

Stronger Schools,
Stronger Boston: A Plan to
Foster Equity, Coherence, and
Innovation

Boston's strategic implementation plan, *Stronger Schools, Stronger Boston: A Plan to Foster Equity, Coherence, and Innovation* is a roadmap for providing high-quality public education for all BPS students and is grounded in the values of equity, coherence, and innovation.

Focus areas of the plan include: implementing an inclusive, rigorous, and culturally/linguistically sustaining instructional program; attracting, developing, and retaining highly effective educators; engaging students, families and community; delivering high-quality support and customer service; and building a sustainable financial system.

Education

Boston is the birthplace of public education and aspires to equip all students at every level of education with the tools they need to improve the city. Currently, disparities in educational attainment by race and economic status persist. Bostonians of all ages agree that quality public education is essential to Boston’s future and a powerful engine for economic equity.

We are committed to addressing existing disparities by developing a sustainable urban education system that supports many school types and educational paths. Our schools have made a promise to our students to provide education that empowers them to become the next generation

of workers, leaders, advocates, and innovators. The following initiatives will enable Bostonians to access quality education opportunities for life-long learning and connect them to jobs where they can make powerful contributions.

“In 2030 my youngest will still be in high school. I hope that by that time every family in Boston has a progressive school they feel proud of like Mission Hill School where my older 2 children currently attend.”
West Roxbury resident via text message

This is what
inspires us
to act.

15%
of Boston residents over the age of
25 lack a high school diploma

Educational attainment is a key determinant of economic outcomes. 15 percent of Boston residents over age 25 lack a high school diploma and almost one third of this population lives in poverty.¹⁴
[See graph below ↓](#)
[Percent of population lacking a high school diploma](#)

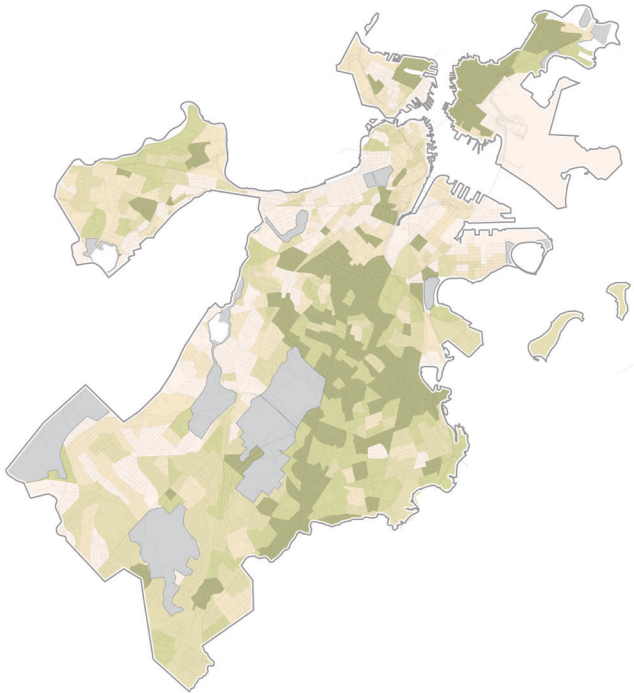
Many youth struggle to get started in the labor market and build careers. Young adults ages 16-24 have an unemployment rate 1.6 times the citywide average.¹⁵

There is a significant and persistent gap between the performance of black and Hispanic BPS students and their white peers. White fourth-graders scored 27 points (13 percent) higher on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading scale than their black and Hispanic peers.¹⁶

Education rates vary significantly by race. While 63 percent of white residents over age 25 have a bachelor's degree or above, only 19 percent of black residents and 17 percent of Hispanic residents have the same.¹⁷

Percent of population lacking a high school diploma

Educational attainment
varies significantly by
neighborhood.



