school autonomy is a key strategy to realize the full potential of all schools in the context of a districtwide school choice program implemented after the state legislature passed the Public Schools of Choice Act of 1990. About five years later, the district opened its first charter schools. In 2006, when the district learned that nearly 55% of all families actively chose a school other than the one to which they were assigned, DPS developed strategies to build on and fully realize the potential of school choice, including autonomy expansion. A few years later, DPS introduced Innovation Schools. Currently, DPS supports district-authorized charter schools, Innovation Schools, district run-schools, and contract schools.[9] DPS currently has four contract schools, while charter and Innovation Schools comprise roughly 45% of the schools in the district. The remaining schools are traditional, district-run schools.

Denver began extending autonomy to all schools beginning in 2007 through the introduc tion of student-based budgeting (SBB). SBB allowed every school to gain budget authority and the district began seeking ways to increase schools' autonomies over hiring through contract negotiations and improvements in HR operations. DPS has continued to expand hiring autonomy to all types of schools. For instance, since 2008 all DPS schools practice mutual consent hiring. In 2010, Colorado's SB191 eliminated forced hiring and changed the definition of tenure to years not just years of service but three consecutive years of demonstrated effectiveness. Charter schools are granted full authority over both educational and operational matters. Innovation schools develop proposals noting which state and district policies they would like to waive and detailing their schools' alternative plan. Traditional, district-run schools can also petition for expanded autonomies. The core theory of action in Denver centers on the notion of setting high expectations for outcomes for all schools, regardless of autonomy type, each spelled out in a set of performance targets known as the School Performance Framework (SPF) and allowing schools as much flexibility as possible to meet them in the way that best meets the needs of their school community. For example:

> "In high school we have graduation requirements that are non-negotiable. But the manner in which the people meet the graduation requirements or how they build the staffing plan is completely decentralized in all types of schools."[10]

DPS tries to provide considerable latitude for each school, while focusing central office activities on equity, accountabilit, and encouraging collaboration. Specifically, DPS is responsible for health and safety, transportation, student enrollment and equity issues. All schools have authority over their budgets and bell schedules and any school can submit a proposal to seek waivers to access additional autonomies. Charter, Innovation, and contract schools have more flexibility, according to the performance contract negotiated with the district.

Importantly, DPS has worked in collaboration with charter and other autonomous school leaders to develop mutual agreement and expectations for serving all of Denver's student population, regardless of their degree of challenge or need. In 2012, the district formally adopted a board policy focused on the "three equities:"[11]

1. **Equity of Opportunity**: all schools have access to equitable per pupil funding, support services from the district and available facilities

2. **Equity of Responsibility and Access**: all schools must offer equitable and open access to all students, regardless of socio-economic status, disability, home language, or other status, and share an equal obligation in district-wide responsibilities such as the cost of district-wide special education services; and
3. **Equity of Accountability**: all schools have the same accountability system under the School Performance Framework (SPF) and standards of performance are applied evenly across all school types.

While Denver's portfolio approach to reform is clearly a strength of the district and has widespread support among the majority of district and community leaders, its implementation has confronted many challenges along the way. First, many in the community have decried the district's aggressive approach to accountability which includes closing and replacing schools with a new, autonomous school model (whether charter or other). While in most cases, these district-moves have yielded improved achievement for students, some community members criticize the rigid educational models used within these schools and advocate for greater investment in traditional, neighborhood schools.

Specific autonomies

Governance. Charter schools specify their governance structures in their proposals. This varies considerably across the district.

Budgeting. Innovation Schools have greater budget autonomy than traditional schools and can choose to use actual or average salaries, but that decision is locked once the choice is made; a school cannot switch. Innovation Schools have the option of buying services from the district (for example, professional development) or can budget to purchase services from other entities.

Staffing. School leaders at all types of schools can decide what staffing is needed to educate their students. Both Innovation Schools and district-run schools are bound by the district's collective bargaining agreement, which requires adhering to the salary schedule. The collective bargaining agreement also requires every school to have a Selection Committee to hire faculty and staff. Innovation Schools often sign one-year contracts with their faculty, superseding the multi-year contract negotiated by the union.

Curriculum & Assessment. Charter and Innovation schools detail their curriculum in their proposals and can claim dramatic autonomy over their curricula. For the district-run schools, a detailed Academic Guidance Document outlines curriculum requirements, with course scopes and sequences by grade level. High performing traditional schools are also allowed leeway in developing their own curriculum. In general, though, curriculum autonomy is limited for traditional schools. As a district with high intra-district mobility, central office feels that consistent curriculum ensures transfers will have continuity in moving from school to school.

DPS expects all schools, regardless of autonomy status, to participate in at least one of the district's interim assessments.

Scheduling & Calendar. Scheduling is a commonly sought (and provided) autonomy in DPS; all school types upon approval may set their own schedules, including start and end times. As new requests have been submitted, the district has worked to transform its transportation department so that it can accommodate as many school scheduling needs as possible. Some schools have gained autonomy over their calendars but very few schools have extended their schools year, as it incurs additional transportation expenses.

Professional development. Charter schools are responsible for their own professional development. Innovation Schools can choose to participate in district professional development or to receive an equivalent sum of money. About half of the Innovation Schools choose the district's professional development. Whatever the type of school, the district typically provides professional development at the school-site. Schools can select from a menu of offerings, and the sessions are tailored to each school's needs.

District support for autonomous schools

Although Innovation Schools access support and service from departments that support district-run schools, there is also an Office of Reform and Innovation.[12] This office has two major responsibilities: it coordinates processes related to authorizing and reviewing all new school applications (charter, Innovation Schools, and district-run schools) and oversees an incubation lab. The office also directly supports charter schools and a small number of Innovation Schools (typically underperforming schools).

The Office of Reform and Innovation works with other district offices to coordinate the approval and review process for autonomous schools. For example, the Chief Academic Officer and her team assess the quality of a school's proposed curriculum and instructional program. Decisions are made by a team representing different district offices. A similar team is involved in reviewing the effectiveness of autonomous schools and renewing or denying their performance contracts.

The incubation lab, or Imaginarium, works closely with schools to identify and evaluate innovative strategies and to expand successful pilots district-wide. For example, expanded learning was introduced as a charter school strategy. After piloting and evaluating the impact on charter schools, DPS now encourages expanding learning time in other schools. Currently, dozens of non-charter schools have extended both their days and their years to best implement their education programming. Any additional costs must be managed by the school. Many have a staggered day and find other ways to extend the day with minimal budget impact. The Imaginarium is also exploring differentiated teacher leadership roles, personalized learning and assessment strategies with an eye to supporting differentiated instructional practices across the district.

Support for school leaders

DPS is highly committed to developing human capital and leadership abilities, both at the school-site and in the central office. District staff have been re-organized into cross functional networks so that a team is responsible for about 10 schools. School faculty and staff are provided with various opportunities for professional learning and collaboration, both within and across schools. DPS has focused central office functions on building the capacity of school faculty and staff to educate children.

District staff have been renamed "partners"—a shift that is more than symbolic. The district recognizes that principals' capacities as both instructional leaders and operational managers varies; partners build a relationship with school leaders and strive to meet individual needs. The partners come to the school site when school leaders need help and provide individualized, differentiated support, whether for budget development or instructional coaching. The result is that principals are no longer pulled out of the school for meetings and can better focus on school-level issues rather than district mandates.

The district has created a variety of opportunities for principals and teachers from different schools (and different types of schools) to come together to collaborate and cross-pollinate effective strategies, via a variety of affinity groups. According to one official:

> "We know that by collaborating across school types...we can more quickly fulfill our fundamental promise to graduate 100% of our students prepared for college and the workforce."[13]

Opportunities for collaboration range from structured school visits and observations to ongoing participation in shared professional learning communities. For example, the district runs a Teacher Leadership Academy and each school is expected to nominate one teacher to participate. Teachers select to join a cohort that focuses either on a particular topic (such as an academic subject) or implementing new pedagogy. Teachers work with cohort members from across the district and are expected to bring new professional learning back to their schools. The district also has a leadership development program for teachers who are aspiring principals. Aspiring principals are "embedded in a high performing charter school and then [brought] back to run a district-run school, clearly

cross-pollinating what they learned." Denver has prioritized cross-pollination of effective education practices as a means to develop human capital.

Impact of autonomy in Denver

The accountability system in Denver is heavily weighted toward growth scores. Acceleration of growth scores has been viewed as the primary indicator of success (more than overall proficiency levels), and growth scores in DPS have outpaced the state growth scores for several years. In absolute terms, Denver schools have shown strong improvement in test scores but the academic performance of DPS schools still falls below the state average.

In addition to state test scores, DPS schools are evaluated against the SPF.[14] This evaluation reviews multiple measures, including:

- **Academic growth**: provides information to parents about how students at their children's schools are progressing, in comparison with students across the state with similar achievement histories.[15]
- **Academic proficiency**: rating is based on student outcomes on the state test.
- **Enrollment rates**: a measurement of how likely students choose and stay at their school.
- **Student engagement**: schools are rated on attendance rates, results from student satisfaction surveys, and the availability of enrichment and special education offerings.
- **Parent Satisfaction**: schools field parent satisfaction surveys; score is based both on response rates and answers.
- **College & Career Readiness**: high Schools are rated on graduation rates, enrollment in advance coursework and performance assessments (ACT, Advanced Placement , International Baccalaureate)
- **Improvement in College & Career Readiness Over Time**: includes above factors, plus results of assessments (ACT, Advanced Placement , International Baccalaureate)

Using those five measures (seven for high schools), schools are rated on a five-point scale (Distinguished, Meets Expectation, Accredited on Watch, Accredited on Priority Watch, Accredited on Probation). In addition to the SPF evaluation, Denver has a school quality review process which every autonomous school undertakes. Renewal of autonomous status is dependent on a successful review; conversely, schools whose student outcomes are low and stagnant, and whose practices are found lacking, could face closure, often followed by replacement with a high quality new school that has been approved and is in the "pipeline." Over the past five years, Denver has closed and replaced 20 failing schools (of 170 total schools).[16]

A recent evaluation by the University of Colorado at Denver[17] indicates that teachers in autonomous schools indicate higher levels of empowerment; the longer the school had been autonomous the greater the sense of empowerment. While these empowerment factors are associated with higher achievement, the current data is inconclusive. There is some evidence that the district's charter schools are out-performing the district average which may be expected since they have had autonomy for a decade.

Each year, DPS conducts a "Strategic Regional Analysis" (SRA) to understand projections for regional growth and demand trends, existing school performance, current school program offerings and availability of school facilities. The analysis is based on the results of School Performance Framework (SPF). Based on information contained in the SRA as well as community input, DPS may issue a Call for New Quality Schools. The Call for New Quality Schools[18] illustrated the need for new public schools, including details such as the grade levels, approximate size and general location for these proposed new schools.

Other district-wide improvements that can be attributed to the portfolio strategy are enrollment growth and the number of students attending a higher performing school. Denver has added 15,000 students in the past seven

years. District leaders attribute increased enrollment to their success in improving schools: "There has been certainly some growth in the local area. But it's not even close. It's [the reason for the increase in enrollment] really been that more people are sending their kids to the DPS schools versus out of district or private schools or other places."[19] At the same time, enrollment in high performing schools has increased. In the 2012–2013 school year, roughly 60% of elementary and middle school students attended a school that met or exceeded expectations. At the high school level, only 44% of high school students attended an effective school.

Denver has made a commitment to meet community needs and provides schools the autonomy to individualize their educational programming to best help their students achieve. In the end, the most authentic measure of effectiveness may be families choosing to send their children to a district's schools. The overall system in Denver –professional collaboration, autonomy, a strong performance management system *and* public school choice-may be a successful formula for district and school improvement.

Los Angeles

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has supported in-district autonomous schools in the form or independent charter schools, for 20 years. LAUSD opened its first autonomous schools in 1993, one year after the California legislation creating charter schools. Under California law, schools receive their charters from the local school board and, in Los Angeles, charter schools can be autonomous district schools in the form of affiliated or independent charters.

In 2007, LAUSD introduced a non-charter governance model for autonomous schools. LAUSD introduced the first pilot schools in 2007, modeled on Boston's pilot schools. In addition to independent charters and affiliated charters, LAUSD now has four additional types of in-district autonomous schools in its portfolio: ESBMM, pilot schools, Local Initiative Schools (LIS), and Lead partner schools. In all, LAUSD has a portfolio of 103 in-district autonomous schools: 48 pilot schools; 23 ESBMM schools; 21 Lead Partner schools; and 11 Local Initiative Schools (LIS). In-district autonomous schools account for 13% of LAUSD's in-district schools.

