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To: Boston School Committee  
Cc: Mary Skipper, Superintendent  
From: Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education, Student Enrollment, and Planning and Analysis  
Date: December 3, 2025  
Subject: Analysis of Bilingual Low-Incidence Language Programming and Consideration for District-Wide Access

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The Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education (OMME) is fully committed to ensuring native language opportunities for all students, including multilingual learners, students with disabilities and multilingual learners with disabilities, while emphasizing an approach focused on sustainability and meeting student needs through various programmatic options. In recent years, the district has prioritized expanding access to bilingual programming across all schools. Schools like the Hernandez were once one of the only options for families interested in a dual language education, which is why it was given city-wide access. As we continue to expand opportunities there will be more options closer to where a student lives.

In this memo you will find the district's strategy for continuing to expand our bilingual programming with a particular focus on low-incidence language<sup>1</sup> options. This memo also outlines the critical factors to consider and some of the potential barriers and challenges associated with granting city-wide access to other school communities.

### Types of Bilingual Offerings

Over the last five years, OMME has focused on both improving the quality of our existing bilingual programs and expanding offerings through the creation of new programming based on enrollment/demographic trends and community interest.

For the purposes of this memo, we will focus on three types of bilingual programs:

- **Dual Language (DL) Education Programs:** These are two-way models (e.g. Hernandez in Spanish, Mather in Vietnamese, and Mattahunt in Haitian Creole) for both multilingual students of the partner language AND students seeking to learn a language other than English who aim to become bilingual, biliterate and bicultural. In practice in this model, teachers are providing instruction in both languages and students are gaining fluency in both English and the partner language.
- **Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) Programs:** This program is for Multilingual Learners (MLs)<sup>2</sup> with the goal of improving English such that they can transition into classrooms with English instruction. Ninety percent of instruction in the first year in this program is in the student's native language, which reduces throughout the year and each subsequent year as the child's English proficiency increases. Students are tested and screened for this program for their English skills. Examples of these programs are at the McKay and Ellis (SY 26-27).
- **Other Bilingual Program - Mandarin:** This DESE approved program under the LOOK Act<sup>3</sup> is for MLs where one of the core instruction courses (eg. Math or ELA or Science) must be in the native language (i.e. Mandarin). This program is designed to ensure Multilingual Learners (MLs) maintain continuous enrollment from Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through Grade 5, guaranteeing they receive instruction in Mandarin as part of a core academic course through the completion of the fifth grade. Students also receive Mandarin as a World Language course as part of their educational experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Low incidence languages are languages spoken by less than 5% of the overall BPS population.

<sup>2</sup> Multilingual Learners (MLs) is the asset based term that is used by Boston Public Schools and refers to English Language Learners.

<sup>3</sup> Language Opportunity for Our Kids (LOOK Act) for bilingual education reform, law passed 2017.

## **BPS Approach**

In alignment with the Home-Based Assignment Plan, which aims to increase student access to high-quality schools near where they live, the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education (OMME) has adopted a parallel strategy for our high incidence language, Spanish: ensuring students in each geographic cluster have access to Dual Language (DL) programming within that same cluster. (See [Cluster map in appendix.](#)) Given that Spanish is spoken by over 30% of the BPS student body, there is ample demand for DL programming, leading the district to aim for a Spanish DL program in every cluster. The district has made significant progress in this effort, having created a Spanish DL program in Cluster D (Blackstone Elementary) and Cluster F (Sarah Roberts Elementary) over the past two years, resulting in every cluster except Cluster B (Allston, Brighton, Fenway, Back Bay and Beacon Hill) having at least one Spanish DL program; students in Cluster B, consequently, have access to the city-wide DL program at the Rafael Hernandez School. While pursuing this expansion, some families seek English proficiency only, which has simultaneously led to the creation of Spanish-specific Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs in certain clusters. Additionally, Inclusive Sheltered English Immersion remains a universal option for every Multilingual Learner.

OMME's strategy for addressing requests for low-incidence language bilingual programming—defined as languages spoken by less than 5% of the total BPS student population—differs slightly from high-incidence languages due to the limited number of speakers, though it remains in alignment with the overarching BPS geographic cluster strategy. Given finite resources, OMME's strategy is to establish these programs in specific clusters based on three primary criteria: enrollment data, demonstrated family advocacy for the program type, and successful community engagement and feedback regarding specific programming. While students residing in the host cluster are guaranteed access, additional students beyond the cluster boundary also gain access via the one-mile radius policy within the student assignment system. Furthermore, access has been strategically expanded to other clusters in certain cases based on enrollment data (see examples below).

The above approach has led to the creation of a variety of bilingual programs and offered in Spanish, Haitian Kreyol, Vietnamese, ASL, Mandarin, and (next year) Cabo Verdean Kriolu. Please refer to the tables found under [Current Dual Language Education Offerings](#) and [Current Bilingual Education Offerings](#) in appendix for all of our programs.