Source: 2013 American Community Survey 5-year block group estimates

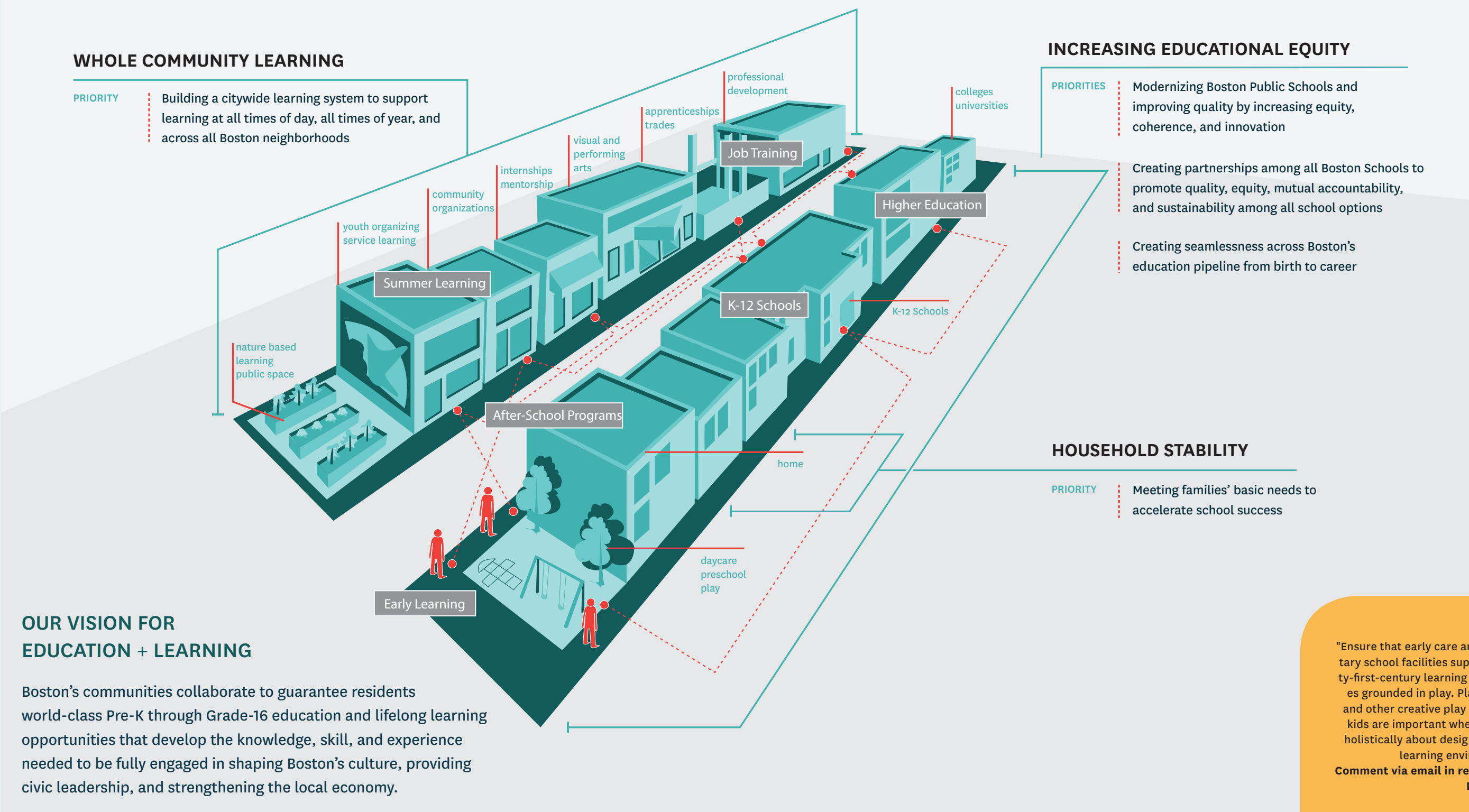


"I would love to see more vocational-technology opportunities for our BPS students. Right now we only have Madison Park serving students who would like to follow a non-college path. With all of the construction, tourism, hotel, restaurants, hospitals, universities, and service interests in Boston, there should be more opportunities for our students to be trained for careers in these fields."
Brighton resident via web survey

Artists for Humanity, South Boston

Boston's Citywide Learning Ecosystem

Our city is rich with learning resources both inside and outside the classroom. We are connecting these resources and creating a system of pathways for learners of all ages to achieve lifelong success.



"Ensure that early care and elementary school facilities support twenty-first-century learning experiences grounded in play. Playgrounds and other creative play spaces for kids are important when thinking holistically about designing these learning environments."

Comment via email in response to Draft Plan

BPS Educational Vision

We will build a learning system that is student-centered and easy-to-navigate, placing equity, innovation, and learning—both inside and outside the classroom—at its center.

Core Values

Equity

We will eliminate systemic bias and provide authentic learning opportunities for all students. We will develop our future leaders into determined, independent learners who are able to pursue their aspirations.

Coherence

We will reduce inconsistencies and inequities in the way our schools and district are organized in order to create a seamless system of care—whether in our classrooms or in our grade configurations across schools. We will make our operations and learning environments student-centered.

Innovation

We will enable our students and employees to become leaders, advocates, entrepreneurs, and innovators for Boston and the world. We will open the doors to the innovation economy for all our learners, youth and adult.

Characteristics of a BPS-Trained Student

Career Ready

Fundamental to our work are the skills, knowledge, and capacity necessary for college and career. We must be clear about what capabilities future workers will need and design our system to develop these in our students.

Equity Oriented

Where do we learn about injustice? Where are the opportunity gaps? The actions of the adults, peers, and systems in our lives are experienced daily and studied more closely than any textbook. BPS can shape significant elements of our kids’ early experiences to be more equitable.

