

SILENCE SPEAKS

100+Voices

Beyond the Trauma

*Using our collective voices to move from Victims to Survivors to
Thrivors*

#SilenceSpeaks

#EndWorkplaceAbuse

June 2024

You are gearing up to fight a force with roots that run extremely deep and are securely wrapped around every facet of the district. My advice to you is that you don't lose yourself in the fight. Just know that your allies may not stand up, your peers may leave you out on the cracked ice, folks that you thought are like-minded may silently watch you go through this horrific process of character assassination. People that you helped and supported in their leadership will disappear as if you never existed. If you are a person of faith, you will need to rely on it. Wishing you the best in this part of your journey.

The grieving process is REAL - embrace it. 💖

~ANONYMOUS

Report Compiled by members of the Coalition for Accountability and Justice

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Overview of the Report.....	8
Research Questions.....	8
Methodology.....	8
Disclaimer.....	9
Boston Teachers Union.....	10
Boston School Committee.....	10
Timeline of the Concerns Related to the Treatment of Employees.....	13
Workplace Diversity in Boston Public Schools.....	16
BPS Central Office Departments Related to Employee Discipline.....	17
Office of Legal Advisor.....	18
Office of Human Capital.....	19
Department of Labor Relations.....	19
Equity, Strategy, and Opportunity Gaps.....	21
Office of Opportunity Gaps.....	21
Office of Retention Cultivation and Diversity.....	21
Special Projects Manager.....	22
Office of Equity.....	22
Office of the Superintendent.....	23
Ombudsperson.....	23
Analysis of Central Office Departments.....	24
Mintz Report on Employee Discipline.....	25
Introduction to the Report.....	25
Data Analysis of the Mintz Report.....	27
Data from Office of Equity.....	28
Data from Office of Labor Relations.....	28
Synthesis of the Data.....	31
Employee Discipline Process.....	33
Due Process Rights.....	33
Investigatory Meetings.....	34
Analysis.....	36
City Council Hearings on Employee Discipline.....	38
Reporting Discrimination in BPS.....	42
Office of Equity.....	42
Office of Equity Reporting.....	43
Lawyers for Civil Rights Lawsuit.....	47
Confidential Settlement Agreements and Non-Disclosure Agreements.....	49

Costs Associated with Employee Discipline.....	51
Paid Administrative Leave.....	51
Principal Churn.....	52
Principal Voice.....	54
Analysis of Principal Churn.....	56
Central Office Management Churn.....	57
Cost of Leadership Churn.....	60
Hiring Practices.....	62
Workplace Culture in Boston Public Schools.....	64
Retaliation for Speaking Out Against Ineffective Practices and Policies.....	69
Transparency and Family Concerns.....	74
Media Caution.....	77
Summary of Findings.....	78
Conclusion.....	80
Recommended Action Steps.....	81
BPS Playbook.....	84
Case Example One: Central Office Manager.....	87
Case Example Two: Principal.....	89
Case Example 3: Lawyers for Civil Rights Lawsuit Against Boston Public Schools and Drew Echelson.....	90
Case Example 4: City Council Letter: Seven Central Office Managers.....	92
Case Example 5: Principal.....	96
Case Example 6: BTU Member.....	97
Case Example 7: Central Office Managerial Employee.....	98
Case Example 8: School Based Managerial Employee.....	100
Case Example 9: School Based Managerial Employee Lawsuit.....	101
Appendix: Mary Skipper’s Communication about Employee Discipline.....	102
Appendix: Overview of BPS Offices.....	104
Appendix: Employee Discipline Summary from Mintz Report.....	107
Appendix: Public Data Collected on BPS.....	110
Appendix: BPS Leadership Team (March 2023-March 2024).....	112
Appendix: Paid Administrative Leave: Records Request.....	114
Appendix: Panorama Survey: Central Office Effectiveness (Spring 2023).....	115
Appendix: Links to Resources Included in the Report.....	117

Executive Summary

The narratives collected for this report reveal the “Institution” of Boston Public Schools as a heartless, vindictive, racist, and sexist organization that retaliates against employees who question their actions. The traumatic treatment of current and former employees make it abundantly clear why the superintendent has ignored the pleas from the retired educators of color, community activists, and employees themselves to investigate what is happening to Black and Brown leaders in BPS. Superintendent Skipper did not cause the current conditions of the Central Administration, yet she has failed to take any steps to effectively acknowledge or address the concerns. Superintendent Skipper has dismantled all policies or practices focused on advancing racial equity in BPS and silences employees from raising concerns. The Central Office Administration has a history of blaming schools and individuals for the deep rooted dysfunction of the “institution”, where there is zero accountability for the Central Office. The experiences of employees demonstrates how the Central Office goes to great lengths to protect the “institution”, over valuing human lives. The institution uses “mobbing” as a strategy to silence employees and force them out of their positions. making unjustified accusations targeting specific employees for circular violations, while ignoring the performance of others. Once an employee is targeted, the institution abusively uses their power to rally others in the organization to spread rumors, make defamatory remarks to families and community stakeholders, share confidential information about the employee in humiliating and public ways, using the media to advance their agenda. Current and former employees report the culture of the Central Office is rife with constant microaggressions and unaddressed bias based bullying. Appeals to improve the culture at the Central Office have been met with opposition hiding behind legal reasons. The culture of the Bolling Building is so toxic that even the employees in the Office of Equity, the department that is intended to protect employees, is in turmoil. Toxic cultures start from the top and pervades the institution, and undoubtedly trickles down to our schools, educators, students and families. Many current and former employees report the emotional abuse from the discrimination and bullying became so detrimental to their physical and mental health they applied for medical leave, only to have their medical requests questioned or denied. The workplace culture within BPS Central Office continues to deteriorate and principals and central office managers are leaving leadership positions at extremely alarming rates, indicating that resigning from BPS altogether as the only option for employees well-being.

The Boston School Committee has even been silenced narrowing their questions to only topics in the Superintendent’s remarks. The committee receives reports full of jargon and fancy presentations, yet there is no real action to improve the learning outcomes and safety for our students. Data indicates 70% of our 3rd graders are not reading at grade level, with the results even more dismal for our multilingual learners and students with disabilities. Each School Committee meeting parents, community activists, employees, students, and educators feel compelled to publicly testify to the School Committee as their only potential recourse to address the mistreatment of their child and to hopefully improve the conditions of the system. The

school committee listens to a ton of plans that discuss the “inputs” but accepts the fact there are no “outputs” that show actual results. It is beyond incomprehensible that the city celebrates bathroom renovations and increasing on time bus arrivals as measures of success, when these should be basic expectations for any system. The silence of the School Committee and Mayor Wu condones the conditions of BPS and clearly sends the message to employees, students, and families that their voices do not matter and the “institution” has no will or urgency to change.

