

BPS parents press for increased transparency after school closings controversy

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Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), a group of Boston Public School (BPS) parents, called today for Mayor Martin Walsh and the Boston Public Schools to be more transparent regarding planned changes in the BPS. QUEST's call came in the wake of a dispute over plans for school closings in the city. Documents obtained from the Walsh Administration by QUEST through a public records request suggest that private negotiations are taking place between City officials and the Boston Compact Steering Committee over charter use of public school facilities and additional topics. The City also declined to release nine documents regarding the Boston Compact, citing its right to withhold information regarding policies still under discussion.

BPS parent and QUEST Member, Kevin Murray, noted "If the City feels wronged by the suggestion that it plans to close "x" number of schools, then why not bring the real planning process out into the open? Too much is going on behind closed doors, without any community voice in important decisions."

In addition to its public records request regarding the Boston Compact, QUEST has repeatedly requested from the BPS school enrollment data from the first two years of implementation of the BPS's new "Home-Based" assignment plan. That data has not been forthcoming, despite assurances from various Boston and BPS officials that it would be made available.

BPS parent, Karen Oil, puts it this way: "We see a connection between the withholding of the enrollment data and the documents about the Compact, on the one hand, and the rollout of "Enroll Boston" and the reported discussions with charter schools about access to BPS facilities, on the other. There is a "grand plan" here and the people of Boston deserve to know about it have input into it before it is presented to us. The Mayor promised a more open and transparent administration of the City, but I'm not sure that's what we're getting when it comes to our schools."

QUEST will continue to work with the BPS, Boston officials and other public education stakeholders to press for the release of BPS enrollment data and documents regarding plans for the Boston School Compact. Without public knowledge of these plans, the current round of community discussions concerning the "Enroll Boston" plan lose their legitimacy as a forum for the input of informed community members. QUEST will also continue to demand transparency from the City regarding its plans for the "consolidation" of BPS schools and the use of public facilities by privately-managed charter schools.