

***PARENT GROUP UNCOVERS “MCKINSEY REPORT,”
REJECTS LEGITIMACY of AUDIT of BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

PRESS RELEASE

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Quality Education for Every Student (QUEST), a grassroots organization of Boston Public School parents, questioned the legitimacy of a city-commissioned audit of Boston Public Schools by McKinsey and Company and asked Mayor Walsh and school officials to ensure that no policy decisions are made based on McKinsey’s flawed analysis. As Patricia Kinsella, a parent of two BPS students said, “The McKinsey report is wrong both in its numbers and its values. It treats students as commodities and schools as real estate investments. As a parent I find this appraisal, which cost a huge amount of money at a time when our school budgets are being cut and which uses misleading data to undercut a real planning process, immoral.”

The report, which the city ordered and for which Boston Public Schools paid \$660,000, concludes that BPS has 93,000 seats for 54,000 students and recommends the closure of 30-50 district schools. Though the McKinsey report was completed in April 2015, the public was not able to read the full document until April 27 of this year, after the city was ordered to comply with a public records request initiated by parents last December. In addition to problems with the report’s content, therefore, QUEST expressed deep concern that the results of a facilities planning review led by an expensive outside consultant were hidden for a full year and that it took the city four months to comply with a public records request.

In examining the report, QUEST found multiple examples of unsound methodology, particularly around the number of excess seats in Boston Public Schools. “The Mayor and others should stop falsely referring to BPS having 93,000 available seats,” said parent Mary Lewis-Pierce. “The McKinsey report’s ‘seats’ aren’t real. They don’t look at educational needs, and count the square footage of hallways and bathrooms as classroom space.” Parents said the report’s recommendations, which include selling school buildings with high resale value, closing schools with low test scores or which are expensive to repair, increasing class size, and cutting costs to students in need of special education services, would harm children and communities. QUEST stressed that in cities such as Chicago and Newark, school closures have disproportionately impacted children and communities of color, and undercut efforts to close achievement gaps.

QUEST would welcome a genuine audit focused on improving educational opportunities for all students and noted that a different facilities process is ongoing. But QUEST said the city’s use of McKinsey has tainted the overall facilities review. “Why hire a firm like McKinsey with a reputation for closing schools if that wasn’t your end goal?” Lewis-Pierce asked.

QUEST asks city and district officials to repudiate McKinsey as a credible source of data on school capacity. Further, QUEST says city and school officials should halt discussion of school closures, consolidations, or “right-sizing” until there is credible, publicly available, and locally-valid data regarding capacity. QUEST called on City Hall and BPS to commit to

a planning process for the future of Boston Public Schools that is fully transparent, and fully vetted by the public. “The goal of any review,” concluded Kinsella, “must be equitable access to quality schools for all children, not short-sighted cost-saving.”

McKinsey documents can be found at <https://www.scribd.com/doc/310569178/Steering-Committee-Working-Draft>