## **Consideration for Citywide Access**

As community members advocate for Citywide access for the Chinese, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese and Cabo Verdean Creole bilingual programs, BPS must balance this request with considerations of enrollment capacity, demand and transportation.

- **Enrollment:** For a program to be viable and sustainable from an enrollment perspective we review historical enrollment trends as well as citywide demographic trends to determine which parts of the city are the ideal candidates for language-specific programs. (E.g. We identified Lilla G. Frederick for the Cabo Verdean Creole program by looking at residency of native speakers and using that as a key factor to identify a location for the program so that it would be accessible to the native speaking community.)

The data provided in the table below represents the number of kindergarten students in each language group and whether they live within the cluster(s) of the respective dual language program:

**Average # and % of K2 Students by Language and Residence within and outside the Program's Cluster from SY20-21 through SY25-26 (Data as of October 2025)**

	Cabo Verdean Creole	Chinese	Haitian Creole	Vietnamese
# Students Within Cluster	50.5	52.3	71.7	47.7
# Students Outside Cluster	4.5	22.8	23.0	11.3
% Students Within Cluster	92%	70%	76%	81%
% Students Outside Cluster	8%	30%	24%	19%

*Note: Students outside the cluster who live within a mile of the program will also have access to the school's program*

Additionally, the district actively monitors program capacity and student enrollment within each program to determine if any adjustments to the catchment area should be made to ensure access to the program throughout the district. As a result, our current low incidence programs have access to more than one cluster area based on catchment area; we are currently working to expand the catchment area for the Mather School based on available data. Current program capacity and enrollment can be found [here](#).

- Transportation:** Without specific information about projected routes, but drawing on the cluster system, if we were to provide city-wide access to a school with a low-incidence language program, we estimate it would cost \$500,000 annually and require adding additional runs/buses to our operation. For example, the Hernandez currently has an estimated 5+ bus routes more than they would require if the school did not have citywide enrollment. Opening additional schools up to citywide enrollment would add a similar number of additional routes at each additional citywide school, with both operational and financial impacts. While the specific number of additional routes required would fluctuate based on the number of students in the program and where they live, we project it would cost an additional \$2 million dollars per year to open all four schools with low-incidence language programs to citywide enrollment. These estimates are based on the analysis of routes currently available to Rafael Hernandez, which is the only school currently with citywide access. (Margarita Muñiz is a secondary school and therefore is city-wide, consistent with all secondary schools in BPS; therefore, transportation costs are limited.)

The district does not currently recommend moving forward with citywide access for low incidence language programs following an analysis of enrollment and transportation data. This conclusion is based on several key factors: 1. Relatively Small Student Impact, where the logistical complexities and costs would outweigh the limited scope of students served by each specific language program; 2. Transportation and Community Impact, as citywide access would require longer, more complex bus routing, which runs counter to the district's preference for a home-based assignment approach that encourages close-to-home school attendance and enables family participation in after-hours events; and 3. Budgetary Concerns, given that the additional transportation costs would create significant strain on the budget, particularly during a period of changing enrollment and challenging financial projections.

We will instead continue to focus on increasing access to Dual Language learning opportunities throughout the district. We commit to monitoring enrollment and demographics data annually to assess whether expanding a program's catchment area could be a viable alternative to increase access for students without creating the aforementioned issues related to excessive transportation complexity, budget strain, or undermining home-based assignment focus.

**Appendix:**

<b>Current Dual Language Education Offerings</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>Year Established</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Gradespan</b>	<b>Clusters included in catchment area<sup>4</sup></b>
Umana	2014	Spanish	Elementary	A
Horace Mann <sup>5</sup>	2019 <sup>6</sup>	ASL	K-12	Citywide
Hernandez	1976	Spanish	Elementary	Citywide
Hurley	2012	Spanish	Elementary	C
Blackstone	2025	Spanish	Elementary	D
Lilla G Frederick	2026	Cabo Verdean Creole	Elementary	D <sup>7</sup>
Greenwood	2006	Spanish	Elementary	E
Mather	2021	Vietnamese	Elementary	E <sup>8</sup>
Muñiz	2012	Spanish	Secondary	Citywide
Mattahunt	2017	Haitian Creole	Elementary	E and F
Sarah Roberts	2025	Spanish	Elementary	F

<b>Current Bilingual Education Offerings</b> <b>TBE—Transitional Bilingual Education   JQES—Bilingual Education Program</b>					
<b>School</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>Year Established</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Gradespan</b>	<b>Clusters included in catchment area<sup>9</sup></b>
Ellis	TBE	2026	Spanish	Elementary	C
McKay	TBE	2025	Spanish	Elementary	A
Quincy Elementary <sup>10</sup>	Other Bilingual Program - Mandarin	2025	Mandarin	Elementary	A and B

<sup>4</sup> Students within a one mile radius also have access to attend the school, in addition to students living within the clusters listed

<sup>5</sup> Available to students district wide who have the designation to attend.