Evolution of Autonomy in LAUSD

LAUSD began sponsoring in-district autonomous schools in part because of competition from independent charter schools. In the early 2000s, with more than 750,000 students, the district used regimented policies and curricula to improve performance but was losing a growing number of students and high quality teachers to charter schools. Enrollment in LAUSD has dramatically declined over the past 10 years, from a high of 747,000 in 2003–2004 to less than 660,000 in 2011-2012.[20] Dissatisfaction with public schools and greater emphasis on school choice has fueled a rapid growth of charter schools throughout California. As enrollment in LAUSD overall has declined, enrollment in charter schools has steadily increased and is now three times its level ten years ago.[21]

In-district autonomous schools developed out of the desire for more responsibility and flexibility by both educators and parents. Beginning in 2007, LAUSD Local District 4, LAUSD, the United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA), and the Belmont Education Collaborative began to work on creating better educational options for students in the Pico Union area. The Belmont Zone of Choice, created through a memorandum of understanding between the district and UTLA, launched a network of pilot schools and began a transformation of school choice as an approach for fostering whole school reform. This approach was then expanded by the adoption of Public School Choice in 2009.

The Public School Choice (PSC) Board Resolution opened the door to expand autonomous schools from one local district to all of LAUSD and led to the introduction of two new types of autonomous schools. Under PSC, autonomy is seen as a tool to turn around low-performing schools and each year an RFP is put out for proposals for conversion of the lowest performing schools in the district. The original PSC annual application process invited

in-district and out-of-district proposed school operators of both new schools and the district's poorest performing schools to submit proposals for school redesign. Currently, preference is for in-district models.

Models of Autonomy

Within LAUSD, there are eight models (in declining order of autonomy): independent charters, pilot schools, LIS, affiliated charters, partnership schools, network partners, ESBMM, and traditional district schools. There is significant variation across the in-district models:

- **Pilot Schools** are modeled on the Boston pilot schools. Originally part of Local District 4, pilot schools have expanded throughout the district. All pilot schools, via a "thin contract" provision in the district-teacher union contract, are free of most union work rules and district policies. Teachers sign an election to work agreement guided by the pilot MOU that identifies exceptions from the collective bargaining agreement. Many pilots are high schools and operate as multiple small schools within a larger facility.
- **Local Initiative Schools (LIS)** like pilot schools, LI schools have an MOU resulting from an agreement with the district and United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA). The LIS model is a waiver process, unlike the pilot model in which all schools receive a uniform set of autonomies. Through an RFP process, LIS schools apply for specific autonomies they desire in the areas of instructional program, organization and operations, and staffing. Ten new LIS schools were added for 2013-2014, bringing the total to 11 LIS schools.
- **Affiliated charters** have autonomy over curriculum, budget and governance. They employ LAUSD teachers (and are subject to the collective bargaining agreement), purchase services from the district, and participate in district professional development. A proposal for an affiliated charter school must include signatures from either 50% of parents interested in enrolling their children at the school or 50% of teachers interested in teaching there. A conversion school must include signature from 50% of the teachers currently employed by the school.
- **Lead Partner Schools**[22] work with an external organization that manages school operations, teaching and learning.
- **Expanded School-Based Management Model Schools (ESBM)** emphasize shared decision- making at the school site. Teachers retain union status. Six new ESBMM schools opened for the 2013-2014 year, bringing the total to 23. Decision-making authority for school operations is held by the administrator, teachers, parents and, in the case of high schools, students and community members. A School Leadership Council with representatives from these groups serves as the decision-making body.

Specific Autonomies

Here we focus on the in-district schools that are managed by the district with a degree of site-based autonomy (affiliated charters, pilot schools, ESBMM, LIS). Even within these four models there is considerable variation in levels of autonomy.

Governance. All school models have school councils. Newly constructed schools must wait until the spring of their first year in operation to select their autonomy model.

Budget. Budgets for traditional schools are based on average daily attendance at the school on "Norm Day." Charter schools receive funding according to the same formula but have more control over spending. ESBMM use a site-based funding model. LIS schools have control over monies they receive from General Fund (not the district funds) with some restrictions. Pilot schools use lump sum per-pupil budgets, and can decide to purchase central and local discretionary services or have the equivalent per pupil funds added to their budgets. The pilot school budget is approved by a Governing School Council, while School Leadership Councils determine resource allocation at ESBM and LIS schools and School Site Councils exercise authority over categorical funds.

Staffing. Pilot schools are granted the authority to staff their own schools, within an Elect-to-Work- Agreement that provides flexibility from sections in the collective bargaining agreement. Other types of autonomous schools can petition for increased staffing authority. The reality is, with the recent lay-offs, all schools (traditional and all types of in-district autonomous models) must hire from the excess pool.

Curriculum. Traditional schools must use district-mandated curricula and assessments. Autonomous schools may opt out but state funding for curricula must be spent on state-approved materials. Autonomous schools determine their own curricula; locally developed standards and objectives may supplement those of the district. While traditional schools must administer both state and district assessments, the autonomous schools must use state tests but can forego local assessments and develop their own.

Professional Development. Autonomous schools may opt out of district professional development and design their own but do not get additional funding to provide their own.

Support for Autonomous Schools

LAUSD has multiple offices, focusing on different autonomy models. Offices are also differentiated by the type of service they provide, with separate offices for the proposal / renewal process and versus on-going support. There are three offices that approve proposals for expanded autonomy. The Local Oversight Committee conducts the proposal process to approve new LIS and ESBMM schools. The Charter Schools Division is responsible for approving new affiliated charters. Pilot school applicants are reviewed by a Pilot Schools Steering Committee, consisting of representatives of LAUSD, UTLA, the administrators union and community organizations.

Autonomous schools receive support from another set of offices. The Intensive Support and Innovation Center (ISIC) supports autonomous school as they implement their program. Most of ISIC staff are former pilot school principals; a few are charter school principals. Autonomous schools can also receive support from the office of Intensive Support and Intervention. This office explains what autonomies are available and provides examples of how other schools have implemented them.

LAUSD continues to struggle with providing support and oversight to the different types of autonomous schools. One district official, stressed the importance of training middle-management in central office on autonomies and how to work with autonomous schools as critical to improving support. In an effort to develop school leaders, the district has developed a partnership with CCE on a federal grant that will provide intensive leadership support for two years to newly-appointed autonomous school leaders.

Accountability

LAUSD uses a School Performance Framework (SPF) to evaluate the performance of all district schools in terms of student achievement using a variety of measures. The SPF aggregates leading indicators specific to each school level: 3rd grade literacy for elementary, Algebra I proficiency for middle school and 1st time pass rate on the state high school exit exam. At every school level, Academic Growth over Time (the District's value added metric) is a key element in how the SPF defines growth at the school site.

Under the SPF, each school receives a performance classification. The following are the five classifications (also known as tiers). Each school obtains one of the five classifications as a result of their performance:

- **Excelling**: Schools that fall within this category are generally defined by high status performance and high levels of growth.
- **Achieving:** Schools that fall within this category are generally defined by both high status performance and low to moderate levels of growth OR moderate status performance and high levels of growth.

- **Service & Support:** Schools that fall within this category are generally defined by both moderate status performance and moderate to high growth levels OR low status performance and high growth levels.
- **Watch:** Schools that fall within this category are generally defined by low status performance and low to moderate levels of growth.
- **Focus:** Schools that fall within this category are generally defined by low status performance and low levels of growth.

In addition to SPF, in-district autonomous schools are subject to a school quality review by the district. The initial review is after three years and subsequent reviews are every five years.[23] The accountability process differs by autonomy model. If a school was authorized under PSC provisions, in addition to the school quality reviews, schools conduct annual data monitoring that continuously assesses the progress of each school based on a set of benchmarks for high performing schools.

In 2012, Academic Growth over Time (AGT) performance measures for both ESBMM and pilot schools were above average for ELA and Math. LIS is a relatively new autonomy model so it would be premature to attribute any performance changes to their new status.

Lawrence

Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) was included in this study as an example of a Massachusetts district other than BPS that has moved toward granting schools greater autonomy. LPS is a small urban district with 28 schools and 13,000 students. More than 90% of students are Latino, 75% have a home language other than English, 28% are English Language Learners and 84% come from low-income families. In 2012 LPS' district-wide performance on the state exam was in the lowest 1% of districts. Lawrence had the lowest graduation rate of any district in Massachusetts.

Evolution of Autonomy

Due to chronic underperformance, LPS was placed in state receivership on 2011. This was an opportunity to dramatically change the role of the district. Jeff Riley, the superintendent/receiver appointed to turn the district around, seeks to create " . . . a decentralized school system, where the focus is on the classroom and talent. The central office pivots away from compliance and moves towards support of the schools."[24] In addition to decentralizing the district, Riley's turnaround plan focuses on five strategies: reducing bureaucracy; implementing innovative districtwide interventions; leveraging proven partners to turn around schools; replacing ineffective educators and staff; and creating a new teacher compensation system.

Shifting both resources and autonomy close to the classroom level is the central feature of the district turnaround plan. The new vision for structuring the school system focuses on what Superintendent Riley calls an "open architecture model," in which the district role is "to establish thin walls and foundations while providing white space for school design." The district manages a common enrolment system, equitable funding, payroll and facilities access. The district provides operational and compliance support, freeing school leaders to focus on teaching, learning and parent engagement. Each school's level of autonomy is dependent upon school performance. Higher performing, Level 1 schools can operate independently. At Level 3 schools, the principals were replaced in some cases and the schools receive intensive support from the district. Lower performing Turnaround Schools have been placed under the management of a successful education management organization (EMO). These include UP Education Network (a proven middle school provider in Boston), Phoenix (a successful charter high school in Chelsea), The Community Group (successful local operator of early childhood center and an elementary charter school). In addition, there are two models that were developed locally, Spark Academy (model based on research at Harvard in the importance of exercise), and the Lawrence Teachers Union runs a schools.

Specific Autonomies

Governance. EMO schools have a governing board. Other schools have a school site council.

Budget. Principals control the school budget based on a standard per-pupil amount. The district charges back for some services, such as human resources (HR) and transportation. Since 90-98% of each principal's budget is spent on salaries, autonomy over staffing provides the greatest leverage point for using budget autonomies.

Staffing. Staffing decisions are made by the team leading the schools. Once a teacher is hired, though, the principal is responsible for them and cannot excess them. Teachers can be evaluated out if they are not effective but principals must collect considerable data to do so. This means principals must make very careful, deliberate hiring decisions.

Curriculum. Lawrence decided that a key way to save on central office costs was to shrink the number of district curriculum and instruction personnel and allow schools to choose their own curriculum. Schools are required to use a curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core, and the district has created curriculum maps to facilitate this. All schools are required to participate in MCAS and other state required testing. Lower performing schools are required to use formative assessments from the Achievement Network.

Schedule/Calendar. In addition to improving student achievement, Superintendent Riley also expects schools to provide students the opportunity to develop essential life skills through extending the school day/year. Schools can set their own schedule but must incorporate a minimum of 205 hours beyond state requirements (for a total of 1,330 hours). Schools are expected to start at the same time but go longer than the required number of days/hours.

Extended time is intended for enrichment activities and is used in a variety of ways. In some schools, it is used for academic enrichment or for targeted supports for kids. One school has offered its students a ropes course. Another is taking students to the Boys and Girls Club so they can learn to swim. Not only are extended hours programs enhancing life skills, they also motivate students to come to school. According to parents and teachers, student engagement has dramatically improved.

Professional development. Professional development is designed and provided at the school level. High performing schools can request professional development from the district or may contract with an external organization. Low performing schools receive professional development from their educational management organization.

Leadership Development & Network Support

The district has designated liaisons between the schools and the district called "academic advisors." These advisors provide support to schools in all areas that touch academics, working most closely with schools with less autonomy. There is no centralized professional development for school leaders. Some have suggested that one of the advantages of the Lawrence model is that there is not an "us vs. them" mentality, perhaps because it is a smaller district. However, being a smaller district, "academic advisor" is just one hat worn by these district personnel, which can challenge their ability to network between schools, partners and the district personnel. Because these advisors only provide support for areas related to academics, schools still need to call on individual departments such as facilities or transportation to address operational issues.