BPS is a large complex system that cares more about optics, using backroom deal making to cover up individual scandals. The actions of the district places all stakeholders in a reactive mode, taking all of the public attention to put out the fires the institution creates. Each story collected for this report was beyond what the public could imagine but nothing shocks the conscience more than the BPS Safety Chat on WhatsApp. This chat reveals the immense challenges across our system and superhuman powers of principals who are on the front lines attempting to support the learning and safety of our students. The Central Office, on the other hand, displays no systemic approach to actually support our school leaders, instead using this chat to squash the media, killing a story, and only publicly sharing communications if there were witnesses. Superintendent Skipper goes so far as to actually applaud using clapping emojis and saying “good job” when the communications team successfully hides what really happened from the public. The actions of this administration have normalized the toxic working conditions of the district and the outrageous incident reports occurring within our schools. The real story in BPS is the entrenched dysfunction of the Central Office that prevents our schools from advancing. As one advocate stated, “BPS is our kids and families and there is nothing wrong with them”. The Central Office, on the other hand, is seriously flawed, inevitably causing chaos to our schools. One employee talked about BPS Central Office saying, “the Titanic is sinking”, while the Superintendent tells the public and the school committee not to worry, “everything will be just fine. We have a plan”. There are tons of *plans* in BPS but very little implementation of any of those plans. Mike Heichman, educational justice activists since the 1990’s and has been critical of every superintendent in BPS. He states, “In terms of equity, I can think of no one worse than Skipper. There are hidden powers behind the curtain that protect her. She has a mindset that is anti-democratic”.

The current structure of BPS provides central office managers, principals, and school based managers no protections, leaving them open targets for retaliation, bullying, mobbing, and discrimination. The actions of this administration plays with our students' lives.

Introduction

There is nothing more important in a city than improving the educational outcomes and experiences for our students in our public school system. Boston is the birthplace of American public education and home to the oldest existing school in the country. At the conclusion of [Tom Payzant's](#) superintendency in September 2006, the Boston Public Schools received the Broad Prize for Urban Education for being the most improved urban school district in the country.

[Two decades later](#), we have had a revolving door of superintendents, declining enrollment, school buildings that are crumbling, and dismal academic outcome data for our students. While at one time, [school funding](#) could be the reason for our failures, in FY25, BPS is projected to spend over \$30,000 per student, which is among the highest per capita spending of a large district in the country.

In the past, BPS stated, schools and principals were viewed as the “agents of change” with the [role](#) of the Central Office to “work with schools to provide support, build capacity, develop systems that facilitate organizational learning, increase efficiencies, and remove barriers” naming “mutual accountability” as the goal. Under current leadership, there is essentially no accountability to the Central Office, allowing Superintendent Skipper to act recklessly with our students' and employees' lives.

Employees of the BPS are entitled to their rights to be in a workplace free of discrimination and retaliation as outlined in the Constitution of the United States, Massachusetts State Law, Federal Law, and Boston Public Schools Circulars and policies. The mistreatment of employees and the willful violation of their rights undoubtedly impacts the educational outcomes and safety of our students and families in BPS. Our students and families of the City of Boston deserve a school system that is free from racism, sexism, corruption, complacency, denial, and self protection.

Superintendent Mary Skipper assumed her leadership role on September 26, 2022. She was notified before even assuming her role of superintendent about the concerns within BPS employee discipline practices. The district has been implored by City Councilors, concerned members of the public, and employees themselves to investigate the discipline practices of BPS. Specifically, it was alleged that employees:

- 1.) Due process rights have been violated
- 2.) There is disproportionality in the discipline of people of color

3.) Employees experience retaliation after speaking out about discriminatory and ineffective practices of the district

Despite repeated requests, the superintendent would not agree to conduct a thorough and independent evaluation of BPS practices. Instead of staying silent, the Coalition for Accountability and Justice chose to use their collective voices to expose what is happening to principals, co-principals, and central office managers. We used publicly available documents as evidence to support our assertions. We received no financial investment or district cooperation in the writing of this report. This report is a summary of our findings from extensive conversations with over a hundred Central Office Managers, Principals, and Co-leaders.

[Mayor Wu](#) stated, “Boston students, teachers, and families deserve a system that is responsive to their needs and provides the type of support that enables everyone to succeed. Our system should be structured and led by anti-racist policies that undermine structural inequities rather than perpetuate them.”

[Superintendent Skipper](#) emphasized saying, “We have zero-tolerance for discrimination at Boston Public Schools,” she said. “Even still, the reality is that institutional racism exists and has had an extremely negative impact on our community for many generations. That’s why we are committed to identifying where it exists and dismantling the systems and structures that perpetuate it.”

School Committee Chair, [Jeri Robinson](#) said, “These issues have been going on for 50, 70 years and we’ve had several superintendents in the last decade. And the problems persist”. She went on to say, “We spend a billion-plus dollars and our children are in schools that should have been condemned years ago. But the issue is, we’re trying to do something now.”

Despite the stated commitment from Mayor Wu, Superintendent Skipper, and Chairwoman Robinson, BPS Central Office has a work culture that is harmful to employees, which is contributing to our system failures for students and families.

It is our great hope that the school committee, Mayor Wu, and the public take immediate action to address the findings within this report. The failure to act further erodes trust and transparency with the public and our families. There is no question that the work environment within BPS influences children and families and prohibits our ability to advance as an institution.

Overview of the Report

Research Questions

- Is there discrimination in the discipline process of Central Office Managers, School Principals and Co-Leaders?
- What practices and patterns emerged of bias as it relates to the district's disciplinary and investigatory protocols?
- Are Central Office Managers, School Principals and Co-Leaders provided due process in the employee discipline process?
- How does the treatment of employees in BPS contribute to the leadership turnover/churn?
- In what ways do the actions of BPS impact our children and families, particularly focusing on our students with disabilities and multilingual learners?

Methodology

This report was initiated by current and former employees who are concerned about the future of BPS and care deeply about improving educational outcomes for students. All of these employees have worked in BPS for decades allowing for a deep historical understanding of the district context, the current and past leadership within the central office, the district initiatives, and the political landscape of Boston.

The initial group of employees to contact for this report was a *purposive* sample of individuals who were identified as *being wronged* by BPS. The initial sample generated a list of over 50 former and current BPS principals and central office managers. This initial list was largely composed of people of color and women. It was quickly learned from this initial list that the district widely employs the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA) to prohibit former staff from sharing their experiences. It was also very apparent that current and former employees are deeply afraid of speaking up against BPS and are equally fearful of the deep bureaucracy of the City of Boston. Some members even expressed extreme fear for their own physical and emotional safety if they spoke out against the district's practices. They expressed deep fear about the ramifications on current or future employment if their name was identified and most requested complete anonymity. Some chose not to share their story at all.

The initial discussions with impacted principals/co-leaders and central office managers generated disturbing trends around the treatment of employees, particularly Black and Brown leaders,

women, and those over the age of 40. Many of the individuals impacted by the actions of BPS formed the Coalition for Justice and Accountability. They codified their concerns and experiences in an anonymous letter emailed to over 1000 people in positions of power. Members in the coalition thought this letter would be taken seriously by the Superintendent, Mayor, and concerned citizens of the City of Boston. The letter resulted in no investigation and no accountability to anyone in the BPS. Despite sharing the letter with multiple media outlets, no media source published the letter to expose BPS's wrongdoings.