<sup>6</sup> DESE recognizes Dual Language Status

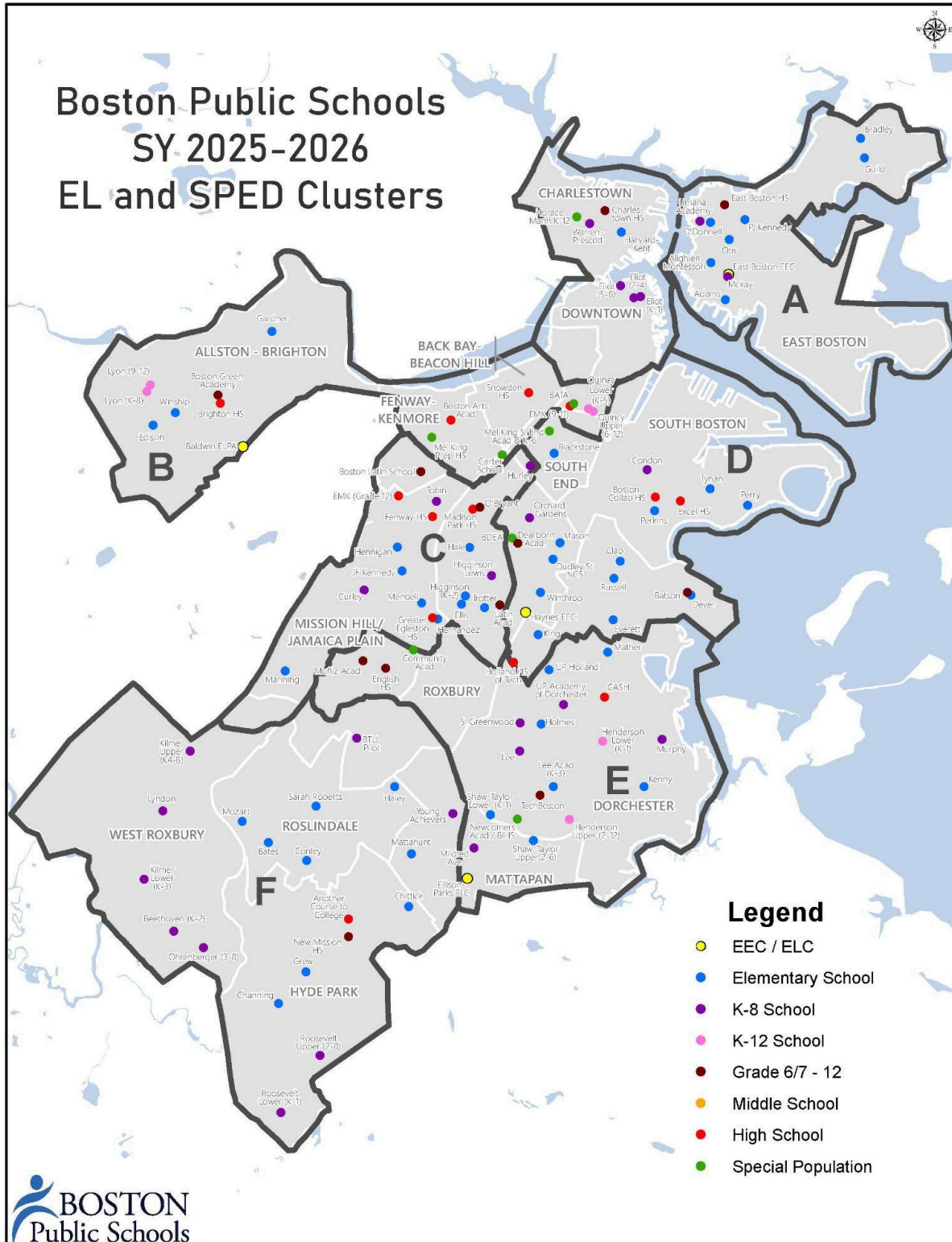
<sup>7</sup> The district is currently evaluating adding cluster E to the catchment area for the Frederick's dual language program.

<sup>8</sup> The district is currently evaluating adding cluster D to the catchment area for the Mather's dual language program.

<sup>9</sup> Students within a one mile radius also have access to attend the school, in addition to students living within the clusters listed

<sup>10</sup> Bilingual Program under LOOK Act.

**Cluster Map:**



## Program Capacity and Current Enrollment

School Name	Program Language	Grade	Capacity	Assigned Students
Mather Elementary School	Vietnamese	K1	20	10
		K2	22	22
		1	22	21
		2	20	22
		3	20	16
		4	20	13
		5	20	13
		<b>All Grades</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>117</b>
Mattahunt Elementary School	Haitian Creole	K1	20	19
		K2	22	19
		1	20	20
		2	20	17
		3	20	15
		4	20	16
		5	20	16
		6	20	9
		<b>All Grades</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>131</b>
Quincy Elementary School	Chinese	K1	36	23
		<b>All Grades</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>23</b>