Human Capital Investment

In the words of Superintendent Riley, "Teachers are the core of the school system." Not only is he focused on staffing schools with effective teachers, he also leverages expertise in schools to improve district policies. This was clear when Riley created a teachers' cabinet with individual teachers (rather than representatives of the union) so he can understand what is happening in classrooms.

To insure the district has talented teachers, Riley freed up resources to attract and compensate them. Initially, he cut 30% of the central office staff and freed up $1.6 million for schools. Resources cut from the central office were

used to increase teacher salaries to make teaching in Lawrence more attractive. In the first year, he replaced 30% of the principals and about 8% of teachers. Riley is recruiting from across the country to attract talented educators to help turn around the district.

To improve professional practice, professional development for teachers is provided at the school level and designed to address each school's specific needs. Much of this is embedded in the school day to foster collaboration. The same is true for principals: the district has almost no centralized PD for principals. Riley does have periodic meetings with them and they sometimes meet on their own to collaborate. The district does offer seminars to explain new requirements or how operations function. For example, when the district set the requirement that schools add an additional 205 hours of service, the district offered a seminar on extended day programs. In the seminar, district leaders presented information about models that have worked in other schools. Participants were expected to take what they learned back to their schools so the faculty could decide the best use of their additional time. Another seminar focused on transportation to help principals understand how some decisions around scheduling and calendar have an impact on transportation and as a result the budget. The attitude is that district leaders are sharing information with peers at the school level.

Accountability

"Accountability" in Lawrence focuses on helping students achieve rather than closing failing schools. The key is insuring that every school has effective teachers. To improve teacher performance, Riley merged the Commonwealth's new teacher evaluation system with a new compensation system. Raises are based on annual performance review. LPS has identified five tiers of teachers, including advanced teachers (exemplary for their school) and master teachers (exemplary for the district). Identification as a master teacher is based on a teacher's entire career. LPS has created a portfolio system so that teachers can document their work over time. Under this new system, ineffective teachers can be evaluated out, while good teachers can move up career ladders more quickly.

Under state receivership, student achievement in Lawrence is increasing. Since 2011, when Massachusetts took over the district, four-year graduation rates increased from 52% to 61% in 2013. During the same time period, dropout rates decreased from 9% to 6%. After one year of receivership, test scores improved both for growth measures and absolute achievement. The Student Growth Percentile (SGP) increased 4 points in language arts and 17 in math. One high school's SGP for math increased from 23 to 75, the largest jump in Massachusetts history. MCAS scores were up in all grades and all subjects. In fact, there were double-digit increases in math proficiency rates for grades 3, 5, 8 and 10. Lawrence tripled the number of schools in which students outperform their academic peers. After 18 months of receivership, 31% of students are enrolled in Level 1 or proven provider schools. In the first full year, they doubled the number of Level 1 schools (from 2 to four) and Riley expects it to double again after the second year of receivership.

New York City

School autonomy began in New York City as a pilot program in 2004–2005, with a small number of schools volunteering to participate. The pilot grew out of an effort to replace large, failing schools with small schools. The creation of an Autonomy Zone (later renamed the Empowerment Zone) was also intended to try to address the lack of effective management by district offices. By 2007, 320 schools (roughly 25% of the city's schools) had signed on as autonomous schools. With the success of schools in the Empowerment Zone, the district decided to extend autonomy to all of its schools.

Evolution of school autonomy in New York City

When Michael Bloomberg became mayor in January of 2002, the New York City public schools had been characterized by mismanagement and failure for decades.[25] The new mayor requested and received permission from the

state legislature to take mayoral control of the district. One of the first steps in mayoral control was to replace the elected School Board with the Panel for Education Policy. Bloomberg was able to force his changes with the newly appointed panel. Another initial step was appointing Joel Klein as chancellor in July 2002. Klein had made a reputation as an anti-trust litigator, rather than an educator, but Bloomberg wanted someone who would completely restructure the school system.

One of Klein's first priorities was replacing 32 community districts with 10 regions. Not only did this eliminate a bureaucracy that had failed to put children first, it also saved $200 million, which helped fund further school reforms. Small schools were the initial focus of Klein's efforts—from 2003–2009, New York City closed 100 large schools and replaced them with 500 small schools. It was soon clear, though, that the new, small schools were not able to flourish in the geographic region structure which replicated the centrally-controlled system.

From the beginning, Klein's ". . . theory of action was that autonomy was a pre-condition for school improvement in schools."[26] In early 2004, Klein re-assigned Eric Nadelstern from his role as regional superintendent to the district office so that Nadelstern could lead the effort to devolve autonomy to schools. The Autonomy Zone was created that fall, with 29 schools (including 3 charters that were interested in collaborating with other autonomous schools). Participation was voluntary. Regional superintendents were asked to encourage principals to participate. According to Nadelstern:

> "To their credit, they did not nominate their worst schools. Instead, they nominated the troublemakers: the principals who went to regional meetings and challenged the superintendent or those who failed to attend at all. They were exactly the kind of school leaders we were hoping to attract."[27]

Nadelstern saw his role as shielding the principals from the central office and its paperwork and, where possible, minimizing state requirements. For example, at the time schools were required by the state to submit an annual Comprehensive Education Plan, which typically ran over 100 pages; the schools in the Autonomy Zone were required to submit 15-page plans. In addition, principals were no longer required to attend district meetings or professional development. With extensive control over their school's budgets, principals could select their staff, develop a curriculum and instructional program, and were asked to determine what outside supports and services they needed to implement their program. Schools used some of their budgets to hire network staff to provide services, supports and professional development.

The Autonomy Zone expanded to 50 schools in the second year, and continued to be grouped into networks of about 25 schools. The autonomous schools met their annual performance targets and exceeded the performance of the rest of the district. The few exceptions met their targets in their second year as autonomous schools. Each year more schools joined the Zone until 2007 when fully 25% of schools of the New York City schools were autonomous. At this point, Joel Klein created two additional types of school support networks, learning support organizations and partnership school organizations, to experiment with different ways to customize support for schools. In 2009, the other two types of networks were brought under the supervision of the Empowerment Zone team. After a five-year pilot program, all of New York City's public schools became autonomous.

Specific autonomies

New York City's public schools have autonomy across the six areas highlighted in this research study. The district central office is responsible for transportation, facilities, food service, enrollment and certain kinds of technology. All other functions are delegated to the school level, with support from the networks.

Governance. Every school has a School Leadership Team (SLT), consisting of representatives of parents and each of the unions, and may include students. SLT membership is defined by regulation, so schools have little autonomy in selecting members. Principals are required to consult the SLT but the team does not have any decision-making authority.

Budget & Services. Schools receive funding based on a weighted student formula and use that money to purchase services to operate the school. While the majority of the budget goes to personnel costs, another significant portion goes to their network to pay for coaching, professional development, operational support and other services.

Staffing. Principals have the right to staff their schools, both by hiring teachers and letting them go. Salaries are set by the district salary schedule, as negotiated with the union. In New York City, teachers who are released from teaching at a particular school are still district employees but may or may not be assigned to another school.

Curriculum & Assessment. There are district-endorsed curriculum options but schools do have autonomy over curriculum. There is a complicated procurement process and most schools use a district-endorsed curriculum.

Schools must complete state assessments. In addition to these annual assessments, the district offers a menu of "periodic assessments," including predictive assessments, from which schools can choose. A consortium of about 40 schools has a waiver from the state to administer portfolio-based assessments instead of the state test.

Scheduling & Calendar. Schools are allowed to customize their schedule and calendar, provided they meet the state number of days per year and hours per week. Very few schools have moved their start or end dates, due largely to restraints imposed by the collective bargaining agreement.

Professional Development. Professional development is provided by the networks. Schools, in a sense, choose or influence the professional development options when they select a network.

District support for autonomous schools

The NYC DOE runs two offices focusing on school autonomy. The Office of School Support provides oversight and support to the networks, annually evaluating them for quality of service. In addition, the NYC DOE Office of Portfolio Management oversees the city's mix of district schools, charter schools, and early childhood education programs and manages the process for developing new schools. This office also is responsible for identifying failing schools and referring them to their networks for intensive support.

According to the Chief Academic Officer: "In any successful organization, the people in charge must have the freedom to select the people they work with."[28] This not only includes hiring faculty and staff, but in the original Autonomy Zone meant self-organized networks of principals. The original networks were created by principals who chose to affiliate, either because their schools had similar needs or the principals had similar philosophies of education. During the pilot program, the principals hired staff to provide support services to their schools. Network staffing varied, depending on the needs of the principals.

When autonomy was extended district-wide, network staff became district employees (except in one cluster of networks run by external organizations). The staffing is standardized across networks with little variation. The district requires networks to provide support services in three general areas: operational, instructional, and student and family services. Despite the effort to standardize services, too often quality of service depends on which network staffer responds to a request. Support is not uniformly provided across the system.

Principals no longer hire (and fire) network staff based on their needs. Instead, networks are held accountable through a performance management review that includes both school achievement and principal satisfaction. Satisfaction is partly judged by which networks are sought after. Principals select a network each year, which can signal to the district if a network is no longer serving the needs of principals and schools. Each year, fewer than 10% of principals switch. If a network falls below a certain number of schools (historically around 18 schools) they can no longer financially sustain themselves and are required to dissolve. There are currently 56 networks, organized into five clusters. In four clusters, networks are staffed by district employees.

Support for school leaders

New York City's autonomy policy is designed to empower and support principals. The networks are designed to serve their ongoing needs and are held accountable for principals' satisfaction. If a school is failing, network staff works closely with school leaders to design a school improvement plan. This typically involves providing close coaching for the school principal or instructional coaches to work with teachers in their classrooms. In addition, Mayor Bloomberg created the New York Leadership Academy in 2003, with the goal of developing entrepreneurial leaders for the city's schools. Despite a decade of the academy, there is little evidence that graduates of the Leadership Academy are more successful than other principals.[29]

Impact of autonomy in New York City

One of the justifications for expanding autonomies to all New York City schools was the ability of the empowered schools to meet their performance targets. There is some evidence that the overall quality of education in the New York City public schools has improved with expanded autonomy. In 2005, 50% of entering 9th grade students qualified to graduate after four years of high school. In 2011, 65% graduated in four years with more graduating after 5 or 6 years.

The district has also made progress improving its lowest performing schools. In the 2007–2008 school year, NYC DOE implemented an A-F school report card. Criteria included: district predictive assessments; attendance; surveys of parents, teachers, and older students; and observations conducted during a one and a half day site visit. NYC DOE developed the Quality Review site visits in conjunction with Cambridge Education and it was modeled on the British school inspection system. The grade was a result of a school review that combined both quantitative and qualitative data. The score was based on school environment (15%), student achievement (25%), and student progress (60%). Schools got extra credit for closing achievement gaps. Schools with a D or an F are targeted for additional assistance. Those that fail to make progress after three years are phased out and replaced. Three-quarters of schools that received a D or F on their progress report in 2011–2012 saw an increase of at least one letter grade in 2012–2013. Of those, 38% improved by two or more letter grades. Schools that fail to make progress after three years are phased out and replaced. Out of the district's 1,700 schools, each year 25 or 30 schools are phased out.