The initial list of participants, *snowballed*, where participants recommended other people to talk with to fully understand the phenomenon of what is happening with principals, co-leaders, and managerial employees in BPS. This report was compiled from conversations with over a hundred current or former BPS employees. Not every employee in this report experienced the BPS discipline process, yet each was able to contribute to understanding what is happening within the BPS Central Administration that is perpetuating the systemic issues around the treatment of employees. The names and identity of the individuals included in this report will remain anonymous and any identifying information has been omitted unless consent from the individual was granted or the story was captured in the media. Of particular note, we did not talk with any employee who had faced alleged misconduct outside of work, who violated the alcohol free work policy, where the safety of a child was compromised, or who faced any criminal charges for their actions. We ceased collecting stories from employees when we reached *saturation* in the data, meaning the same themes were coming out repeatedly providing enough data to draw conclusions about what is really happening inside of BPS Central Administration.

The experiences of educators are affirmed using publicly available documents of reports commissioned by BPS and news sources in the media. BPS is a public institution and most documents and reports are publicly accessible.

Disclaimer

As passionate equity driven educators, we are not endorsing any misconduct of any employee of the BPS. We strongly believe educators should be held to the highest standard for performance following all state and federal laws, school policies, and the ethical code of conduct for educators. We do believe there are examples of misconduct in BPS that require immediate attention to ensure the safety and educational rights of our students. Those who engage in misconduct should be disciplined following proper protocols of due process per the law and BPS policies.

This report was prepared by educators who received proficient and exemplary ratings in their roles and have advanced degrees. The writers of this report are not investigative reporters nor did they receive any compensation. If the validity of the content of this report is in question, we urge BPS to conduct their own independent evaluation that contains the voices and lived

experiences of current and former employees in the roles of Central Office Managers, Principals, or School Based Managers. We attest that the findings will not change if an honest, transparent, and independent report is completed.

Boston Teachers Union

We also heard in this process that some BTU members endured mistreatment in the employee discipline process from central office managers and school principals. We agree that this also warrants investigation and we urge the BTU to engage in a similar investigation to expose the concerns regarding employee discipline in BPS for their members.

It is important to note that in some cases, BTU members violated their own policies and code of ethics for educators resulting in harmful disciplinary treatment of school principals.

Secondly, it is of particular note that some principals in BPS remain part of the BTU in some schools. In the case of employee discipline for these individuals, the union lawyers represented them and paid for the legal fees. The BTU leadership is aware of the district lies, deceit, and dysfunction surrounding the employee discipline process in these specific situations. Given the conflict of interest in this investigation with the BTU leadership, we did not interview union leaders for this report. We focused on the voices of principals, co-leaders and central office managers in their role title, regardless of whether they were in the BTU or not.

Boston School Committee

The Boston School Committee is the governing body of the Boston Public Schools. The School Committee is responsible for:

- Defining the vision, mission, and goals of the Boston Public Schools
- Establishing and monitoring the annual operating budget
- Hiring, managing, and evaluating the Superintendent
- Setting and reviewing district policies and practices to support student achievement

[Massachusetts Association of School Committees](#) states, “A school committee must be responsive to its constituencies in governance, sensitive to the diverse needs of all learners, an advocate for students and learning before the people of the community and, as such, a vigorous ambassador for public education before all citizens.” It is the responsibility of the Boston School Committee as outlined in the [by-laws](#) and [state law](#) to provide oversight of the superintendent. The students and families of Boston depend on the members to take their responsibility seriously, acting with integrity, upholding the [code of ethics](#) of a school superintendent, and to [evaluate](#) Superintendent Skipper with outcome data that represents the voices of students, families and employees.

The Boston School Committee has not sufficiently demanded any accountability measures for the Central Office and has allowed for any previous efforts to advance equity in BPS to be dismantled. The [Internal Audit Task Force](#) appears to have been dissolved with the last meeting notes available from February 2019. The [English Learners \(EL\) Task Force](#) that formed in 2009 had the majority of their members resign with the last meeting notes available from May 2023. [The Opportunity and Achievements Gaps Task Force](#) has not appeared to have met since December 2023. The Boston School Committee has also experienced [churn](#) and is not without its own scandals from past members. According to [SchoolYard News](#), “The Racial Equity Planning Tool was abandoned, the Racial Equity Impact Committee eliminated, Racial Equity Dashboard abolished, Community Equity Roundtable meetings suspended, Restorative Justice initiatives abandoned, and the plan for nine equity coaches scrapped. Public protests from families and community were ignored.”

Families and advocates in the City of Boston have pleaded with the school committee to take action on behalf of the students and families of the Boston Public Schools around a multitude of issues. The district and Mayor Wu committed to [reform](#), yet the Boston Municipal Research Bureau [report](#) states the BPS budget needs substantial improvement; the [City Councillors](#) budget proposals have been met with resistance; [families](#) have been silenced; [autonomies](#) eroded; [employees rights](#) have been violated; there is [chronic turnover](#) of leadership; an incomplete [facilities master plan](#) presented; a flawed [inclusion plan](#) for English learners and students with disabilities shared; [attorneys](#) and [advocates](#) pushed out; [student safety](#) in question; a controversial [exam school](#) plan adopted; a lack of [transparency](#); [buses](#) still arriving late or not at all; [bathroom renovations](#) stalled; [chronic absenteeism](#) rates skyrocketing; [racial and gender bias](#) in referrals continue; with [minimal](#) if any progress towards the stated goals. Instead of [screaming for urgency](#), the School Committee and Mayor Wu appear steadfast in their commitment to Superintendent Skipper, seemingly learning and applying nothing from these reports or from [Boston after Busing](#). There is no question that there is a history of deep institutional challenges that have existed in the Boston Public Schools for decades. Regrettably, the current Boston School committee has remained complicit, allowing for their own members to be silenced narrowing their questions and comments to only focus on topics in the Superintendents remarks.

After each school committee meeting, Jill Shah and Ross Wilson discuss the meetings in a “bite size summary” in their podcast [Last Night at School Committee](#). According to [NeimanLab](#), “the segments offer a combination of “explanation, summary, commentary, and emphasis on why dense procedural discussions matter.” During the June 5th, 2024 episode, Wilson noted the irony of the most recent proposal to honor the contributions of Dr. Albert Holland with the [renaming](#) of the Burke High School, while ignoring his [efforts](#) to shed light on the treatment of Black and Brown leaders in BPS.

The [Editorial Board](#) at the Globe wrote, “School Committee members by and large have other real jobs. This is intended as a part-time post, a civic responsibility. If the district intended to keep committee members guessing about the critical issues BPS faces and how the budget will impact them, they’re doing a good job of it. The real question is how long School Committee members — and the parents and students they are supposed to represent — will put up with that kind of treatment”.

The Boston School Committee should be holding the Superintendent accountable evaluating her performance using real data and information that includes the voices of students, families, and BPS educators. Under the leadership of Mary Skipper, on a mid-year survey released in December of 2023 that included 3,445 Boston Public Schools employees, only 24% responded favorably about the effectiveness of the Central Office. Only 34% of these respondents responded favorably that the Central Office treats school staff with dignity and respect. Data reveals that 70% of our 3rd graders are not reading on grade level. Instead of taking the concerns of families and employees seriously, the school committee meetings have become a public airing of individual complaints that goes on for hours on end, with rhetorical discussions with no accountability and no action.

