

ROI of Early Hiring and Mutual Consent in Boston

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**"My hobbies are gardening and dairy farming.
I like to plant the seeds of success and milk my creativity!"**



BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS HIRING INITIATIVE PRESENTATION TO ASPEN CFO CONVENING

April 25, 2018

Agenda

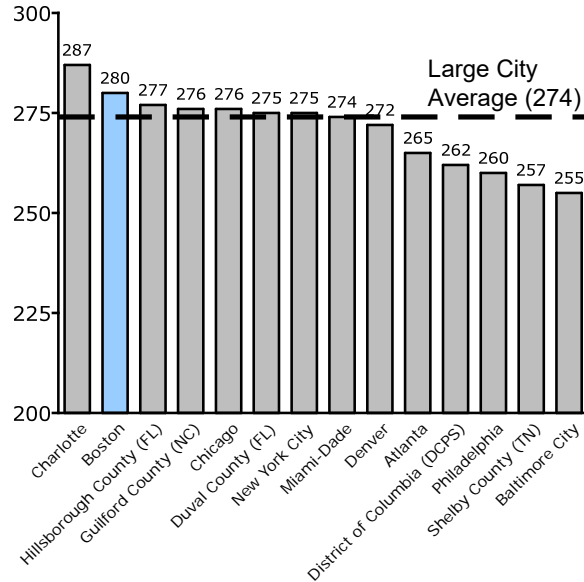
- Boston Public Schools: context and hiring challenges pre-2014
- Hiring Initiative: Strategy, implementation, and results to date
- Lessons learned, questions, and reflections

The nation's first public school system, BPS educates more than 56,000 students across 125 schools

- Student profile:
 - 66% economically disadvantaged
 - 45% first language not English
 - 31% English Language Learners
 - 20% Students with Disabilities
 - 42% Hispanic, 34% Black, 14% White, 9% Asian, 1% Other/multiracial
- 10,250 staff, including 4,500 teachers
- \$1.16B budget, or \$20,800 per pupil

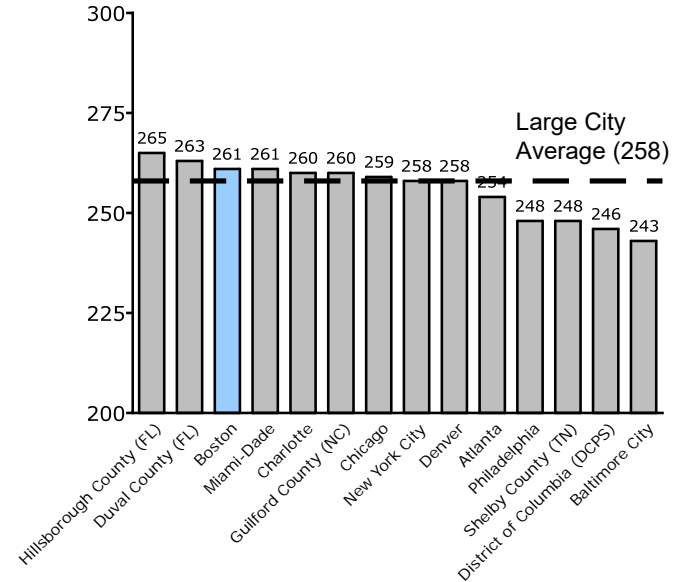
Boston slightly outperforms other large cities, though like many struggles with persistent achievement gaps