APPENDIX 9

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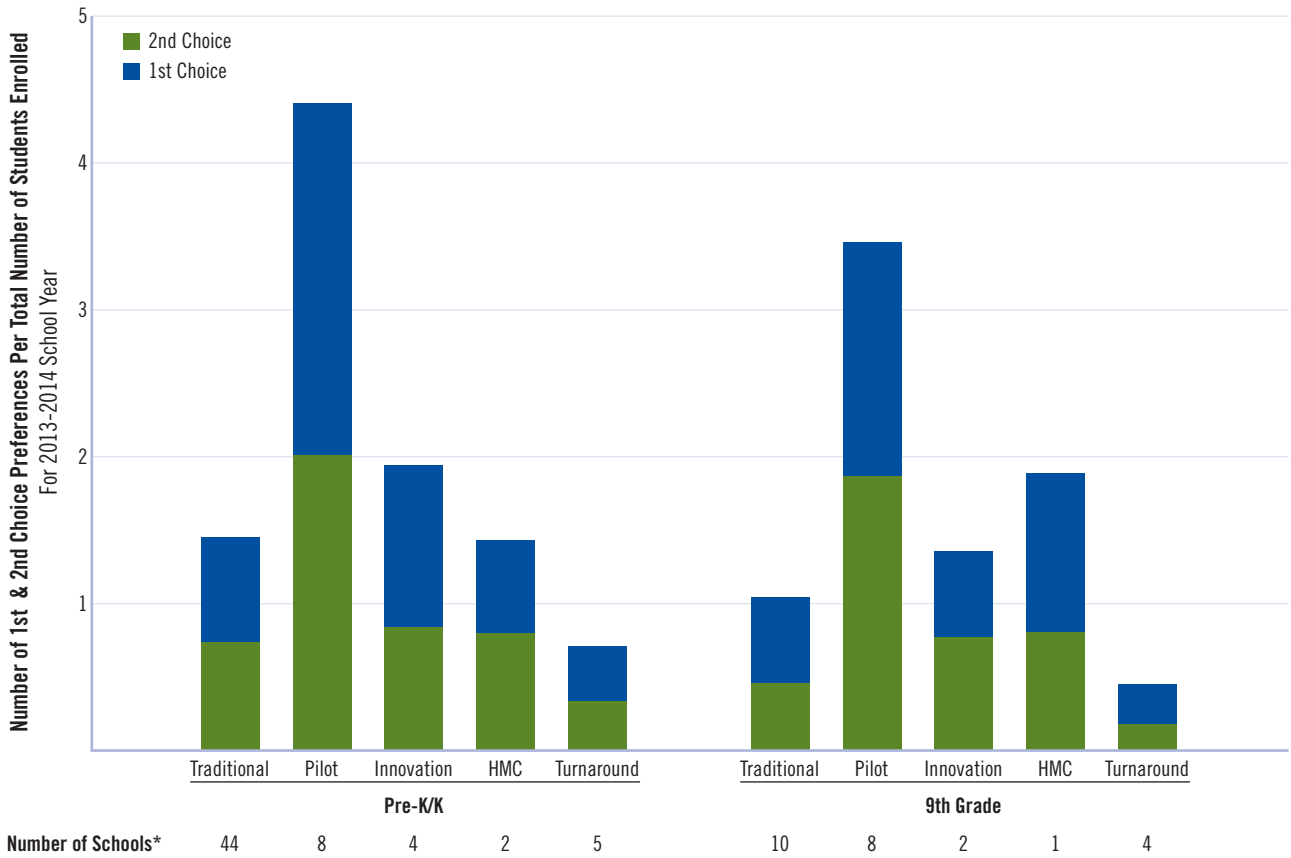
APPENDIX 10

Student Choice and Assignment by School Type

FIGURE A10.A

BPS families are more likely to choose autonomous schools

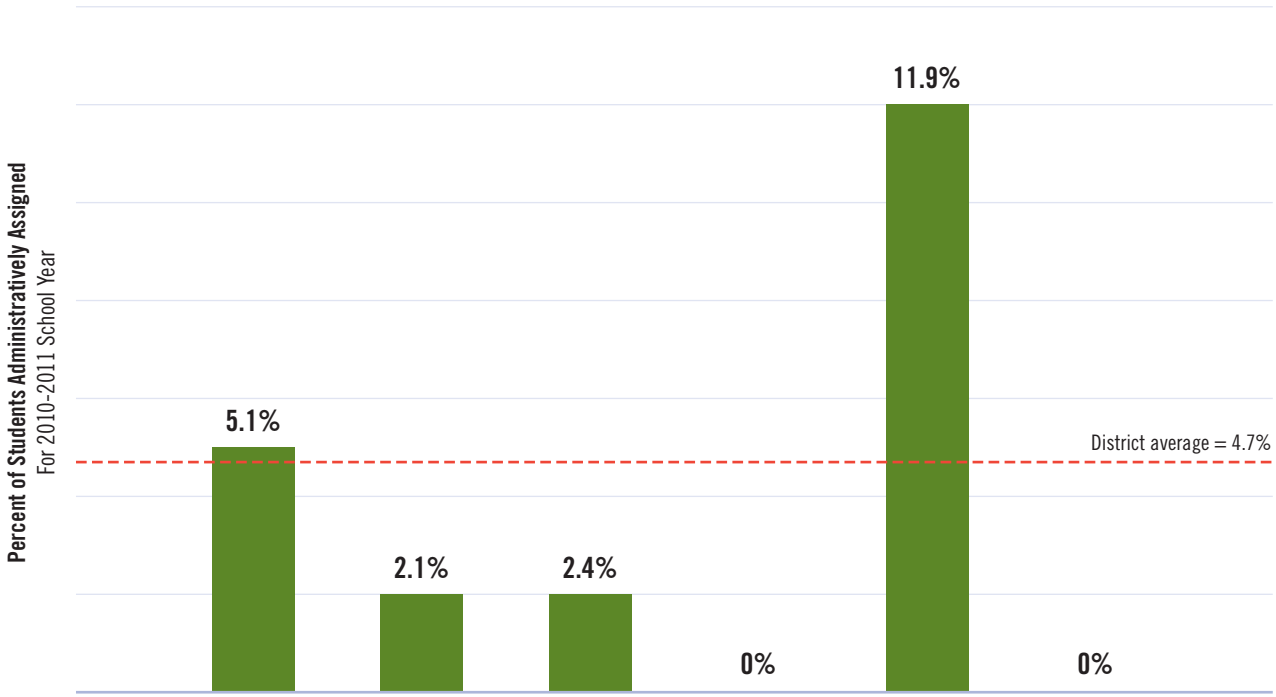


* Some schools receive entering students in more than one grade. This choice/assignment process does not apply for alternative/SPED schools, Exam schools, and some autonomous schools with separate applications procedures.

Source: BPS, ERS analysis

FIGURE A10.B

Students in traditional schools are twice as likely to have been administratively assigned than those in autonomous schools



	Traditional	Pilot	Innovation	Horace Mann Charter	Turnaround	Exam
Number Admin Assigned*	1,713	142	65	0	641	0

Source: BPS, ERS analysis

APPENDIX 11

Flexibilities Available through School Site Council Waivers

According to the BTU Contract and BPS Office of Family & Student Engagement, School Site Councils at traditional schools can "waive any provisions of the collective bargaining agreement, any School Committee rule or regulation, or Superintendent's policy" under the following conditions:

- Principal/Headmaster approval
- For waivers of School Committee or Superintendent policies, Parent Council approval
- Approval from two-thirds of present and voting BTU members who work more than 50% of their work week at that school (secret ballot withfove days of notice to eligible voters)
- Waivers cannot alter BTU members' salary, benefits, seniority rights for transfer, excessing or layoffs, due process rights or rights to file a grievance, or the Union's jurisdiction
- Waivers cannot affect operation of other schools or incur costs to the district beyond the school's allocated budget w/o district approval
- The BTU Steering Committee must be notified within five days of waiver adoption
- Compliance with state/federal/municipal laws
- Teachers who object to waivers must be given the opportunity to transfer elsewhere

TABLE 11.1

Flexibilities Available Through School Site Council waivers

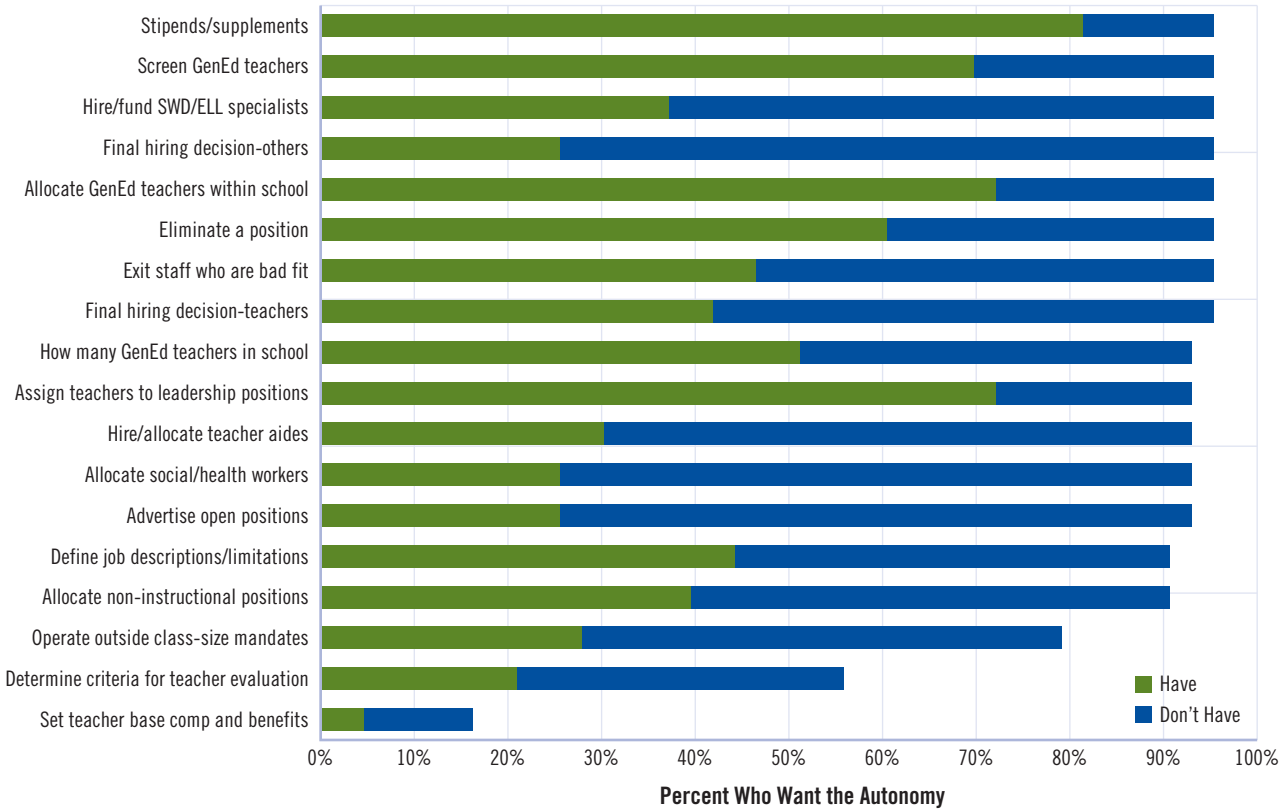
Staffing	Determining non-teaching duties teachers are required to perform
PD	Changing the number and use of PD meetings
Schedule/Cal	Changing timing and length of school day/year (additional costs or impact on other schools will require district approval)
	Increasing teacher instructional hours per week
	Allowing class sizes above BTU maxima
	Changing the number, time or place of parent-teacher meetings
	Increasing the amount or changing the use of common planning or PD time
Curriculum/ Assessment	Establishing alternative curriculum
	Changing timing of report cards
	Opting out of or choose alternative tests (not for required state testing)
	Setting more rigorous promotion and graduation requirements
	Setting promotion requirements
Other	Opting out of record-keeping and paperwork
	Setting alternative attendance polices
	Setting alternative student discipline codes

