



Boston Coalition for Education Equity

2019 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

QUESTION: If you answered “YES” to the question “Do you believe segregation is a critical problem facing BPS”, **What changes would you propose to the current assignment system to make it more equitable?**

AT LARGE

Domingos DaRosa

Parents should be able to choose where their children attend school, get rid of the districts make it one pool to pick from.

Annissa Essaibi-George

First, our schools have never been desegregated. We need to create more diverse communities and make certain to have only high quality schools.

Michael F Flaherty

With respect to enrollment and diversity, I believe our schools become stronger when they become an integral part of the neighborhood where they are located. I also, of course, strongly advocate for equal educational opportunities, meaning that, right now, a return to a purely neighborhood school system would run the unacceptable risk of failing to achieve such equality. What we need to work towards is a school system where everyone’s neighborhood school is their number one choice. But that won’t happen overnight, and success in this regard will require bold leadership, collaboration among all parties involved, and incorporation of the best practices working in other urban school districts across the country.

Priscilla E Flint-Banks

BPS should stop funding Charter School. Create more access to the exam school. Create an advisory board of teachers, parents and students to work with the School Committee on this issue.

David Halbert

The current assignment system should be changed to incorporate socio-economic and racial/ethnic data as part of the overall assignment algorithm. The goal of BPS within the assignment process should be to balance the creation of schools that reflect the composition of the district's overall student population, with providing non-burdensome access to quality educational opportunities for all students. Because of this more must be done to improve overall quality and performance among BPS schools, to provide greater options to families and reduce the enrollment pressure on specific schools.

William A King

All schools should be considered City Wide options. Families should be given a packet on all schools with a description, which should be made available in both paper and electronic formats. Ultimately, the hope is this would allow parents to make more informed choices when picking school assignments for their kids and by making all schools as city wide options kids will be able to attend school in other neighborhoods.



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Julia Mejia

As a graduate of the Boston Public Schools and who survived the busing era attempt to desegregate Boston, I know 1st hand the deep inequities that continue to persist throughout our educational landscape. Unfortunately, our zip code determines where our kids are assigned and those who live in more affluent parts of the city get better access to quality schools. Research shows that integration can be a great equalizer. I believe we need to explore an assignment system that centered in fully integrate our schools. A school assignment system designed to ensure that students from across social economic status, race, etc are able to learn and grow together.

Alejandra Nicole St. Guillen

The home-based assignment system was designed in a way that failed to address the inequities in our education system. If elected I would advocate to increase good schools in districts that have been neglected to improve equity and access to quality education.

Michelle Wu

The 2018 BARI report on home-based assignment commissioned by BPS highlighted the increase in segregation under this system. One of the report’s recommendations for greater equity was to create choice baskets by numbers of high-quality seats rather than high-quality schools. BPS still hasn’t implemented this change, but it should happen as quickly as possible. Additionally, the BPS definition of 'high-quality' is tied to student scores on standardized tests that we know to be inequitable. Other metrics of quality (such as MCIEA’s) better reflect each school’s situation while incorporating current accountability measures such as test score growth that provide more information than raw score. Sharing this data can more equitably inform families’ choices to navigate the system and highlight how our understanding of school quality is currently based on inequitable measures. Data also shows that allocating all the seats at most desired schools in the lottery’s first round creates inequitable outcomes for families of color who disproportionately comprise later rounds of the lottery. Ultimately, we can’t be satisfied with a system that equitably splits up too few quality seats among our families. Increasing the number of high-quality schools can address the inequitable lack of access faced by many BPS students.

DISTRICT ONE

Lydia Marie Edwards

I believe every school should be a quality school. My focus has been to ensure affordable housing and economic opportunities are available to all residents and in every neighborhood so that communities themselves are desegregated and so that adequate resources are provided to BPS to stabilize and strengthen schools.



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I am certainly open to changing school assignment plans if and where these plans are widening the divide. Given housing and transportation challenges, I do not think this can be done in isolation of other issues. In some neighborhoods, such as East Boston – literally islanded from the rest of Boston – transportation across the city creates challenges that result in students being late to school, missing school breakfast or simply losing time with their family due to long travel duration.

I do believe basic improvements to the application process, such as providing families more clarity around school waitlists, and continual improvements to our school and public transportation systems, are part of ensuring equity. I would also support changes to exam school admissions to ensure these schools are representative of Boston.