**8th Grade Math
NAEP Scale Scores (2017)**



Math
Black-White Difference
45 53 35 34 46 26 35 37 45 58 68 29 44 34

**8th Grade Reading
NAEP Scale Scores (2017)**



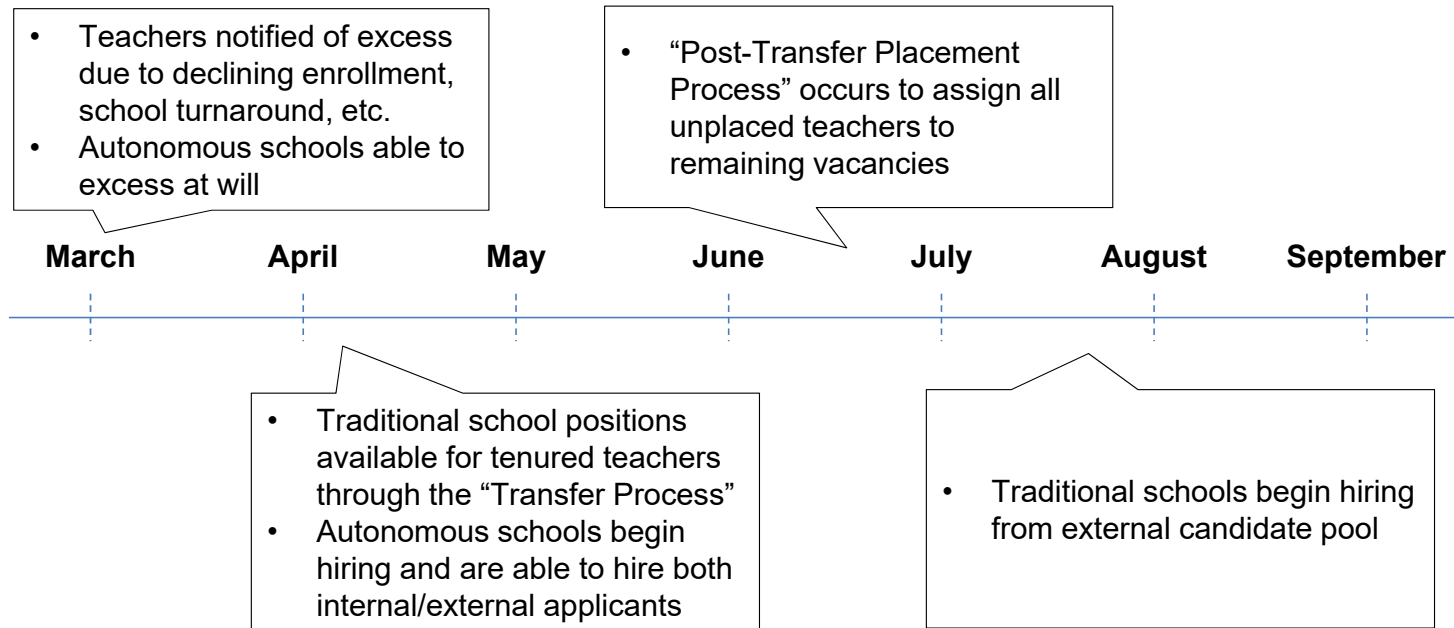
Reading
Black-White Difference
27 21 35 21 32 33 35 27 36 49 29 29 67 32

Source: <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>

BPS has a number of unique characteristics which impact district strategy, particularly around human capital

- **Student assignment:** Families have choice for schools within one mile of home, plus other options to ensure access to high-quality schools
- **School autonomy:** 32 schools fall into one of three autonomy categories (pilot, Horace Mann charter, Innovation schools) created by BPS or the state
 - Prior to the early hiring initiative, these schools were able to hire teachers *before traditional schools could extend offers*
- **Weighted student funding:** in place since 2012, uses average teacher salary though a small number of schools use actual salaries
- **Fierce competition for regional talent** with suburbs, smaller cities, charter schools and private schools

Challenge: Prior to 2014, contractual hiring processes inhibited BPS's ability to hire the best talent



Challenges

- **Less than 10% of vacancies filled before June 1:** Schools unable to hire when best talent is available early in the hiring season
- **Inequities among schools** with some able to hire early and others not
- **"Vicious cycle"** of underperforming teachers assigned to low performing schools, which then enter Turnaround status and excess staff

BPS leveraged seldom-used contract language to change the hiring process for all schools

Goal

Enable all schools to:

1. Hire by “**mutual consent**”, regardless of tenure or internal/external candidate
2. Make **offers early** when the talent pool is more effective and diverse
3. Operate on a **level playing** field in the competition for talent

Breakthrough moment: Re-thinking the contract

1. Expand use “open posting” beyond hard-to-staff roles
 - Jobs that require additional duties
 - Additional \$1,250 stipend per position
1. Leverage ability to place teachers in position of “Suitable Professional Capacity” (SPC) when positions are not available