It is without question that our students and families deserve so much better. The Boston School Committee and Mayor Who should act with urgency to improve the current conditions of Central Office.

Timeline of the Concerns Related to the Treatment of Employees

- **December 2018:** [Lawsuits](#) filed against BPS alleging pay bias and difficult work environment for women. The women reported discrimination and faced retaliation in an effort to force them out of the organization.
- **July 2020:** The [high school association letter](#) was the first documented concern of district practices with the removal of school principals alerting the BPS School Committee that “six high school leaders were removed from their positions by the Superintendent during the pandemic shutdown this spring.”
- **August 20, 2020:** [Dear Bolling Colleague Letter](#) signed Boston Public Schools Black/Brown Affinity Group at the Bruce C. Bolling Building. The Black/Brown Staff at Bolling have made a conscious decision to not sign our individual names due to past experiences with and fear of retaliation by those in leadership positions in both Boston Public Schools and the City of Boston.
- **2021-2022 School Year:** Sam Depina and Brenda Casselius convened a meeting with the Chiefs who identified as a person of color at Bolling to hear their concerns about the racist, exclusionary, and harassing culture of the Central Office.
 - A memo was sent to Cassellius, Depina, and Shuster outlining these concerns by a former employee of color. This memo has yet to surface in the public records request despite it meeting all the criteria about the racist culture within BPS.
- **August 17, 2022:** BPS employee (now identified as Charles Grandson) notifies Acting Supt. Echelson & Incoming Supt. Skipper of concerns related to sudden increase in number of BPS senior administrators of color investigated and placed on paid administrative leave. During the previous 10 months (2021-2022 SY), BPS investigated and placed a significant number of senior administrators of color (mainly Black men and women) on paid administrative leave. This “[mystery memo](#)” written by the Chief Equity and Strategy Officer was not released or publicly shared until March 4th, 2024 when it was obtained by Schoolyard News.
- **August 2022:** More than a [dozen retired principals](#) and other administrators of color sent to Superintendent Mary Skipper in August, one month before she formally began her duties, alleging that BPS has placed a disproportionate number of administrators of color on leave and is subjecting them to a process known as investigatory meetings in an effort to terminate them or force them to resign.
- **November 2, 2022:** [Boston Education Justice Alliance](#) (BEJA) requested the investigation include a review of white central office staff who have been at the helm of mismanagement for many years. City and BPS leadership are complicit in giving passes

and additional support to white central office staff who continue to carry out decades of chronic mismanagement of critical district areas such as budgets and buildings.

- **August 18, 2023:** [Mintz Report](#) is completed with a review of paid administrative leave determinations & disciplinary outcomes for BPS central office managers, school leaders, and co-leaders that does not include any of the actual experiences from educators.
- **August 30th, 2023:** [School Committee Presentation](#) from Tidwell and OLR/OHC with recommendations to improve processes and practices with employee discipline for principals, co-principals, and central office managers..
- **September 21, 2023:** [Docket #1307](#): Order for a Hearing to audit the City of Boston’s hiring, firing and promotion policies, practices and procedures. City Councillor Julia Mejia ordered this hearing outlining the concerns. This hearing was rescheduled for two weeks to accommodate the district. [BPS leadership](#) only participated in forty five minutes of the hearing.
- **November 2023:** Antiracism Advisory Committee at Bolling wrote to Superintendent Skipper naming the microaggressions towards Black and Brown educators at the Central Office.
 - The communication and notes associated with this committee has yet to surface in the public records request, although the contents of these meetings meet the criteria about the racist culture within BPS.
- **Anonymous Letter February 2024:** As members of The Coalition for Leadership Justice and Accountability, representing the voices of the victims of BPS, we are pleading for action. The letter implored our elected officials in Boston, state leaders, community advocates, government officials, and families of BPS to demand a comprehensive independent investigation into the discriminatory and retaliatory practices of BPS. This letter was ignored by all stakeholders.
- **March 15th, 2024** the [Lawyers for Civil Rights](#) and Pontikes Law, LLC, filed a [lawsuit](#) in Suffolk Superior Court on behalf of Ms. Aketa Narang Kapur, alleging discriminatory and retaliatory treatment by Boston Public Schools (BPS). The Plaintiff, Aketa Narang Kapur (“Kapur”), brings this complaint against the Defendants, Boston Public Schools (“BPS”) and Drew Echelson (“Echelson”), for discrimination on the basis of race and color; retaliation and interference in violation of M.G.L. c. 151B § 4(1), 4(4), and 4(4A); retaliatory termination in violation of the Massachusetts public employee whistleblower statute, M.G.L. c. 149, §185; and common law claims of termination in violation of public policy and interference with advantageous employment relationships. Ongoing.
- **May 22nd, 2024:** A [former Black administrator](#) at the Condon K-8 School in South Boston filed a [wrongful termination and racial discrimination lawsuit](#) against Boston Public Schools defendants as Drew Echelson (Echelson), Sam Depina, SEIU Local 888, Neal O’Brian, and secretary Michelle Zawadzki. Stephanie Rodriguez-Ruiz, a Boston attorney representing Lambert, said in a statement. “We see this in the District’s inability to retain Black men and women, a problem many groups have openly criticized BPS for.”

The lawsuit also alleges BPS violated the whistle-blower statute by terminating Lambert in retaliation for raising concerns about racial discrimination. Ongoing.

- **May 29th, 2024:** Post-Audit: Government Accountability, Transparency and Accessibility- Docket [#0585](#)- A hearing to audit the City of Boston's hiring, firing and promotion policies, practices and procedures. City Councillor Julia Mejia ordered a second hearing to audit the Boston Public Schools practices. Again, BPS leadership left this hearing after only an hour, missing public testimony where three BPS employees testified to the discriminatory and retaliatory practices of the district.
 - **Ongoing:** There has been extensive reporting in the Boston Globe, Bay State Banner, WBUR, Schoolyard News and other media outlets regarding the concerns raised by internal and external stakeholders. For more on this investigation, see the following: [article #1](#), [article #2](#), [article #3](#), [article #4](#), and [article #5](#).
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Workplace Diversity in Boston Public Schools