APPENDIX 12

BPS Principal Survey Results: Preferred Autonomies

FIGURE A12.A

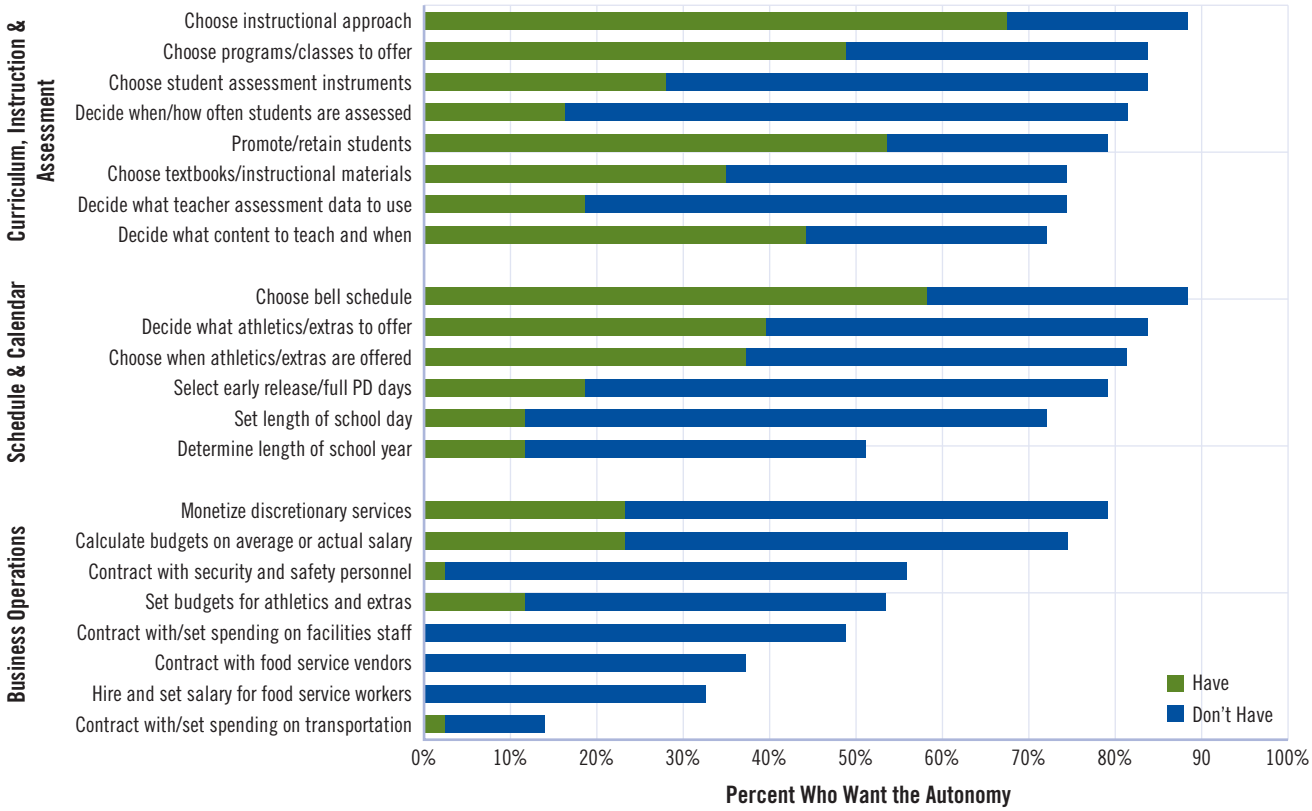
Findings from Principal Survey: Staffing



Source: CCE, ERS analysis

FIGURE A12.B

Findings from Principal Survey: Other



Source: CCE, ERS analysis

APPENDIX 13

School-by-School Demographic and Incoming Proficiency Data, SY2013–2014

Elementary & K-8

School	Enrollment	Incoming proficiency[30]		Pct FRL	Special Education		English Language Learner	
		Grade	Pct		Pct all	Pct L4[31]	Pct all	Pct L1-3[32]
Traditional								
Adams Elementary	292	K	63%	83%	21%	9%	58%	32%
Bates Elementary	293	K	64%	68%	12%	1%	25%	12%
Beethoven Elementary	921	K	77%	17%	20%	8%	21%	12%
Bradley Elementary	298	K	70%	75%	16%	5%	29%	9%
Channing Elementary	317	K	68%	80%	15%	8%	19%	8%
Chittick Elementary	306	K	72%	83%	18%	11%	13%	7%
Condon Elementary	811	K	50%	79%	20%	10%	33%	19%
Conley Elementary	218	K	65%	72%	34%	27%	20%	11%
Curley K-8	847	n/a	n/a	73%	22%	12%	39%	22%
Edison K-8	818	n/a	n/a	82%	22%	10%	40%	21%
Ellis Elementary	396	K	62%	88%	14%	8%	34%	21%
Everett Elementary	280	K	75%	80%	12%	4%	32%	11%
Greenwood Sarah K-8	412	n/a	n/a	91%	24%	13%	44%	26%
Grew Elementary	252	K	62%	81%	11%	0%	14%	6%
Guild Elementary	318	K	38%	81%	23%	11%	67%	47%
Hale Elementary	182	K	75%	82%	14%	4%	10%	5%
Harvard/Kent Elementary	570	K	61%	84%	23%	15%	47%	34%
Henderson Elementary	243	K	83%	53%	30%	14%	12%	7%
Hennigan Elementary	585	K	55%	87%	17%	11%	47%	29%
Hernandez K-8	417	n/a	n/a	76%	12%	0%	52%	29%
Higginson/Lewis K-8	392	n/a	n/a	90%	31%	16%	13%	6%
Holmes Elementary	331	K	70%	86%	26%	13%	12%	8%
Hurley K-8	336	n/a	n/a	73%	14%	2%	52%	33%
Jackson/Mann K-8	737	n/a	n/a	85%	22%	13%	33%	19%
Kennedy Patrick Elem	319	K	50%	78%	14%	7%	67%	52%
Kenny Elementary	301	K	45%	79%	17%	10%	54%	44%

School	Enrollment	Incoming proficiency[30]		Pct FRL	Special Education		English Language Learner	
		Grade	Pct		Pct all	Pct L4[31]	Pct all	Pct L1-3[32]
Kilmer K-8	470	K	81%	38%	20%	9%	14%	7%
King K-8	504	n/a	n/a	90%	19%	10%	16%	7%
Lee K-8	592	n/a	n/a	88%	33%	24%	13%	7%
Lyon K-8	142	n/a	n/a	49%	35%	8%	10%	2%
Manning Elementary	159	K	86%	43%	36%	19%	6%	2%
Mario Umana Academy	730	n/a	n/a	83%	23%	8%	42%	24%
Mather Elementary	599	K	75%	84%	16%	8%	41%	24%
McKay K-8	681	n/a	n/a	88%	13%	5%	65%	33%
Mendell Elementary	226	K	54%	64%	19%	12%	19%	14%
Mildred Avenue K-8	444	n/a	n/a	88%	26%	15%	26%	12%
Mozart Elementary	173	K	60%	61%	21%	13%	17%	7%
Murphy K-8	899	n/a	n/a	66%	15%	7%	17%	6%
O'Donnell Elementary	293	K	61%	82%	13%	0%	65%	35%
Otis Elementary	395	K	50%	79%	11%	2%	65%	34%
Perkins Elementary	248	K	39%	89%	13%	0%	17%	5%
Perry K-8	251	n/a	n/a	69%	28%	15%	16%	9%
Philbrick Elementary	150	K	81%	51%	21%	9%	14%	5%
Quincy Elementary	802	K	81%	79%	17%	9%	48%	31%
Roosevelt K-8	472	K	72%	64%	25%	11%	16%	7%
Russell Elementary	370	K	61%	76%	9%	1%	47%	25%
Sumner Elementary	544	K	67%	85%	22%	11%	41%	21%
Taylor Elementary	524	K	73%	88%	16%	9%	36%	26%
Tobin K-8	418	n/a	n/a	90%	14%	1%	42%	23%
Tynan Elementary	394	K	38%	85%	27%	15%	16%	11%
Warren/Prescott K-8	542	n/a	n/a	56%	12%	5%	9%	3%
Winship Elementary	302	K	76%	75%	26%	11%	27%	13%
Winthrop Elementary	366	K	76%	83%	13%	1%	27%	12%
Pilot								
BTU K-8 Pilot	330	n/a	n/a	67%	21%	6%	18%	8%
Gardner Pilot Academy	372	n/a	n/a	88%	24%	11%	41%	16%
Haley Elementary	325	n/a	n/a	54%	28%	14%	9%	5%
Lee Academy	164	K	56%	82%	34%	31%	24%	18%
Lyndon K-8	561	n/a	n/a	54%	22%	9%	25%	12%
Mason Elementary	243	K	69%	77%	33%	23%	21%	5%

School	Enrollment	Incoming proficiency[30]		Pct FRL	Special Education		English Language Learner	
		Grade	Pct		Pct all	Pct L4[31]	Pct all	Pct L1-3[32]
Mission Hill K-8	234	n/a	n/a	56%	32%	9%	14%	8%
Young Achievers K-8	518	K	69%	84%	23%	8%	30%	17%
Innovation								
Blackstone Elementary	630	K	56%	87%	22%	12%	47%	25%
Clap Innovation School	173	K	72%	73%	19%	9%	24%	16%
Eliot K-8	388	n/a	n/a	48%	22%	18%	14%	9%
Trotter Elementary	411	K	64%	84%	15%	4%	9%	6%
Horace Mann Charter								
Dudley St Neigh. Schl	178	n/a	n/a	81%	10%	0%	17%	6%
UP Academy Dorchester	562	n/a	n/a	86%	14%	6%	29%	20%
Turnaround								
Dever Elementary	583	K	67%	88%	16%	8%	35%	21%
E Greenwood Leadership Acad	375	K	62%	83%	21%	11%	29%	17%
Holland Elementary	742	K	57%	86%	20%	10%	39%	23%
Kennedy John F Elementary	400	K	59%	89%	14%	5%	49%	31%
Mattahunt Elementary	633	K	50%	81%	19%	11%	20%	13%
Orchard Gardens K-8	824	n/a	n/a	84%	15%	6%	52%	29%

Middle & High Schools

School	Enrollment	Incoming proficiency[30]		Pct FRL	Special Education		English Language Learner	
		Grade	Pct		Pct all	Pct L4[31]	Pct all	Pct L1-3[32]
Traditional								
Boston International	345	8th	6%	77%	2%	0%	80%	61%
Brighton High	989	8th	29%	88%	20%	8%	41%	18%
Charlestown High	935	8th	23%	87%	24%	12%	39%	26%
Comm Acad Sci Health	382	8th	30%	84%	25%	10%	42%	32%
Community Academy	67	n/a	n/a	82%	12%	0%	6%	0%
Dorchester Academy	398	8th	28%	83%	31%	17%	8%	3%
East Boston High	1373	8th	46%	76%	16%	9%	35%	24%
Edwards Middle	492	5th	49%	89%	23%	11%	38%	14%
Excel High	550	8th	34%	86%	25%	15%	26%	14%
Irving Middle	443	5th	54%	83%	29%	18%	17%	7%
McCormack Middle	665	5th	41%	92%	25%	14%	32%	14%