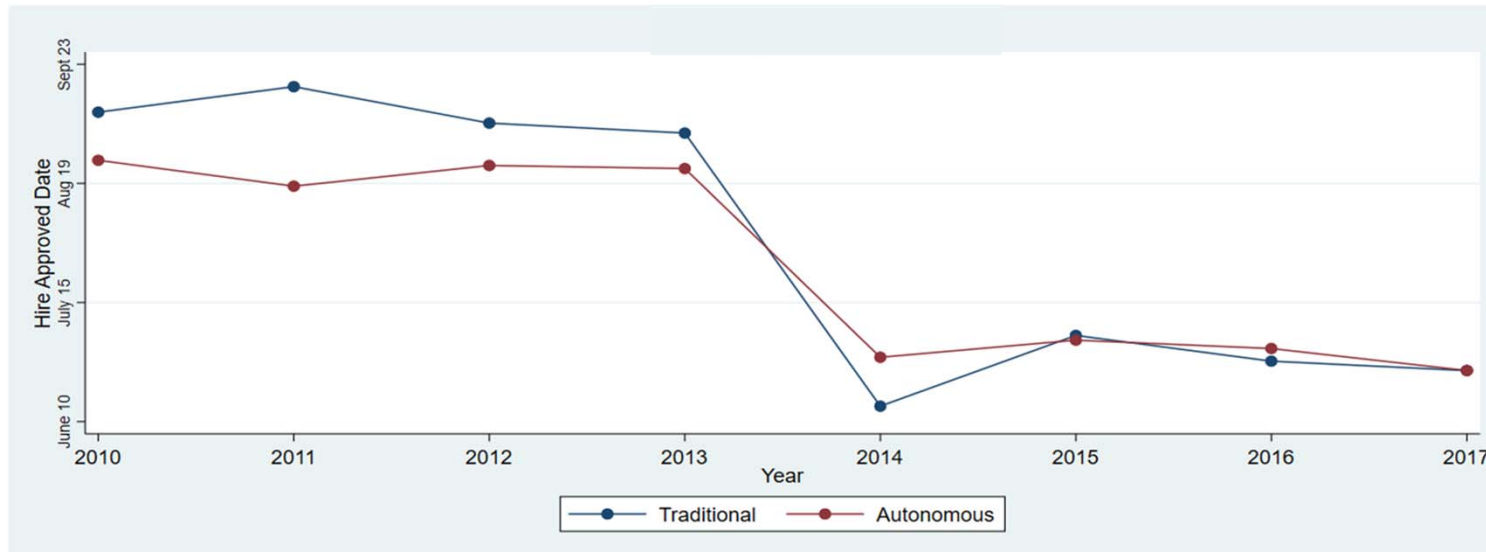


Implementation

- Post all positions in March with open post stipend paid centrally
- Allow all schools to hire via mutual consent
- Place unselected teachers in SPC positions and provide additional coaching and evaluation support from central office

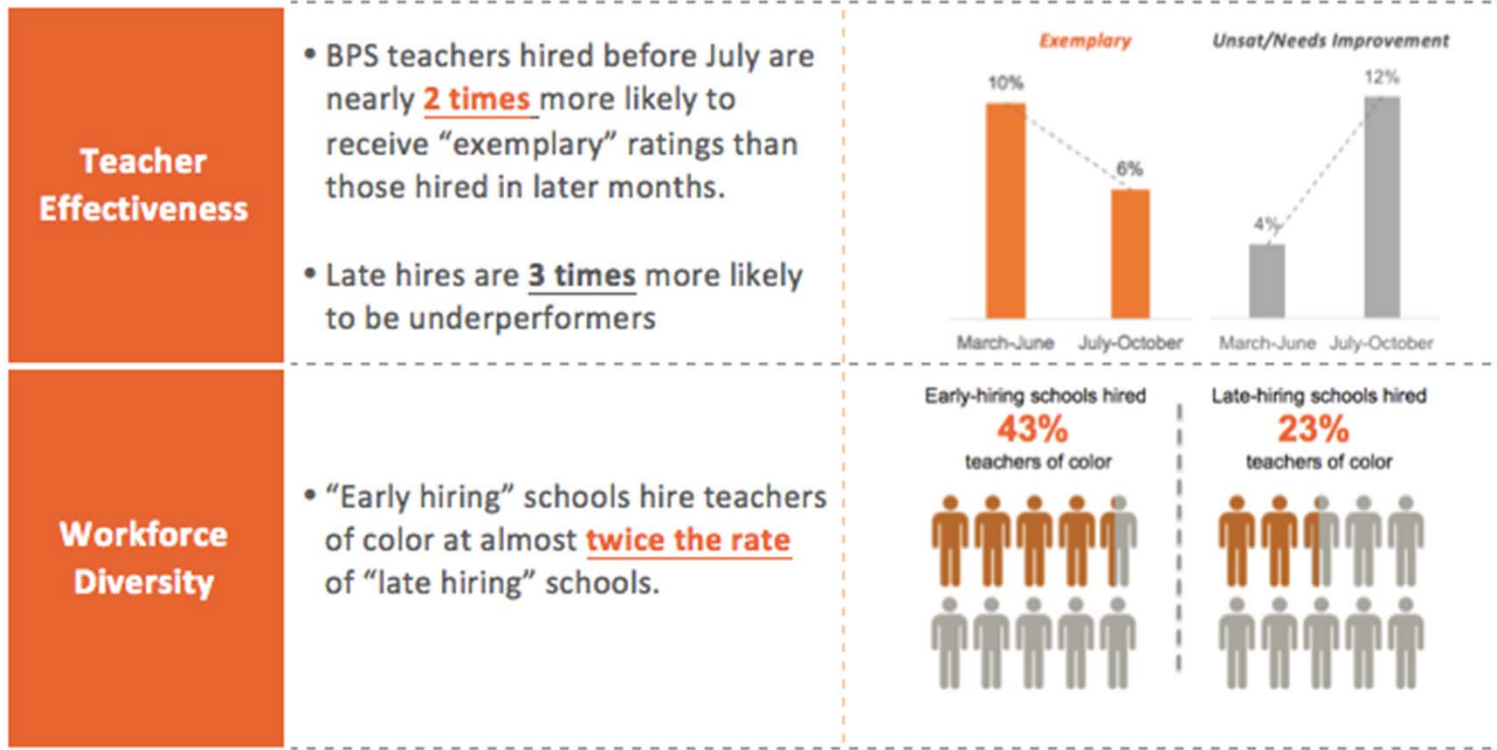
As a result of this initiative, BPS has dramatically accelerated the hiring timeline...