Community Contributors

We do not just want our students to climb the ladder but to reach back to pull others up. Our students are critical in shaping what our communities look like over time. As students climb the educational ladder, BPS will equip them to support their peers and contribute to their communities.

Full of Agency

We want students to see themselves in potential futures and to believe in their ability to effect change. School can help them recognize their role and potential as an individual.

The successful BPS graduate is one who, six years after graduating high school, is gainfully employed and a productive, contributing citizen who believes in his or her ability to effect change.



John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science



Hour of Code Week at Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

BPS Skills

As we look toward the future, we believe that our academics and enrichment have to equip BPS students with three types of skills:

Learning and Innovation Skills

Creativity, Critical Thinking, Communication, and Collaboration

Information, Media, and Technology Skills

Information Literacy and Media Literacy

Life and Career Skills

Adaptability, Initiative, Social and Cross-Cultural Skills, Productivity, and Leadership

We will:

Build a connected education system that supports learners from early care through career

We will expand Pre-K until every 4-year-old in Boston has a seat and strengthen K-12 education as a pathway to college and career. Our schools will prepare students to attend college and encourage learning that prepares students to meet industry requirements.

Strengthen Boston Public Schools to fulfill its promise to students that they will have a quality job in Boston no more than six years after graduation

We will implement an inclusive, holistic, and culturally responsive instructional program; cultivate highly effective instructors who embrace a diversity of cultures and perspectives; engage students, family, and the wider community in learning; support students and families through a coordinated, school-based support network; and build a financially sustainable and equitable education system.

Provide twenty-first-century learning experiences and facilities

We will modernize infrastructure through the BuildBPS Ten Year Educational and Facilities Master Plan and develop innovative modes of instruction through High School Redesign.

Encourage partnerships among district, charter, religious, and independent schools

These partnerships will promote best practices and innovation as well as maximize resources for teaching and learning.

Take steps toward making college affordable and accessible for all Bostonians

We will continue to add more free community college options for eligible BPS graduates. We will make it easier to earn early college credits and transfer community college credits between institutions and to four-year colleges. We will provide nonfinancial support for matriculation through programs like Success Boston that help students navigate the college experience.

Foster learning beyond school walls

We will support after-school programs, expand opportunities to earn credit in community settings, increase access to summer learning opportunities, and otherwise unlock learning outside of classroom walls, including giving caregivers tools to support children’s learning. Boston will support playgrounds and streetscape infrastructure that create playful environments where kids enjoy learning and build twenty-first-century skills such as grit, determination, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Create pathways to career ladders in Boston’s strongest and most well-paid sectors

We will focus on pathways to jobs in sectors such as education, financial services, technology, and health-care by strengthening partnerships between employers, schools, and job-training programs that can guarantee jobs for participants. We will explore hybrid school models that train students for careers through more rapid academic programs that result in postsecondary credentials and jobs.

BPS students →



"We have the intellectual and cultural capital in our cities to make our public schools the best in the nation. In 2030, my vision is that Boston should serve as a model for public schools just as it did in 1635 when it opened the nation's first public school."
South Boston resident via web survey

Universal Pre-K

Boston is committed to ensuring a high-quality Pre-K seat for every 4-year-old in the city.

Building on its legacy as a leader in education, Boston has established early childhood education as a citywide priority. Boston is a national leader in Pre-K education in large part due to program-quality improvements made in Boston Public Schools and across community provider settings through the local “K1DS” initiative and through the federal Pre-K Expansion Grant effort.¹⁸

Studies have shown that investments in high-quality Pre-K translate directly into closing early racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, as well as long-term academic success and greater likelihood of gainful employment.¹⁹ The Mayor’s Universal Pre-Kindergarten Advisory Committee defines Pre-K quality by several standards, which include teacher qualifications and certifications, curricular accreditation and standardization, ongoing professional, development and frequent child outcome assessments used to inform classroom practices. Boston now meets the total demand for Pre-K seats citywide and in every neighborhood and is on track to have enough seats for the next 10 years.²⁰ Nevertheless, only 75 percent of Boston’s 6,000 4-year-olds have a quality seat, and the total number of 4-year-olds is expected to grow to more than 6,700 by 2025.²¹ Quality seats are not evenly distributed. Neighborhoods like South Boston, Brighton, Charlestown, Allston, and Jamaica Plain currently have enough high-quality seats to serve children and families, while Dorchester, Hyde Park, West Roxbury, Roxbury, East Boston, and Roslindale are in need of additional high-quality seats.²²

The following actions will help expand quality Pre-K seats, and achieve Boston’s goal of ensuring a high-quality Pre-K seat for every four-year-old.

Preserve Established Progress

Boston will work to protect the high-quality seats that are currently funded through the Preschool Expansion Grant program.