DISTRICT TWO

Edward M Flynn

I was alarmed when a report found that there are growing inequities in the BPS under the current assignment system, and that many students from communities of color still have limited access to high quality schools. I understand that the current system is based on an algorithm developed in MIT, and I would like to see if there is a way to make this algorithm more equitable. On the other hand, the inequities that we see now is also reflective of the inequitable distribution of quality schools in our neighborhoods, and that families of color have fewer opportunities to live in neighborhoods with quality schools due to issues such as high cost of housing. We also need to address the fundamental inequities in housing, access to opportunities, and distribution of educational resources in addition to the flaws in our assignment algorithm. I’ve been a huge proponent in issues such as affordable housing, language access, and disability rights, and I’ve called for hearings on important equity issues such as displacement and eviction, as well as public health disparities in communities of color. I believe that these issues are interlinked with education equity, and improving on these issues can mitigate the inequities in the assignment system.

DISTRICT FIVE

Ricardo Arroyo

It is telling that when the current assignment system was implemented achieving racial balance was not part of the equation, the emphasis was on moving towards "neighborhood schools" which in practice creates increasing segregation along both racial and socioeconomic lines. Recreating the assignment system with a focus on the importance of racial and socioeconomic diversity is imperative and must be done in partnership with the most invested stakeholders. Students, parents, teachers, and school administrators.



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Cecily Leticia Graham

I propose changes to address how our highly skilled students are moving out of public schools into charter schools, creating a brain drain, hence lowering the productivity and test scores of our readily available schools. This inevitably leads to more school closures and displacement of students and teachers. While I understand we don't want to hold back high achieving students, we should ensure all students whether charter or public are receiving the same quality education. In addition to this as I previously stated, assigning a student based off of their zip code creates more disparities and perpetuates segregation. Although we have access to METCO programs, students should not have to travel far distances or sit on a waiting list in order to receive a quality education.

Justin Matthew Murad

No response to this question.

Alkia T Powell

I believe segregation is a critical issue facing BPS.

Jean-Claude Sanon

Due to the fact that segregation has been revealed as a sin towards the student of color. It was a critical problem for BPS and the student in the past, a system that failed our kids. Therefore, why coming back with a method that has caused damages to our children before. Student should be able to attend whatever school they so choose to attend without any limitation or else equitability will never reign in our educational system.

Mimi E Turchinetz

We need to develop a system that creates diverse student bodies while maintaining geographic proximity so that students are not required to traverse the city daily for their education. One way to address this is by working to reduce the racial and economic segregation in Boston. I would work to reduce housing segregation by aggressively pushing for the development of family-oriented multi-tiered income housing.

DISTRICT SIX

Matt O'Malley

No response to this question.



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DISTRICT SEVEN

Kim Janey

I was very active in the various student assignment policy debates over the last 20 years, including the most recent that resulted in the home-based assignment plan. I was proud to lead efforts in pushing back and demanding the focus be on equity and increasing quality, NOT determining who gets access to quality. Many of us pointed out that the plan being proposed would increase segregation and decrease access to quality. An immediate change should be looking at actual “seats” instead of “schools”, when determining school choices in assignment basket.

DISTRICT EIGHT

Priscilla Kenzie Bok

I’ve spent the last few years deeply engaged in trying to combat housing segregation, and I’m very concerned about educational segregation as well. Acknowledging that I’m no expert on school assignment, I think we should look carefully at the tweaks proposed in the recent BARI report. We may also want to review the timing of assignment rounds, as I know such timing has been shown to have differential segregating effects in Cambridge, for example. I also believe that we could do much more to provide parents with clear information about their options in order to help every family make informed choices. Even just knocking doors this summer, I’ve encountered a significant number of parents flummoxed by their first encounter with the school assignment system and seeking advice on how to think about the decision. Inequities in access to information are some of the first barriers that we really should be able to overcome. I also think we need to follow BARI’s recommendation to measure equal access in terms of actual competition for seats, not just number of schools. Such a framework would also help us acknowledge and address the shortage of seats available to families in parts of District 8.

Montez David Haywood

I will advocate for walking zones that will allow students to go to school with their neighbors.