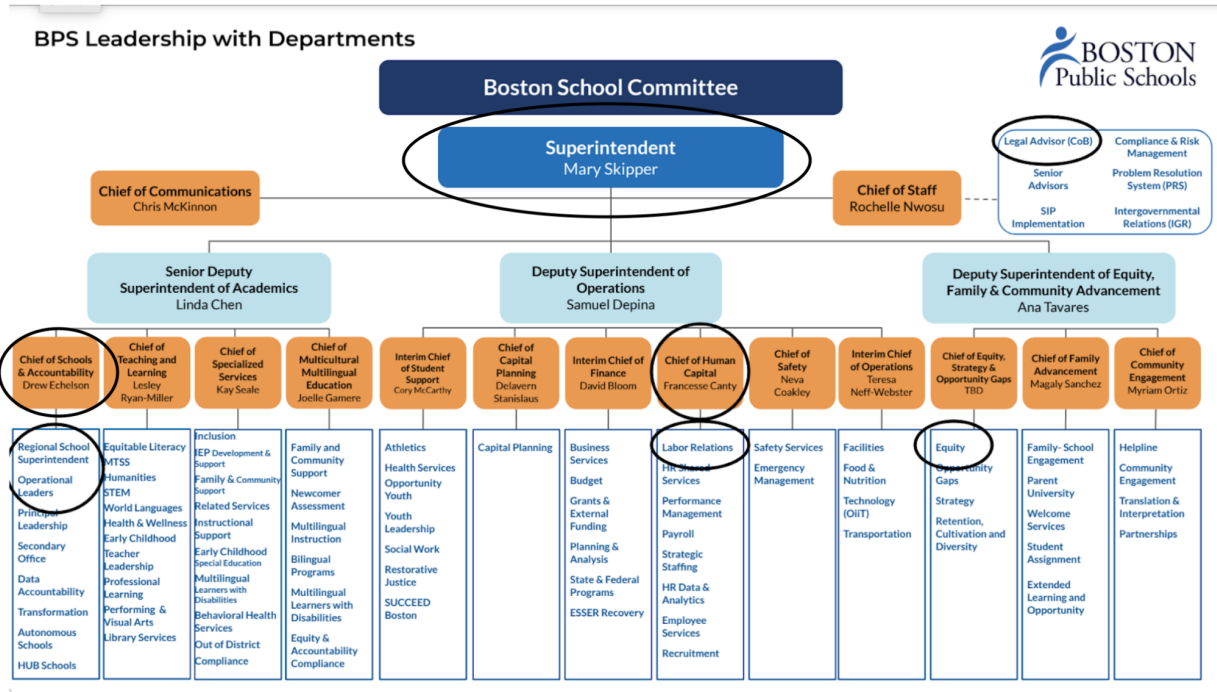
In a presentation to the BPS [School Committee](#) in 2022, data revealed the workforce diversity within BPS. Data revealed 10,867 total staff in BPS with 43.5% identified as White; 32.7% as Black; 17.1% as Latinx; and 5.1% as Asian. This data indicated 125 school leaders in BPS with 44.4% identified as White; 43.2% as Black; 5.6% as Latinx; and 4.8% as Asian. The data indicated 981 central office staff in BPS with 40.8% identified as White; 34.1% as Black; 16.3% as Latinx; and 6.6% as Asian. BPS is still under the Garrity Order requiring that there are not less than 25% of teachers and guidance counselors who identify as Black and 10% other minorities. We have yet to reach this threshold, which means the order has not yet expired.

Of the approximately 49,000 students enrolled in BPS for the [2022-2023](#) school year, 43.8% identify as LatinX, 28.4% identify as Black, 69.8% are low-income, 31.9% are English Learners, and 21.5% are students with disabilities. The Boston Research Center (2018) found that Boston's public schools are more segregated today than they were in 1965. The [Globe](#) reported, "The majority-white schools are emerging in the same neighborhoods that had them prior to court-ordered desegregation".

While there is diversity in the workforce in BPS, there remains a mismatch between our district staffing data and our student demographics. The largest area of noted concern is the extremely low percentage of staff in BPS that identify as Latinx (17.1%) when 44.7% of our students identify as Hispanic. Only 5.6% of BPS leaders identify as Latinx and only 16.3% of central office staff identify as Latinx.

The data workforce diversity does reveal that BPS has been successful in recruiting educators of color to the district to principal and central office manager positions. The question that needs further examination is whether the district is retaining educators of color, with a focus on school principals, co-leaders, and central office managers, which is explored in the sections to follow.

BPS Central Office Departments Related to Employee Discipline



The opaqueness of the organizational structure in BPS leads to great concern and challenges with implementing consistent and equitable employee discipline. The offices/Departments across BPS do not seem to have any consistent reporting structure and/or mechanism for collaborating or communicating. The most recent organizational structure indicates the superintendent has direct reports that include four Deputy Superintendents, Chief of Communications, and the Chief of Staff. Senior Deputy Linda Chen directly oversees four Chiefs who oversee 33 areas of work that include all the regional school superintendents, inclusion, multilingual learning, and special education. Senior Deputy Sam Depina supervises six Chiefs who oversee 28 areas of work including capital planning, budget, labor relations, and human resources. Deputy Ana Tavares supervises three chiefs and 13 areas of work including family engagement, partnerships, equity, and the helpline. Despite naming accountability for the central office as a key priority for the new superintendent, the central office structure and accountability appears to be getting more confusing and unstable. The lack of clarity and transparency of each of these areas of work

within BPS Central Office warrants deep concern and additional investigation but is outside the scope of this report.

The following offices/Departments appear to be responsible for the oversight and management of employee discipline as it relates to central office managers, principals and co-leaders.

- Office of Human Capital
 - Department of Labor Relations
- Office of Legal Advisor
- Office of Equity
- Office of the Superintendent

The BPS website provides a summary of each office/department (Appendix). The description of the Office of legal advisor and Office of Labor Relations on the BPS website demonstrates the lack of clarity and transparency over the exact responsibilities of each office. It is unclear who oversees the attorneys for BPS and their reporting obligations to senior officials in BPS including the superintendent. In addition to the BPS staff there are 136 employment agreements for 2023 in Analyze Boston payroll. It is unclear if these all work for the school system but in a review of the names there are a significant number of former BPS employees working across varying departments. The scope of work or job postings for “employment agreements” could not be located on any publicly available document. These employment agreements range from \$1,000 with some totaling over \$100,000. The lack of transparency around employment agreements raises significant concern worth exploring for additional potential bias in the hiring and pay of these employees.

There are no actual employees listed on the BPS website for either the labor relations or legal departments. To obtain the names and titles of employees in this office we used [payroll records](#) available from the City of Boston and public documents.

Office of Legal Advisor

Lisa Maki was listed on the City of Boston website as the [legal advisor](#) for BPS in March of 2024. The position of legal advisor for BPS was [posted](#) on March 22, 2024 indicating that Maki has moved on from this role. According to Analyze Boston Payroll, there lists two paralegals in this office, Nadra Chase and Danielle Seibold. The legal advisor, Lisa Maki (City of Boston) has a dotted line to the Chief of Staff, Rochelle Nwosu on the most recent organizational chart. Maki was hired into this role in September 2021. She formerly was the legal advisor for the Boston Fire Department and was the Director of Labor Relations from 2018-2020. Maki also worked for the City of Boston law department with payroll records available from 2011- 2016. According to

a [press release](#) in December 2014, Maki was appointed by former Mayor Marty Walsh to the licensing board that regulates alcohol, food, hotels/inns, lodging houses, fraternities/dormitories, billiards/pool tables/sippio, bowling alleys, and fortune teller licenses within the City of Boston. She was appointed to this board effective December 1, 2014 to begin a 6-year term. City of Boston [Document 1](#) and [Document 2](#) indicate she was in this role in 2015 as a commissioner. It was not clear when she left this role from publicly available documents. Maki became the town solicitor for the town of Braintree in July of 2016 until 2018, when she returned to BPS. Formerly, according to internal documents the legal advisor for BPS was held by Cathy Lizotte from February 2019-December 2021 with her Analyze Boston title being General Counsel in the Law Department. It is unclear from public documents why Lizotte left BPS but there was a [Globe](#) report that indicated concern related to the release of information connected to the Boston School Committee. It appears that Mauricio Vaca is now serving as the interim legal advisor since April 2024.

