

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, JULIA MEJIA, BENJAMIN WEBER,
BREADON, COLETTA ZAPATA, DURKAN, FERNANDES ANDERSON, FLYNN, MURPHY,
PEPÉN, SANTANA, WORRELL, AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS HOW BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS CAN EXPAND THE USE OF EVIDENCE-BASED BEST PRACTICES FOR INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS FOR MULTILINGUAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION LEARNERS

WHEREAS, “Inclusion” is an education model that seeks to ensure the effective education of students with diverse learning needs, including multilingual learners and students with disabilities, while enhancing the social and emotional development for all students in an integrated learning environment that supports the needs of each student, instead of segregating students based on their learning needs; *and,*

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Education identifies multilingualism and multiliteracy as highly beneficial for the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children, with peer-reviewed research demonstrating increased understanding of math concepts, easier development of strong thinking skills and use of logic, improved focus and decision-making, better self-control, and strengthened connections with culture and community, in addition to long-term practical benefits for job opportunities and participation in multilingual local and global communities; *and,*

WHEREAS, It is therefore highly beneficial for English Learners to have their native language fostered through native language instruction while simultaneously developing skills in the English language, rather than receive instruction solely in English; and it is further of benefit for native English speakers to gain exposure to other languages through inclusive classrooms that support and integrate Multilingual Learners with instruction in their native languages in addition to English; *and,*

WHEREAS, Further, the inclusion of students with disabilities provides similar benefits for social and emotional development of all students, while enhancing positive outcomes for students who learn differently; *and,*

WHEREAS, BPS currently places students in substantially separate classrooms (SSCs) at highly disproportionate rates, particularly for Black male students and English Learners, with over twice the state and national rate of students in SSCs, Black male students being over three times as likely to be placed in emotional impairment SSCs as other student groups, and English Learners with an identified communication disability being over two and a half times more likely to be placed in SSCs; *and,*

WHEREAS, BPS leadership has recognized this deficiency and urgency to implement a more inclusive approach, including as part of a 2022 deal with the Massachusetts Education Commissioner, which mandated structural changes to address what state leaders described as “systemic disarray” in BPS’s special education services, and which allowed BPS the opportunity to address these shortcomings to avoid being immediately labeled “underperforming” or requiring state receivership; *and,*

WHEREAS, A May 22, 2024 BPS School Proposals report reflects these necessary changes, discussing investments BPS is making: “[to] create inclusive opportunities to the maximum extent possible, to increase students' access to grade level content and high-quality instructional materials with the appropriate resources and supports to ensure that ALL students can be successful, especially students we have not served well. This work is at the center of our efforts to eliminate gaps in opportunities and outcomes.”; *and,*

WHEREAS, Research studies on special education outcomes consistently demonstrate that students having access to targeted subject matter interventions and sufficient support are both critical, making the specific details of the implementation of Inclusion extremely important; *and,*

WHEREAS, Teachers and staff must be adequately trained and provided resources to maximize the positive impact of Inclusion on student outcomes; *and,*

WHEREAS, Some BPS schools have been nationally recognized for highly effective implementations of Inclusion, and their systems should be discussed as models for expansion to the majority of other BPS schools that do not currently implement similar systems, and consequently have measurably poorer outcomes; *and,*

WHEREAS, Inclusive classrooms are best facilitated by a team of educators who are dedicated to one classroom of students, so the educators can build relationships and provide consistency for those students, and collectively meet each of their needs, without overtaxing teachers to possess multiple licenses and perform the duties of more than one job at once, or jump between classrooms and split attention across too many students to maintain close relationships; *and,*

WHEREAS, Emphasizing the necessity of a team of educators for effective implementation of Inclusion, the Council of Great City Schools, a coalition of 75 of the nation’s largest urban public school systems, of which the Boston School Committee is a member, published a report in 2022 commissioned by BPS, which highlighted: “No districts we are familiar with use dually certified general/special educators to meet the needs of all of their students, even with paraeducator support”; *and,*

WHEREAS, Providing native language instruction requires a sustained pipeline of educators who are fluent in the primary home languages of students, making it critical to implement systems to attract, hire, and retain enough teachers to meet students' needs; *and,*

WHEREAS, The effective implementation of inclusive classrooms requires guidance and support from families and students, and must therefore integrate community outreach on a school-by-school basis with both the school's community at large, as well as the individual families of that school's students.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss how Boston Public Schools can expand the use of evidence-based best practices for Inclusive Learning Environments for Multilingual and Special Education Learners. Experts on classroom Inclusion models; community groups representing Boston Public School teachers, students, parents, and staff; and representatives from Boston Public Schools will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

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