Kristen Mobilia

The 2019 student demographics were:

- 42% Hispanic
- 34% Black
- 14% White
- 9% Asian
- 1% Other/Multiracial



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The question remains: Why does the white BPS student population occupy a high percentage of the more desirable schools, including the exam schools? In 2014, we transitioned from the 3 Assignment Zones to an automated system designed by MIT. While the intentions may have been good, the results are continued segregation. Ultimately, the way that we’ll get to a better place regarding school diversity is to push for more affordable housing and equitably funded schools for each neighborhood. Without a change to equity in education, we won’t make the necessary progress with regard to racial wealth inequities.

Additionally, like our current push to have Boston police and fire departments that mirror our population, we need our teachers and other school employees to mirror our student population . The 2019 teacher and guidance counselor demographics were:

- 60% White
- 22% Black
- 11% Hispanic
- 6% Asian
- 1% Other

We need to make a concerted effort to attract a more diverse set of applicants when staff roles are being filled.

Helene Vincent

The most important thing we can do—and the most necessary—is ensure that all BPS schools are of high quality and offer the basics of a solid education, including science, art, music, sports, and wraparound services. Unfortunately that’s a longer-term goal, so we need to find more ways to increase equity in the system now. We must find ways to amend the Home-Based Assignment system to reduce segregation and consider changing it altogether if necessary. A relatively quick change would be to reserve some seats at high-demand schools for children from low-income neighborhoods, which are the least likely to have sufficient high-quality seats available. This would reduce choice in neighborhoods with plenty of Tier 1 options, but that’s an acceptable compromise in the face of a clear need to address segregation. I’d also like BPS to truly solicit and incorporate the ideas and needs of families living in low-access neighborhoods. Knocking doors, I’ve talked to many BPS families who don’t think BPS values their input or understands their needs. To create long-lasting and effective solutions, we must have input from those most affected and create an approach that everyone can support, or the change will not last.



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DISTRICT NINE

Jonathan Lamar Allen

I support Councilor Andrea Campbell's "Action for Children" Plan which proposes modifying the home-based assignment formula to enhance equity by giving each family a minimum number of Tier 1 and 2 seats instead of Tier 1 and 2 schools. According to the plan, "the current assignment process sustains inequity because it does not account for the differing number of seats at each school, and the uneven distribution of students across the city."

Brandon David Bowser

There is much to say about Home-Based student assignment, and how our families choose or don't choose their schools. In short, every neighborhood deserves a high quality and performing school. Sadly, this is not a reality. I think that when we look at how assignments are decided. If we rely on a lottery based school assignment, we will continue to place students in schools far away from their neighborhood. This will cause long commutes which will further drive up our transportation budget. Our families deserve a school close to their house. The first step to making our school choice more equitable is to ensure that all communication is made available in the home language. I have had many students who come from households where the student is primarily responsible for translating school documents. Choosing a school for students should be streamlined and easy for parents to understand. We also have to make sure that homeless families are not lost in the process. There is also programming that needs to be taken into consideration. Where are our special education strands and ELL programs located? How many seats are available in these programs?

Liz A Breadon

I don't believe incremental changes will work in a system designed to maintain status quo. This is a heavy lift but I support shifting some of the approx \$125M we spend on busing to equitable funding of neighborhood schools. I also support an elected school board representing Boston districts so that equity can be discussed and negotiated out in the open.

Daniel J Daly

I think that the current school system assignment system is riddled with pros and cons. As much as we need to be sure to never allow ourselves to fall back into the parochialism that caused the busing crisis, we also need to make sure that we are allowing our children to attend schools that are geographically accessible for them. We must work together as a city to find a better middle ground to this issue. Although the lottery system was integral in working to desegregate our schools, an East Boston resident should not have to drive across the city to pick up their child from school when the neighborhood schools are just a walk away. However, while our neighborhoods are significantly more diverse than they were 40 years ago, there is certainly still



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considerable economic inequity among them, and it is imperative that we find a way to balance local schooling with the economic and social issues that persist in our city.

Lee Nave Jr

In order to address the homework issue, we need to look at how homework is assigned and by which it must be completed. Currently, a lot of homework must be done using a computer, which is an access issue. In addition, for older students who have to work to support their families after school, they are penalized for not completing assignments. Assignment systems that acknowledge differing student situations will reduce inequities that persist in student “achievement” outcomes. We are not assessing “achievement” if our students are not being set up for success.

Amanda Gail Smart

I don't believe it's a critical issue, but I don't have the numbers in front of me. I think that having discussions with parents or family members to see why they are not sending them to public school, would be a first step.