Office of Human Capital

In a review of the BPS Organizational Chart, Deputy Superintendent of Operations, Sam Depina oversees the [Office of Human Capital](#). The current Chief of Human Capital is Francesse Canty, who previously worked in the Office of Labor Relations from 2018-2020. She worked in Everett Public Schools as the Human Resource Director from 2020 until August 2022. She returned to BPS in October of 2022 as the Director of Compliance and Risk Management. She became the Chief of Human Capital in August of 2023. The Chief of Human Capital oversees Labor Relations, HR Shared Services, Performance Management, Payroll, Strategic Staffing, HR Data and Analytics, Employee Services, and Recruitment. Canty replaced Raecia Catchings who left the Chief position in the summer of 2023. There is a current Deputy Chief of Human Capital Managerial E, Hannah Hall, who replaced Megan Reed who was in that position in 2022. Reed is now a Director D position in High School Renewal. Payroll entries for 2023 indicate there were 125 entries of employees who received a payment under the department of “Office of Human Capital”.

Department of Labor Relations

[Office of Labor Relations](#) is led by a Director, Jeremiah Hassan and a Deputy Director, Louis Scaricchio. According to [Analyze Boston 2023 data](#), there was also a manager Tier D position: Richard Banks in Labor Relations.. There were seven attorneys listed in the department of Labor Relations as managerial Tier D employees: Eliza Mina, Helen Anderson, Jeffrey Smith, Mary Kate Condon, Michelle Bouchard, Bader Abu-Eid, and Marsophia Ducheine. Michael Pidani and Hilary Detmold were listed as senior labor counsel. There was a paralegal assistant as a managerial Tier C employee: Nicole Sorenson. There was a staff assistant as a managerial Tier B employee: Joan Hayes. There were three employees listed with employment contracts with the

Office of Labor Relations: Joseph Coffey, Peggy Kemp, and Ed Lee. There were also four interns listed for 2023. There were positions listed as ASD Office of Labor Relations as well, which appears to be part of the City of Boston. It is unclear if these positions have any relationship to BPS. In total (not including the ASD staff), the Office of Labor Relations payroll for 2023 was \$1,680,424. The racial demographics of the employees in this office do not seem to reflect the demographic of the overall diversity of the central office. According to OHC data, 57% of central employees identify as educators of color. With the exception of an attorney who started in September of 2023, the remaining full time employees responsible for investigations and discipline were all white presenting.

In addition to the employees listed above, Francesse Canty in her role as **Director of Compliance and Risk Management** conducted investigations in 2022. Canty is listed on Analyze Boston for 2022 as a Director (D) non academic under the department listed as the Chief Financial Officer. We could not identify who was in the position of Director of Compliance and Risk Management after Canty left to become the Chief of Human Capital. Additionally, Ann Marie Noonan was named as conducting an investigation in the case of Kapur in the spring of 2022. Noonan is listed on Analyze Boston in 2020 as a Supv.-Labor Relations in the ASD Department of Labor Relations. Noonan was not listed as receiving payment from the City of Boston during the 2021 or 2022 fiscal years. Noonan's LinkedIn profile states she was employed by Valerio Dominello & Hillman, LLC full-time since October 2022. This suggests that in addition to the employees listed on Analyze Boston in the Labor Relations or Law departments, BPS has contracts with lawyers or law firms who also participate in the investigatory and discipline process of BPS employees. In a review of the [2022 BPS budget](#), the law firms Valerio Dominello & Hillman LLC received \$200,000 to provide legal services to BPS, Stoneman, Chandler & Miller LLP received \$50,000 to provide legal service to BPS and Ernst & Young LLP Management Consultants received \$200,000 for management consulting. According to [media sources](#), the Hinkley Allen law firm was paid a total of \$679,000 to conduct the two-phased investigation of Mission Hill. The phase III report was prepared for: Boston Public Schools Interim Superintendent Drew Echelson completed on September 27, 2022. The report was prepared by: Hinckley Allen & Snyder LLP listing, William F. Sinnott, Elizabeth J.. Mcevoy, B Stephanie Siegmman, Tara A. Singh, Julianna Malogolowkin, and Shasky L. Clarke. Sinnott previously served for eight years as the Corporation Counsel of the City of Boston where he was head of the Law Department.

Using the search "law" for Analyze Boston there are 83 entries for fiscal year 2022 of individuals and positions and 93 for fiscal year 2023 (three of these individuals contain Law in their name so can be excluded from this count). It is unclear from public documents the extent of crossover from the law department of the City of Boston to BPS.

Equity, Strategy, and Opportunity Gaps

The organizational chart for BPS indicated that the Division [Equity, Strategy, and Opportunity Gaps](#) was led by Chief Charles Grandson who most recently held that position in 2023. Payroll records for 2023 indicate Charles Grandson was employed in BPS under the title of Chief Officer under the department of “Strategy”. Payroll records indicate that Grandson received some sort of settlement agreement on his departure from BPS and likely a signed Non-Disclosure Agreement not allowing him to talk about his experiences with BPS.

At the OAG Task Force meeting on March 28th, 2023 the Chief of Staff, Rochelle Nwosu shared a [presentation](#) that included the organizational charts for the Division of Equity, Strategy, and Opportunity Gaps that included four offices that Grandson previously supervised. The presentation included the offices as 1.) Strategy and Innovation, 2.) Opportunity Gaps, 3.) Retention Cultivation and Diversity, and 4.) Office of Equity.

The BPS website states, [The Office of Strategy & Innovation](#) “oversees Boston Public Schools 20- 25 Strategic Priorities Monitoring, Annual Report Development on the status of monitoring, transformative mentorship programming, and overall strategic priorities collaborative projects and initiatives.” Payroll records indicate there are fourteen employees in the department “**Strategy**”. There was one director, Sharra Gaston, whose title was listed as Interim Deputy Chief on the BPS [organizational chart](#), two coordinator managers, five interns, and two employment contracts in the department of “Strategy” on payroll.

Office of Opportunity Gaps

The BPS website states the mission of the [Office of Opportunity Gaps](#) as “Our mission is to help build capacity and provide the vision, innovations and supports the district and its individual schools need to foster opportunities for marginalized students (Black, Latino, EL, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged) to flourish and close gaps in proficiency across all areas of their education. The [Office of Opportunity Gaps](#) was led by an Assistant Superintendent, Yozmin Gay-Draper. According to payroll records there were 16 entries of employees in 2023 in the Department “Opportunity Gaps”. There was Director (D), Valecia Saunders, Director (C) Adetunji Adewole Onamade, six Managers, one instructional coach, one employment contract, one intern, and three summer school BTU Prof.