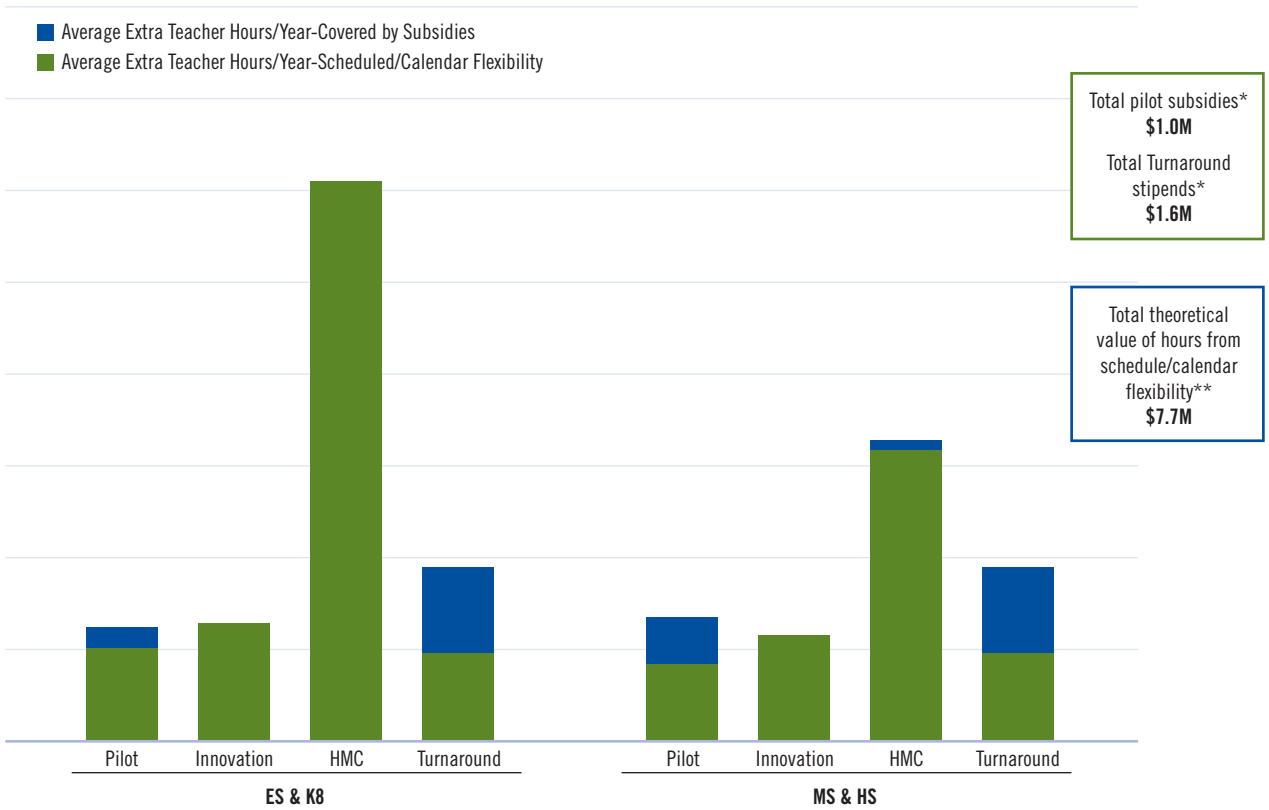
School	Enrollment	Incoming proficiency[30]		Pct FRL	Special Education		English Language Learner	
		Grade	Pct		Pct all	Pct L4[31]	Pct all	Pct L1-3[32]
Rogers Middle	484	5th	39%	84%	22%	4%	21%	9%
Snowden International	397	8th	48%	91%	24%	7%	6%	0%
Timilty Middle	562	5th	35%	91%	21%	4%	31%	14%
Urban Science Academy	505	8th	37%	82%	23%	7%	10%	2%
West Roxbury Academy	612	8th	21%	86%	22%	10%	27%	13%
Pilot								
Another Course College	231	8th	52%	88%	19%	5%	7%	1%
Boston Arts Academy	445	8th	62%	71%	16%	1%	5%	2%
Boston Comm Lead Acad	521	8th	47%	88%	21%	8%	22%	7%
Fenway High	327	8th	54%	75%	19%	10%	5%	0%
Frederick Pilot Middle	570	5th	20%	89%	29%	15%	42%	23%
Greater Egleston High	175	n/a	n/a	91%	21%	6%	16%	7%
Lyon High	138	8th	34%	74%	38%	7%	4%	2%
New Mission High	294	8th	57%	82%	15%	5%	5%	1%
Quincy Upper School	487	n/a	n/a	92%	20%	9%	13%	4%
TechBoston Acad	1015	5th	28%	90%	19%	10%	31%	16%
Innovation								
Madison Park High	1146	8th	19%	91%	37%	21%	31%	15%
Margarita Muniz Academy	156	8th	28%	92%	11%	0%	46%	26%
Horace Mann Charter								
Boston Day/Evening Acad	368	n/a	n/a	85%	18%	2%	9%	2%
Boston Green Academy	324	8th	35%	84%	33%	13%	15%	4%
Kennedy Health Careers	331	8th	56%	78%	13%	2%	12%	1%
UP Academy Boston	459	5th	41%	88%	25%	6%	24%	4%
Turnaround								
Burke High	536	8th	34%	80%	15%	4%	32%	21%
Dearborn Middle School	258	n/a	n/a	86%	16%	5%	49%	33%
English High	596	8th	19%	87%	24%	12%	38%	28%
Harbor School	298	5th	29%	88%	29%	11%	13%	5%
Exam								
Boston Latin	2379	n/a	n/a	33%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Boston Latin Academy	1689	n/a	n/a	60%	2%	0%	0%	0%
O'Bryant Math & Sci.	1353	n/a	n/a	78%	3%	0%	3%	0%

APPENDIX 14

Extended Learning Time Analysis

FIGURE A14.A

Autonomous schools extend teacher time through schedule/calendar flexibilities and financial subsidies



The average autonomous school has **190 extra teacher hours per year** – the equivalent of an extra hour of student learning or teacher collaboration every day or 3 more weeks of PD for teachers.

District pays for 96-145 hrs above standard hours at pilots (including 2 HMCs that were formerly pilots), and $4100 stipend per teacher for 190 hrs extra at Turnaround schools

**Analysis accounts for hrs > BTU standard at < contractual hourly rate ($43.50). Assumes Turn. & Inn. schools used all extra hrs; Pilot hrs from BPS data, HMC hrs from MOUs/school websites. Total value of estimated unused extra hrs = $533k. Source: BPS staffing and extended pilot hours data, autonomous school documents, ERS Analysis

APPENDIX 15

Time in School for Commonwealth Charters vs. BPS

	Student hours/day	Student hours/year*
Traditional BPS Schools	6.25	1125
Boston Commonwealth Charters	8.2	1476

*Conservative estimate—assumes Commonwealth Charters have 180-day school year, when they have flexibility to extend the school year far longer.

Source: http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/OutofDebate_Evidence_2_0.pdf

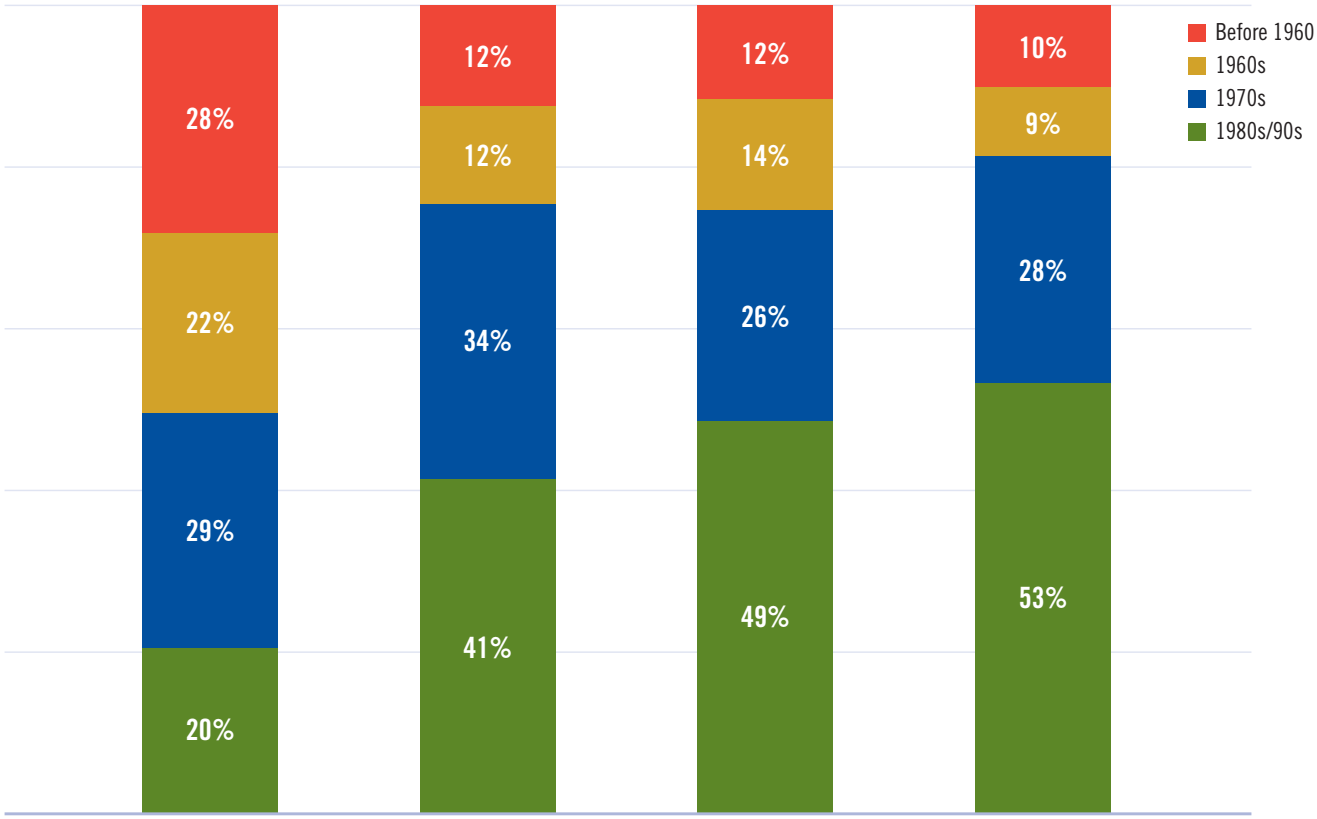
APPENDIX 16

Teacher Demographics and Compensation Across School Types

FIGURE A16.A

Autonomous schools have younger, but equally diverse, teacher populations

Teacher Birth Year, by School Type, 2013-2014



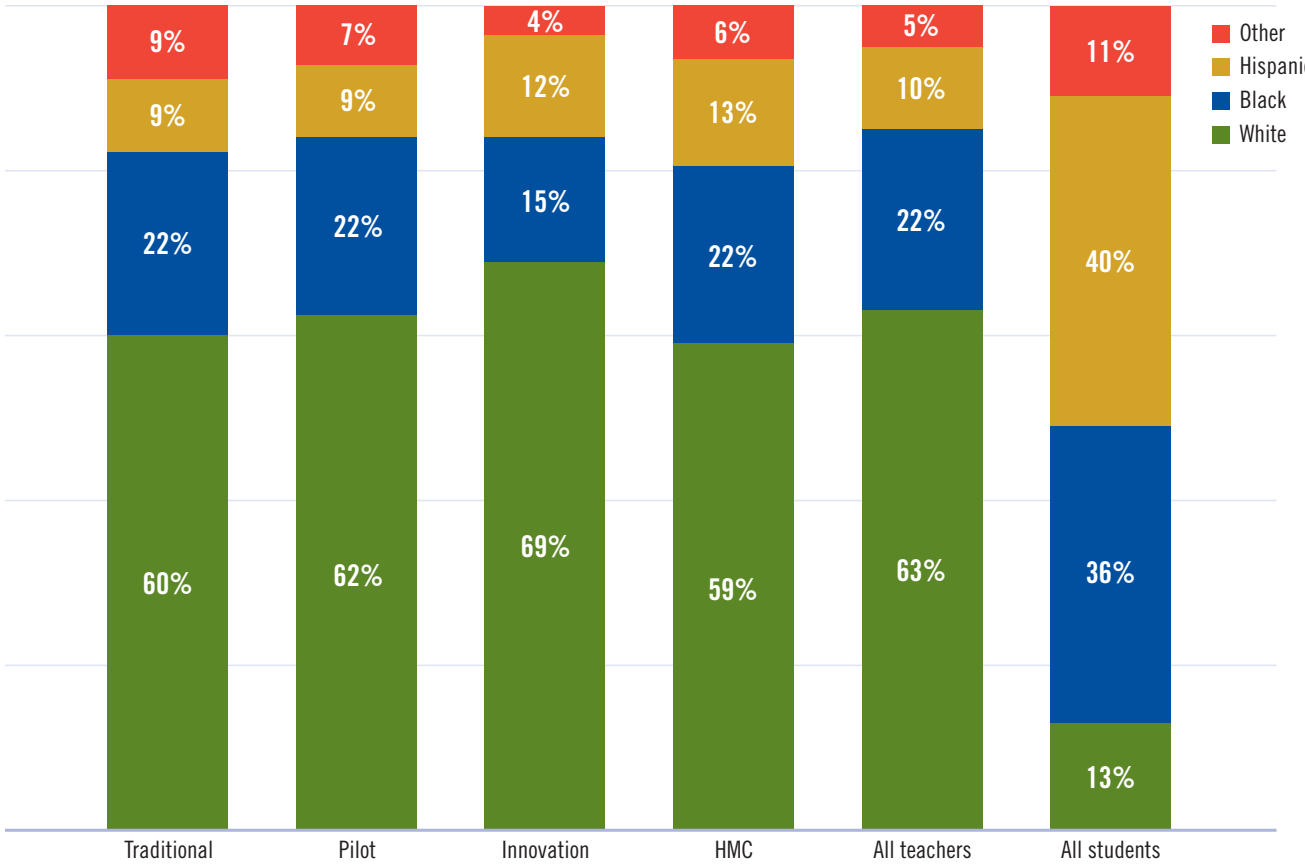
	Traditional	Pilot	Innovation	HMC
Average Years Teaching in BPS	13.0	7.9	7.2	3.7

Note: Traditional schools include 10 Turnaround and 3 Exam schools..
Source: BPS, ERS analysis

FIGURE A16.B

All school types have comparably diverse teacher populations, though none reflect the student population

