

May 23, 2022

Dear BPS Families and Community,

In March, officials from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) conducted a comprehensive review of BPS curriculum, transportation, delivery of student services and district operations. This review was a welcome midpoint progress report after BPS entered into a partnership with DESE in March 2020, after a similar review in the fall of 2019.

The results of the DESE review will be shared publicly on Tuesday May 24th at the [Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting](#). The Board will discuss the report, but we do not anticipate the Board taking any action on the report tomorrow.

As expected, the report highlights a number of areas where BPS has made considerable progress over the past three years. Some of the notable improvements include:

- The adoption of MassCore, a rigorous set of academic graduation standards that sets consistent expectations for all high school students across the district;
- Implementation of a Quality Guarantee that commits to a baseline of consistent services so that all students receive a high-quality experience regardless of school, program or neighborhood;
- A consistent approach to literacy through the use of updated curricular materials, enhanced professional development, and ongoing monitoring of results; and,
- Investments to strengthen native language instruction and biliteracy and a move toward practices consistent with the LOOK Act to support students learning English.

The review also takes a deep look at areas where immediate action is needed to deliver on our commitment to students and families, particularly in the areas of special education and transportation. We share the community's urgency and readiness for solutions, and BPS is committed to moving forward to address these long-standing challenges. The DESE report in particular highlights the need to:

- Continue to improve on-time performance for transportation services;
- Ensure that inclusion is at the foundation of special education in every school, and significantly reduce the disproportionate placement in substantially separate programs for students of color;

- Improve teaching and learning in each of BPS' Transformation Schools through robust, evidence-based Quality School Plans;
- Provide high-quality services to all English learners, including English learners with disabilities; and,
- Address significant deferred maintenance in our school facilities and develop a district-wide master plan for facilities.

We stand ready to address the long-standing challenges highlighted by DESE that underscore the transformational change that BPS students, families, educators deserve. We join our new mayoral administration in recommitting to this important work ahead. Much of this work will require increasing staffing, operational support, and other resources, including a more robust collaboration with City departments, to ensure that the District and our schools are prepared to meet all of our students' needs.

We believe that a strengthened partnership between the City, BPS and DESE can ensure action on critical challenges and accountability for clear, timely progress. Our District's new Superintendent will play a pivotal role in leading that work.

Together, we have begun discussions with Commissioner Riley and DESE staff to collaboratively determine ways to strengthen our partnership. To be clear, we believe that an updated and strengthened partnership with DESE is critical to driving solutions, but ultimately, no one is better equipped to accelerate the progress Boston has made than our BPS communities.

We will continue to update you as these discussions continue, and we welcome your input and ideas. We will update the [School Committee on the DESE review this Wednesday at 5:00pm](#) during our regularly scheduled meeting and we encourage you to listen in.

Boston's future leaders are sitting in our Boston classrooms today, and our City's future depends on their success. We hold our obligation to our students as a sacred responsibility, and will continue our work – all hands on deck – to help them reach their full potential.

In partnership,



Michelle Wu
Mayor, City of Boston



Jeri Robinson
Chair, Boston School Committee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Cassellius". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Brenda" and last name "Cassellius" clearly distinguishable.

Dr. Brenda Cassellius
Superintendent, Boston Public Schools