Office of Retention Cultivation and Diversity

The [Office of Retention Cultivation and Diversity](#) (RCD) mission statement states, RCD “combines talent acquisition and cultivation, pipeline development, and diversity programs to

better support candidates and employees throughout their careers. RCD is committed to developing, preparing and retaining a racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse group of highly effective and culturally proficient teachers and staff members every year. We continue to focus our efforts on three key ‘levers’ for our work: 1) Build and Support Pipelines 2) Cultivation and 3) Develop and Retain employees.” RCD was led by an Acting Managing Director, Rashaun Martin according to the 2023 organizational chart. According to payroll records, Martin was in the “Human Capital” Department as a Director (D). In 2022, Ceronne Daly was listed as a Director D in the “Strategy” Department overseeing this office according to the [website](#). The [organizational chart](#) presented in March of 2023 indicates there are a total of nineteen positions listed in the RCD Office. Four of these positions were listed as “vacant”. There are three staff in cultivation under MTEL Prep Support as BTU specialists, four staff as BTU specialists under BPS teaching fellowship, four positions listed under Accelerated Community to Teacher Tea (ACTT) which appear to also be BTU, two staff as BPS Cadet program with one listed as a managerial coordinator B in the “Human Capital” department and one listed under the department “strategy” on payroll for 2023. Luther Joseney is listed as the Retention Specialists for Educators of Color and their payroll indicates they were a Manager C in the Department of “Opportunity Gaps”. There are two employees listed under the retention services and diversity team. Kariem McCormick is listed as a Retention Fellow as a Manager B in the Department of “Human Capital”. Alexander Ezechukwu was named as an intern with the Department “Strategy”. According to payroll, there is no Department for the Office of Retention, Cultivation, and Diversity. Employees are budgeted under the department of “Human Capital”, “Strategy”, or “Opportunity Gaps” with the exception of Chandra Joseph Lacet whose entry in payroll was as an Instructional Coach under the Department of “Madison Park Vocational”, yet her name appeared on the organizational chart from the Office of Retention Cultivation and Diversity.

Special Projects Manager

The organizational chart in March of 2023 indicates a **Special Projects Manager** directly reporting to Grandson, Stacy Guerrero. According to payroll records, Guerrero worked for the Family and Community Advancement Department as Staff Assistant Managerial C.

Office of Equity

The [Office of Equity](#) is led by an Assistant Superintendent, Becky Shuster. The Equity website in April 2024 indicates there are five staff members in the office: Emily Pina, Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator; Grace Jung, Director of Training and School Support; Francesska Jean Pieirre, Director of Accommodations; Bruce Bolling, Assistant Director of Compliance; and Chrismary Gonzalez, Assistant Director of Intake. Boston payroll from 2023 also indicates in Equity there is a Chief of Equity, Mariangely Solis Cervera and a Special

Assistant, Lori Nelson. It is unclear from organizational charts the relationship between these employees and the office of equity. The Equity office employed eight interns during 2023 and two managerial interpreters. A [presentation](#) by the Office of Equity indicates the “interns” are referred to as “Equity Assistants”. In total using the filters for departments of “Equity” and “Office of Equity ” there are a total of 41 entries. It seems some of these employees work for the City of Boston and the relationship to BPS is unclear. It appears that Emily Pina replaced Quinnelle Gomez as the Director of Compliance and Title IX Coordinator. It appears as if Carmen Fonseca is no longer in her position as the LGBTQ+ Student Support Manager. It does not appear that there is anyone currently in this position. It was reported that BPS is reorganizing, moving the Office of Equity under Human Resources. Multiple employees have indicated they are leaving their positions from the Office of Equity, with some already on leave from their positions.

Office of the Superintendent

The [Office of the Superintendent](#) is led by Superintendent Mary Skipper. The website states, “Superintendent Skipper’s agenda at Boston Public Schools is focused on ensuring students have equitable access to quality education and experiences. As such, she and her leadership team are focused on prioritizing and accelerating academic performance; strengthening access to social-emotional learning; streamlining operations and ensuring student safety; developing authentic family and community engagement practices; improving internal and external communication with families and staff; and, increasing accountability for both the central office and our schools.” According to [Analyze Boston for 2023](#), Skipper received regular pay of \$303,461.48 and other pay of \$78,634.23 for a total salary of \$382,095.71 for FY 2023. There are nine other entries in the department of the Superintendent's Office that included one assistant superintendent-Monica Hogan; one deputy superintendent-Sam DePina; three managerial Tier C employees-Cathryn Reynolds, Caroline Normand, and Kelsey Smithendorf; a senior advisor-Megan Costello; a special assistant-Patricia Feeney; a staff assistant-Margaret Considine; and an employment agreement-Albert Holland.

Ombudsperson

The Hinckley Allen Phase III report investigated the role of the **Ombudsperson** in BPS. The report states that the “Ombudsperson serves as an objective and neutral party tasked with listening and investigating complaints within the Boston Public School system. The Ombudsperson is a central point of contact and resource for parents and other members of the community who have concerns related to our schools and the District. The Ombudsperson represents the Superintendent in matters of concern.” The four principles of the Ombudsperson Office are neutrality, independence, confidentiality and informality. The long standing employee in this role, Carolyn McNeil is no longer employed by BPS. This position no longer exists in the

BPS organizational structure and there were no publicly available documents found that discussed the elimination of this position.

Analysis of Central Office Departments

The lack of transparency around the employees within each department is quite concerning and raises significant red flags about the basic operations of the district and financial mismanagement within and across departments. **The Central Budget is upwards of \$70 Million dollars with essentially no accountability.** Central Office employees indicated that evaluations in some departments are non-existent with others using archaic paper versions of outdated evaluation circulars. Employees indicated they requested baseline data to see how many central office employees were evaluated using the required Vector System, yet BPS has failed to provide this data. Employees also requested to repeat the internal Gallup Poll that was administered in 2021 and to share the results publicly, with the goal of setting improvement targets as an institution. Instead employees were told no surveys could be administered for “legal reasons”.

The job descriptions for all the employees listed should be available in the Office of Human Capital and warrants further review but is outside the scope of this report. The budget documentation for each department should also be available and deserve close attention to how funds are allocated at the Central Office and how funds in the category of “other” are being spent on certain employees. A budget audit of the Central Office is outside the scope of this report but is a strong recommendation as a future analysis. Currently, the City Councillors are strongly advocating for this audit. BPS used to produce comprehensive budget reports, yet this practice has been discontinued demonstrating no transparency to the public on the spending within the Central Office Administration. We strongly agree with our City Councillors and believe there should be an internal audit of the Central Office. This auditor should be vetted publicly as a fully independent auditor with no affiliations with the City of Boston or Boston Public Schools for an accurate, honest, and transparent budget analysis to occur.

The workplace culture and accountability within BPS Central Office is explored in depth in this report in a future section. The sole attempt to investigate the concerns about bias in the employee discipline process across these multiple departments was from the Mintz report, which is summarized in the section below.