Race/Ethnicity of Teachers and Students, by School Type

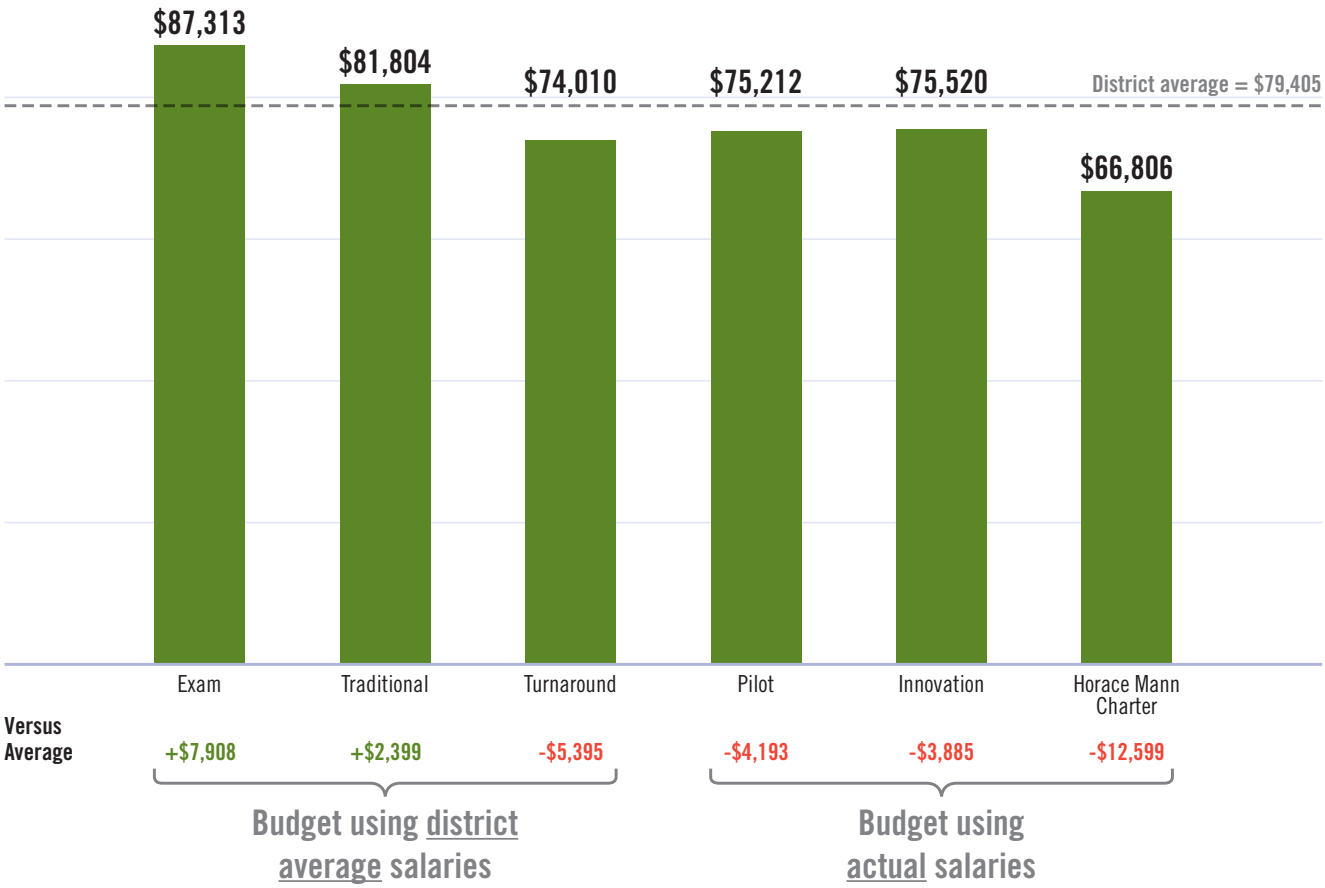


Note: Traditional schools include 10 Turnaround and 3 Exam schools.
Source: BPS, ERS analysis

FIGURE A16.C

Under current comp structure, teachers in Autonomous schools on average earn less

Average Teacher Salary, by School Type, 2013-2014



Source: BPS, ERS analysis

APPENDIX 17

School Leader Experience, by School Type

Number of principals	Start year					Total
	13–14	12–13	11–12	Total since 11–12	10–11 or before	
Total	24	8	11	43	47	90
Traditional	19	6	10	35	31	67
Exam	-	-	-	-	3	3
Autonomous	5	2	1	8	13	20
Pilot	3	2	1	6	9	15
Innovation	2	-	-	2	3	5
HMC	-	-	-	-	1	-

Percent by school type	Start year				
	13–14	12–13	11–12	Total since 11–12	10–11 or before
Total	26%	9%	11%	46%	54%
Traditional	29%	9%	15%	53%	47%
Exam	-	-	-	-	100%
Autonomous	24%	10%	5%	38%	62%
Pilot	20%	13%	7%	40%	60%
Innovation	40%	-	-	40%	60%
HMC	-	-	-	-	100%

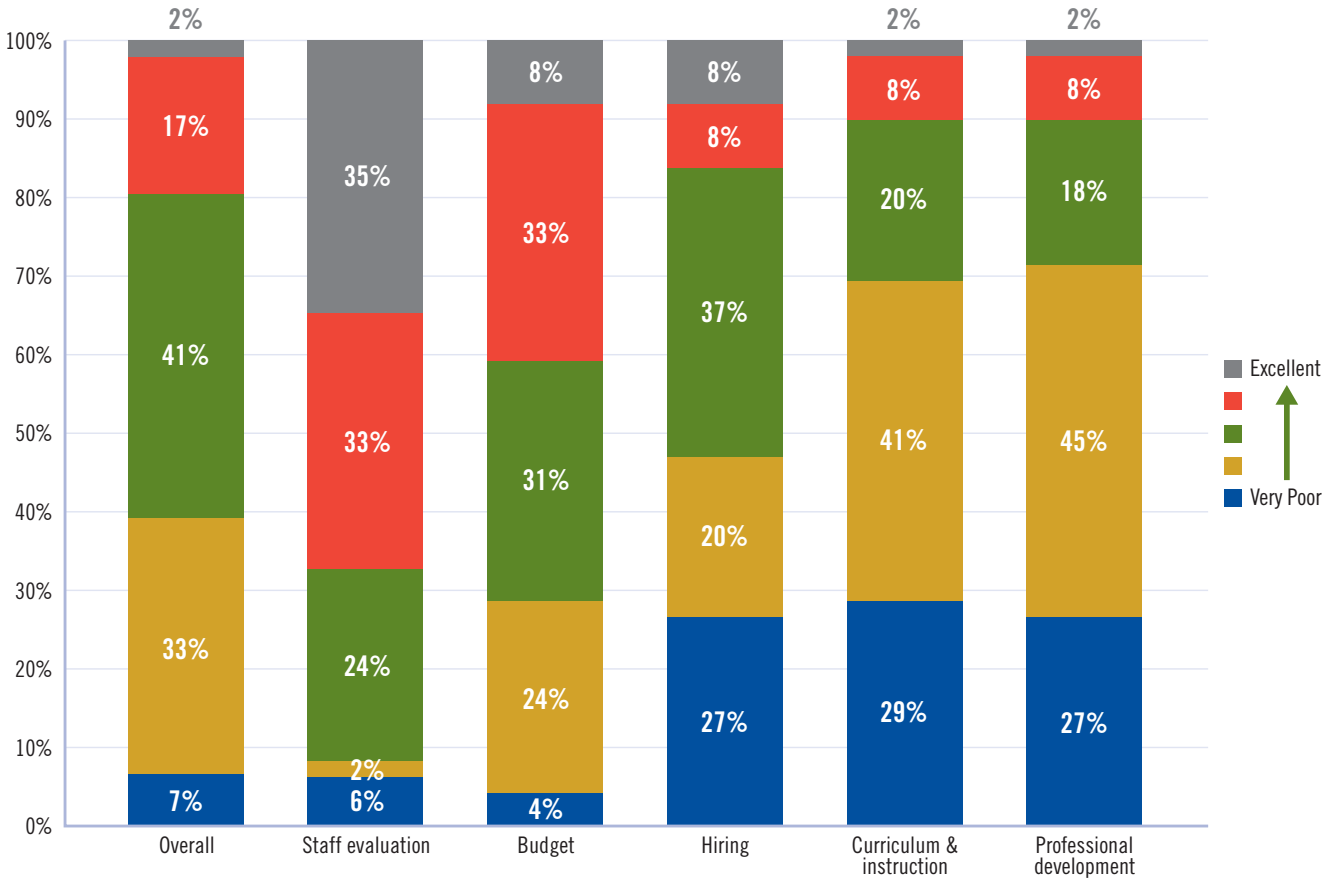
Note: analysis excludes Turnaround schools and schools without at 4 years of data (SY10-11 to SY13-14).
Source: BPS, ERS analysis

APPENDIX 18

BPS Principal Survey Results – Evaluation of District Services

FIGURE A18.A

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Very Poor" and 5 being "Excellent," how would you describe the quality of support you receive from your district's central office in the following areas?



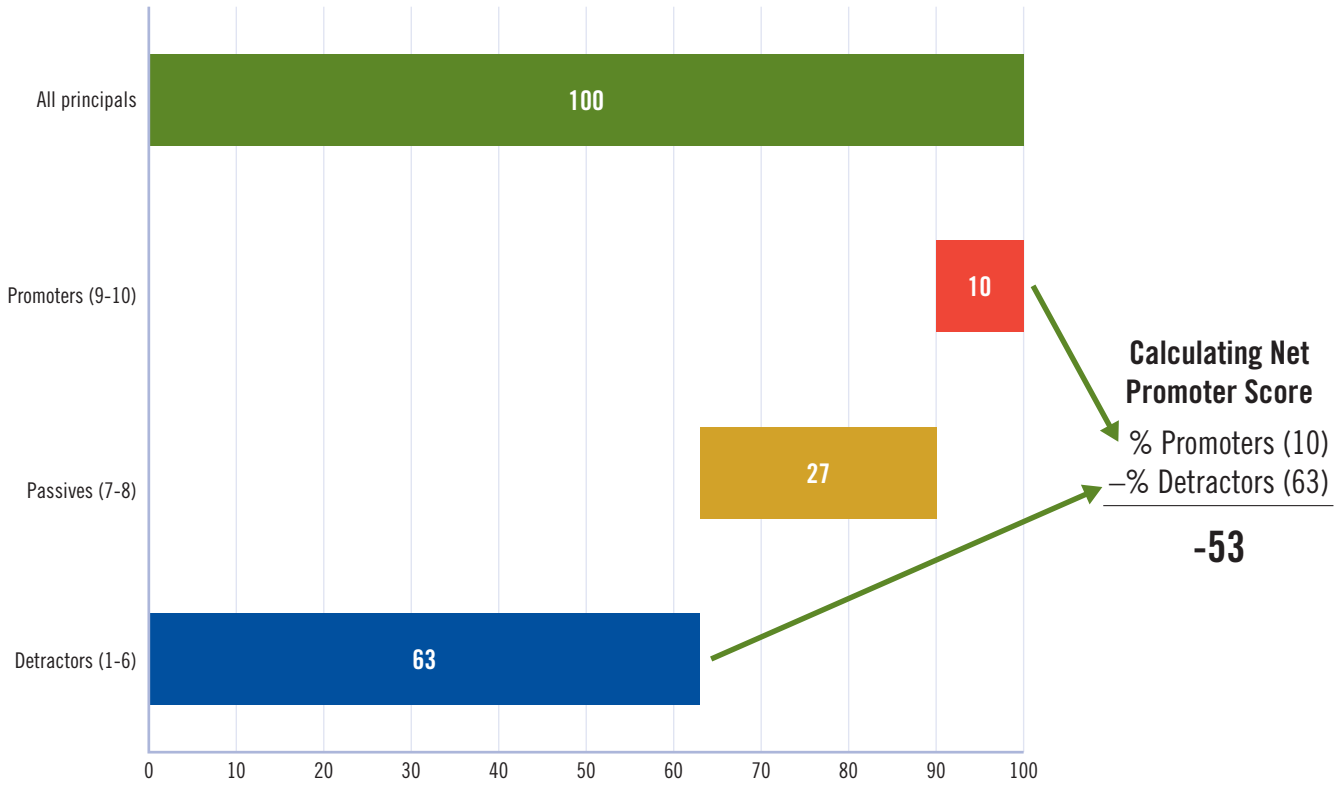
Source: Survey of BPS principals, January-March 2014

FIGURE A18.B

Principals' likelihood to recommend working in BPS

Q: If there were an opening for a principal in your district, how likely are you to recommend that high-quality peer from another district pursue the position?