Date of Hiring Approval for Teachers
2010-2017



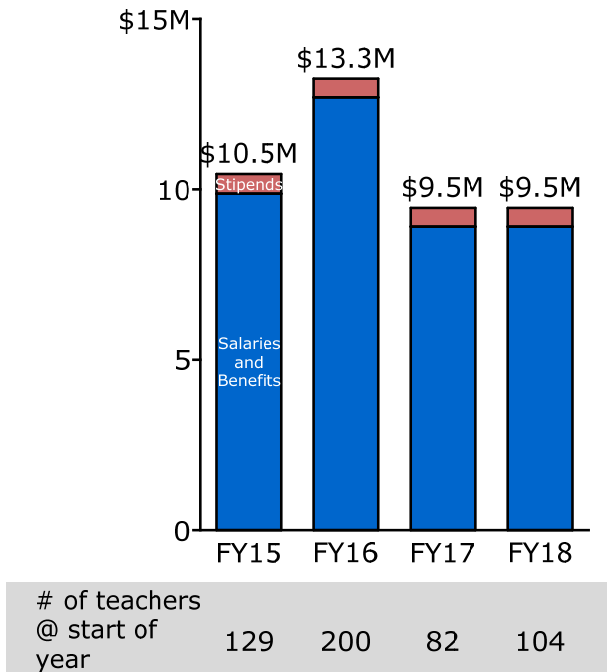
Source: "Hiring Reforms to Improve Worker Productivity, Diversity and Retention: Evidence from Teachers"; Kraft, Papay, Wedenoja, Jones (2018)

...with strong initial results related to teacher quality and diversity



BPS absorbed significant costs to implement the early hiring strategy, but also implemented cost reduction strategies

Costs of Early Hiring Initiative and Number of SPC Teachers



Cost Reduction Strategies

1. Hire central evaluators to identify effective teachers or move out low performers
2. Implement voluntary severance agreement
3. Pay for teachers to obtain second license
4. Limiting hiring in certain subject areas when lots of effective teachers available

Lessons learned

1. Mutual consent helps “unlock” other important human capital work
 - a. Evaluation matters more when schools can hire their replacements
 - b. Pipeline and recruitment activities even more critical
2. Contracts (+) and state law (–) create context for change
3. Exposed issues with evaluation system

Questions for discussion [40 minutes: 20 small group; 20 full group]

Please discuss the following questions in groups of 4-5 and be prepared to share out:

1. Considering the program costs (on a per student basis, as a % of the overall budget, etc.), is it wise for BPS to spend money in this way? Why or why not?
2. What other strategies might BPS consider for reducing costs of this initiative?
3. How do our initial hiring challenges compare to yours?
4. What about Boston's approach makes you think differently about how your district approaches teacher hiring and placement? Given your district's current context, would it make sense to take a similar (or different) approach to addressing the challenges you identified?