

BOSTON PARENTS DEMAND FULL DISCLOSURE REGARDING PLAN FOR CITY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), a grassroots organization of Boston parents with children in over thirty different Boston Public Schools, is asking city officials to be transparent about school policy deliberations that will affect tens of thousands of Boston families. QUEST says the city is holding back information about plans to close up to three dozen district schools and is allowing the Boston Compact, an entity funded largely by the Gates Foundation, to develop policy about city schools through backdoor channels.

QUEST has particular concerns about the outsized role of the Boston Compact in a proposal to put charter schools into the city's "home-based" student assignment system ("Enroll Boston"). "We've seen what's happened in other cities when unified enrollments were imposed. In New Orleans, it led to greater segregation and less equity, particularly for special needs students. In Denver, Philadelphia, and elsewhere, public schools have been closed and the buildings handed over to private operators. All this was done while shutting out parents and community members from decision-making. We're not going to let that happen in Boston," said Karen Oil, a BPS parent.

At a September 29, 2015 meeting with QUEST parents, Mayor Marty Walsh revealed plans to shrink the number of Boston Public School buildings to 90. The Walsh administration, however, has given no public indication whether the plan involves shuttering dozens of buildings, handing buildings over to charter operators, or forcing public schools to co-locate with charters. In addition, recent documents obtained by QUEST through a public records request show that these facilities plans are being driven by the priorities of the Compact, not by the needs of the Boston Public Schools.

QUEST identifies the recently proposed "Enroll Boston" system as the next step in a privately financed agenda that has destabilized public education and increased inequities in other cities. Although representatives of the Compact allege they initiated "Enroll Boston" as a response to parent demand for a simpler lottery system, the Compact has given no data to support this claim. "The community meetings held by the Boston Compact were more window dressing than a real attempt to seek our input. It looked like the outcome had everything to do with the agenda of the Compact and their private funders and very little to do with the needs of actual students and families in the public schools," BPS parent Mary Lewis-Pierce said.

QUEST will continue to demand transparency from city officials regarding the future of the city's schools. All policy deliberations, especially those taking place with private organizations, must be conducted in the public eye, with full public access to meetings and written records.