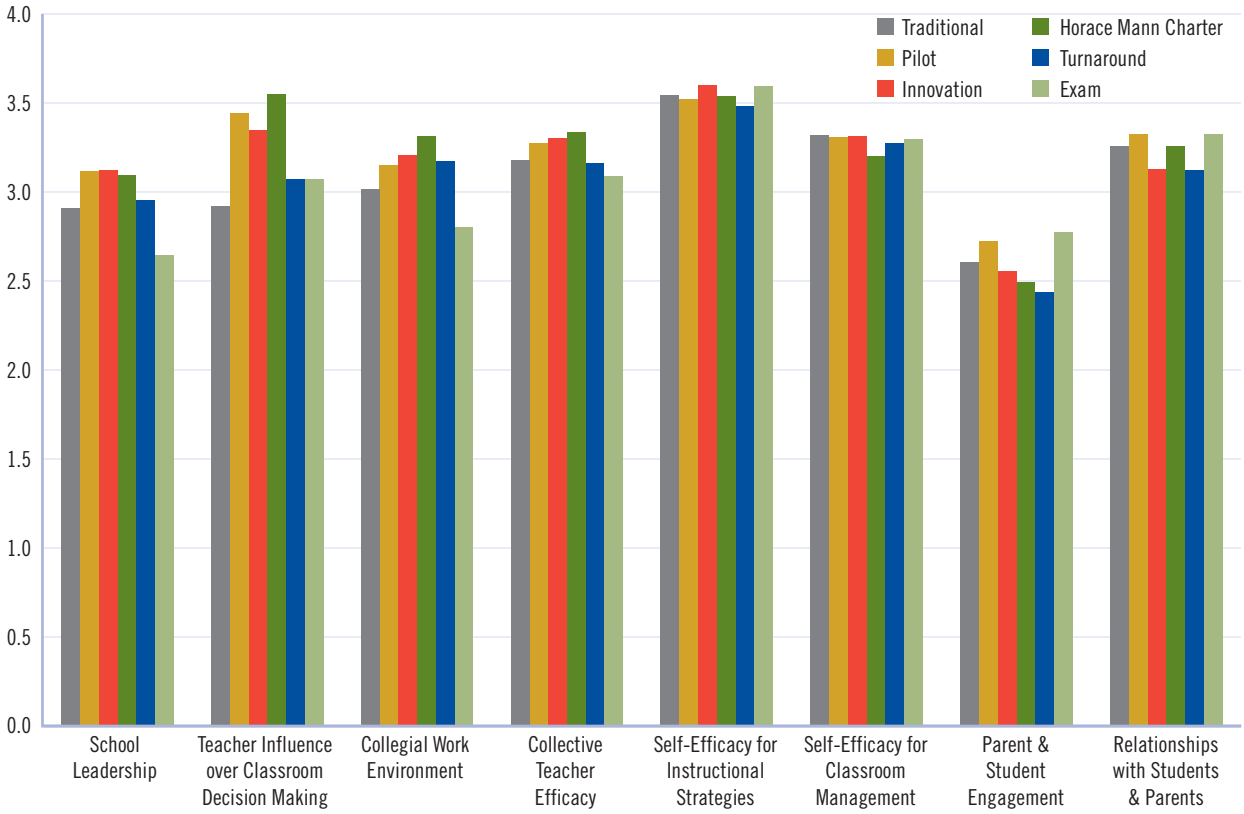
(Asked on a 1-10 scale, with 1 being Not At All Likely and 10 being Extremely Likely)



Source: Survey of BPS principals, January-March 2014

APPENDIX 19

BPS Teacher Survey



Traditional	2.9	2.9	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.3	2.6	3.3
Pilot, Inn, HMC	3.1	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.5	3.3	2.7	3.3

Source: BPS Teacher Survey

Endnotes

The Path Forward

1. The first Pilot Schools were: Fenway High School, Young Achievers, Health Careers (now EM Kennedy), Downtown Evening Academy (now Boston Day and Evening Academy), Lyndon Elementary, and Boston Arts Academy.

2. Drawn from Center for Collaborative Education (2007). *Strong results, high demand: A four year study of Boston's Pilot High Schools*. Boston, MA.

3. Equity in this context refers to equity of resources, a key ingredient in creating equitable conditions for success at all schools. Specifically, in an equitable system, students and schools with comparable needs receive comparable funding.

4. Proposal to The Boston Foundation by the Center for Collaborative Education, October 2013.

5. MacInness, G., *In Plain Sight: Simple, Difficult Lessons from New Jersey's Expensive Effort to Close the Achievement Gap,* The Century Foundation, 2008.

6. Providing core curriculum for schools does not imply mandating its use in all schools. In a well-functioning system, the district provides high-quality curriculum options while empowering schools to tailor their instructional approach based on student needs.

7. Zavadsky, H., "Five Critical Conditions That Encourage School Improvement," *Education Week*, April 18, 2014. http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/04/18/29zavadsky.h33.html

8. Among other research, see Steinberg, M. (2014). Does Greater Autonomy Improve School Performance? Evidence from a Regression Discontinuity Analysis in Chicago. *Education Finance & Policy, 9(1), 1*-35; Abdulkadiroglu, Atila, Joshua D. Angrist, Susan M. Dynarski, Thomas J. Kane, and Parag A. Pathak. 2011. Accountability and flexibility in public schools: Evidence from Boston's charters and pilots. Quarterly Journal of Economics 126(2): 699–748; Hanushek, Link, & Woessmann (2011). Does school autonomy make sense everywhere? Panel estimates from PISA. NBER Working Paper No. 17591; and Waters, T., & Marzano, R.J. (2006). School district leadership that works: The effect of superintendent leadership on student achievement (Working Paper).

9. For more on this topic, see Miles, K. and Frank. S, *The Strategic School: Making the Most of People, Time and Money.* Corwin Press, 2008.

10. http://btu.org/sites/default/files/BTU_Summary_Package_Sept2012.pdf

11. Following several years in limbo, the Pilot School Manual is undergoing an update by a group of autonomous school and district leaders to become an operating manual for all BPS autonomous schools.

12. While the first two BPS Horace Mann Charter schools required teacher's union approval, the state has since lifted this requirement.

13. The district's early hiring strategy for the 2014–15 school year has significantly improved traditional schools' ability to hire effectively.

14. A full analysis of school funding based on student needs was beyond the scope of this project and merits further study.

15. Proficiency data excludes 24 schools (18 ES/K-8 and 6 MS/HS) due to limited data (<10 data points). For ES/K-8, data represent DIBELS proficiency of incoming Kindergartners. For MS/HS, data represent the unweighted average of Math and ELA results for Grades 6 and 9.

16. Students served in substantially separate settings, according to MA DESE Special Education Levels of Need.

17. Students with the most significant ELL needs, according to: http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/mepa/pld.html

18. Many Innovation and Horace Mann schools also have the ability to extend teacher time based on individual MOUs with the district.

19. Traditional schools have the option to extend common planning/PD time by 10 hours, but must pay teachers at the real hourly rate for these hours.

20. BPS is extending its MBTA pass program to most 7th and 8th graders in 2014-15, which may enable more school scheduling flexibility.

21. In FY14, 14 out of the 21 pilot schools (including 2 HMCs which were formerly Pilots) received $1.02 million for __ hours more than 95 and less than 146 above the BTU contract standard. The total cost of Turnaround stipends assumes all Turnaround teachers received the $4100 stipends designated by the BPS Turnaround Plan in FY14.

22. See Appendix 15 for detailed data on teacher experience and salary across school types. Notably, the ethnic diversity of the teacher population at autonomous schools is on par with the ethnic diversity of teachers at traditional schools, though neither reflects the ethnic diversity of BPS students

23. Branch, Hanushek and Rivkin, as reported in Education Next, Winter 2013: http://educationnext.org/school-leaders-matter/

24. Clark, D., Martorell, P., and Rockoff, J. "School Principals and School Performance," National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research, 2009. http://www0.gsb.columbia.edu/faculty/jrockoff/cmr_principals_calder_WP38.pdf

25. ERS' 2010 analysis found that BPS spends 2-4 times less per pupil on professional development than peer districts, and specifically recommended that BPS invest an additional week of PD for principals.

26. Denver Public Schools, "2010 Denver Plan: Strategic Vision and Action Plan."

27. Network partners are schools by partner organization —education management organizations or community non-profits—and do not receive direct support from LAUSD. Partnership schools are run by the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, a nonprofit that grew out of an initiative begun by former Mayor Villaraigosa.

28. Although it is unclear the extent to which the election of Mayor Bill DiBlasio and appointment of Chancellor Carmen Farina will affect the district's direction, the groundwork laid by the prior administration and the impact to date provide a useful case study for our purposes.

29. In New York State, charters can be authorized by the state, the district, or the state university system.

30. In all districts studied except Baltimore, when school programs are closed they are immediately replaced with similar program options to maintain stability for families and communities.

31. Boston has the opportunity to open up to 9 more Horace Mann Charters and as many Innovation schools as the community will support.

32. http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/78

Appendices

1. Boston Public Schools. Boston Community Leadership Academy School Profile. http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/school/boston-community-leadership-academy

2. See the CHS's student population statistics at the MDESE website here: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00350515&orgtypecode=6&

3. See http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=datawise

4. See BPS Quincy school profile here: http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/school/quincy-elementary-school

5. See the Quincy's student population statistics at the MDESE website here: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00350286&orgtypecode=6&

6. See BPS Trotter school profile here: http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/928

7. From the website http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/domain/5

8. See: http://www.baltimorecityschools.org/cms/lib/MD01001351/Centricity/domain/87/2013-14_pdfs/20131218-TUDA.pdf

9. Contract schools are run under a contract with external organizations. They have more autonomy that charter schools.

10. Interview with district official, February 4, 2014

11. See: http://osri.dpsk12.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Call-for-New-Quality-Schools-2014-Final.pdf

12. For more information, see: http://osri.dpsk12.org/

13. Statement of Alyssa Whitehead-Bust, Chief of Innovation and Reform, Denver Public Schools Before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce Hearing Entitled "Raising the Bar: The Role of Charter Schools in K-12 Education" March 12, 2014

14. For more information, see: http://spf.dpsk12.org/

15. They use a methodology much like Massachusetts Student Growth Percentiles.

16. Statement of Alyssa Whitehead-Bust, Chief of Innovation and Reform, Denver Public Schools Before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce Hearing Entitled "Raising the Bar: The Role of Charter Schools in K-12 Education" March 12, 2014

17. Connors, S. C., Moldow, E., Challender, A., & Walters, B. (2013). Innovation Schools in DPS: Year three of an evaluation study. University of Colorado Denver: The Evaluation Center, School of Education and Human Development.

18. For more information, see: http://osri.dpsk12.org/school-development/call-for-new-quality-schools/

19. Interview with district official, February 4 , 2014

20. California Department of Education DataQuest: http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/

21. California Department of Education DataQuest: http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/

22. While network schools are autonomous from the district, they are not-self managing and are not a focus of this profile.

23. The progress of every LIS school will be monitored longitudinally. The monitoring tools and process are currently being developed.

24. Remarks at The Boston Foundation on November 18, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkGFIzfYZ0w

25. See: Phenix, Deinya, Dorothy Siegel, Ariel Zaltsman, and Norm Fruchter. Virtual District, Real Improvement: A retrospective evaluation of the Chancellor's District, 1996-2003. Institute for Education and Social Policy, Steinhardt School of Education, New York University, June 2004.

26. Interview with current NYC DOE official, Feb 12, 2014.

27. "The Evolution of School Support Networks in New York City" by Eric Nadelstern, CRPE Working Paper #2012-2

28. Testimony of Shael Polakow-Suransky to the NYC City Council Education Committee, 10/25/2012

29. "Principals Younger and Freer, but Raise Doubts in the Schools." By Elissa Gootman and Robert Gebeloff. New York Times, May 25, 2009.

30. Proficiency data excludes 24 schools (18 ES/K-8 and 6 MS/HS) due to limited data (<10 data points). For ES/K-8, data represent DIBELS proficiency of incoming Kindergartners. For MS/HS, data represent the unweighted average of Math and ELA results for Grades 6 and 9.

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Notes