Expand Quality Programs

We will expand the number of BPS seats as space allows and expand the number of seats in community-based organizations that meet the city’s quality thresholds, especially in communities where there is a shortage or potential shortage.

Improve Existing Programs

We will invest in improving quality in community-based organizations that are close to meeting quality thresholds. Among the most important investments will be investments in early educators. We intend to assist teachers to earn advanced credentials and reduce gaps in teacher compensation.

Build an Oversight System

Boston’s Universal Pre-K work will be guided by a partnership between City Hall and Boston Public Schools and will draw on expert input from field experts and community providers. This partnership will oversee Pre-K investment, program delivery and monitoring of system quality and student results.

Achieve Full Access

Identify a revenue source that will allow high quality Pre-K for every-four-year old in the city. Boston has put forward proposals to the State House that will allow for a dependable revenue source.



BuildBPS

BuildBPS is a strategic framework to bring Boston's school buildings into the twenty-first century.

Boston is committed to providing a strong, equitable educational system in all our neighborhoods. Boston’s demographics are changing. Black and Latino children make up a large and growing portion of Boston’s youth. Historically these children have not been well connected to the full range of assets Boston has to offer. Boston’s education system has a mandate to connect all students to the full assets of the city and society.²³

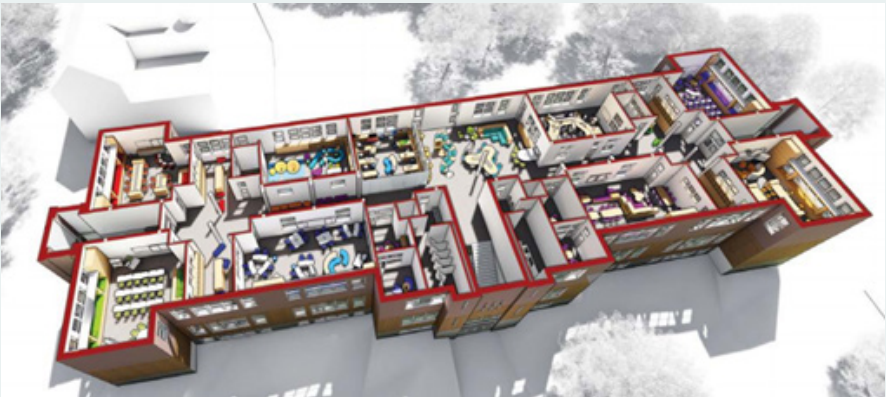
At present, 59 percent of BPS’s students are clustered in four neighborhoods—East Boston, Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. The projected growth rate is also highest in these neighborhoods for the foreseeable future.²⁴ Black and Latino children make up a large proportion of BPS students in these neighborhoods. Boston will make investments in these areas, as elsewhere, to ensure equity and sufficient capacity across our system.

At the same time, our facilities are old, built for a time when teaching and learning were different. 65 percent of our schools were built before World War II and fewer than half of those have been fully renovated.²⁵ Many schools lack key resources—a dedicated art room, a dedicated music room, or a library/media center can each only be found in half of public elementary schools.²⁶ More than half of all middle and high schools also lack a library/media center.²⁷

The places where we educate students have changed very little over the last 125 years, but the world has changed dramatically. The ways that school space is arranged and classrooms are set up suggest the kind of instruction we can expect to see in them.



Existing classrooms traditionally follow an “egg carton” design where learning tends to be sedentary, passive, and controlled.



The next generation of learning should be active, collaborative, playful, creative, and self-directed. Correspondingly, our next generation of learning spaces will be flexible, sensory, contextual, safe, and networked. Our school facilities will foster collaboration and small group learning. They will integrate the use of new technologies and content across disciplines.



A new \$73.5 million building at the 6-12th grade Dearborn STEM Academy is scheduled to open in 2018 in Dudley Square. The new space has been designed for twenty-first-century student learning. It will feature flexible spaces for collaboration between students and adults and a high capacity for the use of technology, including a makerspace and learning commons.

Principles for Investment

We will make creating high-quality 21st-century learning spaces for every student a centerpiece of our investments: investing an unprecedented \$1 billion in Boston’s school buildings over the next 10 years.

What our students and staff need

We will create school environments that promote student and staff safety and well-being.

Our growth

We will develop adequate school capacity in projected high-growth neighborhoods.

What our education programs need

We will invest in new school furniture and technology to promote twenty-first-century learning and teaching methodologies. We will make improvements to facilities so that they support the needs of our educational programming.

Climate responsiveness

We will improve the energy efficiency of BPS facilities.

The state of our facilities

We will use real-time facility assessment data to prompt and validate our investment choices via the BuildBPS Data Dashboard.

Collaboration

We will look for opportunities to develop shared spaces for learning, used by two or more schools, through partnerships, existing BPS facilities, or new construction.