Mintz Report on Employee Discipline

Introduction to the Report

In a presentation to the Boston School Committee on August 30th, 2023, Mintz shared their report from investigating a Review of Paid Administrative Leave Determinations & Disciplinary Outcomes of BPS Central Office Managers/School Leaders. In a review of the timeline they state their investigation was prompted on August 17th, 2022 stating “BPS employee notifies Acting Supt. Echelson and Incoming Supt. Skipper of concerns related to sudden increase in number of senior administrators of color investigated and placed on paid administrative leave.” We now know this investigation was launched from a memo sent by Charles Grandson in his role as the BPS Chief Equity & Strategy Officer and the senior advisor to the superintendent for issues of equity and strategy. In his letter to Incoming Superintendent Skipper and Acting Superintendent Echelson, Grandson raises huge and significant concerns stating the following:

- In an effort to advise and protect the district and the rights of individuals I am recommending that the district retain an external investigator to look into practices related to potential patterns of implicit bias or racial discrimination as it relates to the District’s disciplinary and investigatory protocols and past practices.
- While paid administrative leave (PAL) is usually not considered an adverse employment action, it undeniably casts a shadow and stain on the reputation and integrity of employees. As such, the use of PAL as an employment status should be used in the most extreme cases when immediate removal of an employee is necessary to prevent irreparable harm - usually physical but not always. It is also my understanding that in many of these instances there have not been any substantive findings that have warranted such action, and definitely not termination of these employees by the district - thus far.
- Of note is the convening of six Black administrators at the Chief level in January of 2022, who met with your predecessor to raise concerns regarding a racially hostile and retaliatory work environment on the executive team -one of whom was later the subject of an investigation.

Despite the severity of these concerns, there seemed to be no urgency from BPS with this investigation. It took over a year to complete a report that did not even include the experiences of the actual employees. It is also important to note that Charles Grandson is no longer employed with BPS. This mere fact that Grandson is no longer with BPS may raise the question as to

whether he was removed in retaliation for reporting discrimination and ineffective practices. Under the leadership of Superintendent Skipper, Grandson's position has yet to be filled and we heard that this position was not going to remain in the organization demonstrating no apparent commitment to equity and strategy.

From this internal advisory from Grandson, Superintendent Skipper hired counsel, Natashia Tidwell and Janki Viroja of the law firm Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, to conduct an investigation into the use of paid administrative leave (PAL) to identify potential patterns of implicit bias or racial discrimination. The district expanded the period of review to include school years 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022, the entirety of the preceding BPS Superintendent's administration and to include school leaders (principals and school co-leaders) and Central Office Managerial employees. It is unclear from public documents how much the district paid for this investigation but this information should be available from a public records request.

The investigation contained interviews from "key internal and external stakeholders including former and current BPS employees with oversight responsibility of the misconduct complaints, external stakeholders, School Committee leadership, and Superintendent Mary Skipper." The experiences and voices of the actual employees who were subject to an investigatory meeting or were put on paid administrative leave were outside the scope of the Mintz report and have never been heard publicly. At the Boston Public School Committee meeting on August 30th, 2023, Tidwell said that due to limited data, she was unable to draw a reliable conclusion as to whether and to what extent race was a factor in decisions on the disciplinary outcomes resulting in administrative leaves. The analysis contained in this report demonstrates otherwise and shows disproportionality in the discipline process for leaders of color.

The concerns raised about the treatment of employees of color in BPS expand beyond the initial internal claim. In August of 2022, a group of retired concerned educators of color wrote to incoming Superintendent, Mary Skipper, to share their "troubling and disappointing" concerns that "that racism is still a constant and accepted practice within Boston Public Schools." On August 20, 2020 the BPS Black/Brown Affinity Group at the Bruce C. Bolling Building sent a letter to Central Office Staff stating, "Black/Brown Central Office staff who have been marginalized, ostracized or outright fired in the process of advocating for change." They further state, "Until we deal with the underlying issues that perpetuate the current power structure at Bolling, BPS schools will never see real change in closing the opportunity gap and changing the narrative of racist ideologies that underpin the White supremacist notions that have permeated BPS since Judge Garrity's order for school desegregation."

While Tidwell did not report findings of bias in the employee discipline process, in a comprehensive and thorough review of the data in the Mintz report there is evidence that

employees of color are disciplined more harshly than their white counterparts. There is also evidence from the Office of Equity data that the district does not take allegations of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or disability seriously. Furthermore, there are case examples that the district uses paid administrative leave as retaliation for speaking out against ineffective practices and policies or for reporting discriminatory behavior. The employee discipline process in BPS as outlined in the Mintz Report can be found in the appendix. The analysis of the data in the Mintz report is summarized in the section below.

Data Analysis of the Mintz Report

The Mintz report exposed the district dysfunction and lack of coordination across the departments responsible for employee discipline. The investigators quickly learned that BPS does not track data of individuals in BPS who faced allegations of misconduct and/or were placed on PAL. The report indicated they worked with the two BPS Departments tasked with intake and processing of complaints against Central Office Managers and School Leaders, the Office of Labor Relations (“OLR”) and the Office of Equity (“Equity”)

- The data revealed that 247 employees were the subject of a BPS investigation or performance review and that, of these, 131 were placed on PAL pending the outcome across BPS (53%).
- Mintz then searched within the data to identify matters involving the specified category of employees, namely Central Office Managers and School Leaders, ultimately narrowing the target population for this review to 41 individuals (“the Data Set”). The Data Set includes the four employees who were placed on PAL pending dismissal for Poor Performance.

Table A: Data Set

	Office of Equity	OLR	Performance Evaluation
BIPOC	2	17	4
White	8	10	0
	10 Total	27 Total	4 Total

From Mintz, “it is clear that the outcomes from OLR face harsher discipline”. The vast majority of equity violations receive remedial training. Data demonstrates that BIPOC staff are much more likely to face discipline by OLR. It is alleged that if this data was further disaggregated by gender and age this would illuminate additional findings..

Data from Office of Equity

- 8 of the 10 Office of Equity Investigations included allegations against white Staff for disability based bias, gender based bias, race base bias, discrimination or sexual misconduct or the failure to address sexual misconduct. Only one white employee was placed on PAL for allegations of race based discrimination or bias and one white employee was placed on leave for sexual misconduct or failure to address sexual misconduct. Three of Equity's 10 investigations resulted in a Not Substantiated finding (one employee of color and two white employees).
- 7 of the 10 reports to the Office of Equity resulted in findings of misconduct. One Black educator received remedial training for disability based bias or discrimination. Four White Staff had findings of race based bias or discrimination where three resulted in remedial training and one with a separation agreement. Of the two white staff engaging in misconduct around sexual misconduct, one received a separation agreement and one resigned before a determination was made.
- Mintz reported, where Equity leads a misconduct complaint investigation, an employee is less likely to be placed on PAL pending the investigation's outcome. Notably, the Office of Equity required the employee to attend remedial training as discipline in four of its seven completed investigations. This data indicates BPS discipline from the Office of Equity does not enforce policies to keep employees of color free from bias and discrimination.

Data from Office of Labor Relations

- 13 of the 27 OLR investigations were placed on PAL (48%). These included one White staff for conduct outside of work; eleven employees for a failure to follow protocols, procedures or policies (one Asian employee, six Black employees, one Latinx, and three white staff), and one white staff for fitness for duty concerns. **Eight of the thirteen employees placed on PAL were people of color (61.5%) and were all placed on leave under the allegation of failing to follow proper protocol or policies.**
- **Mintz made the following observation that could signal a need for more substantive factual analysis: the five OLR investigations of alleged violations of the District's procurement policies or other financial impropriety all involved POC; there were no white employees investigated for similar misconduct.** Three employees of color were placed on PAL for failure to follow procurement procedures while the two employees of color alleged to have committed other financial-related misconduct were not.
- The eight educators of color were placed on leave for the following allegations:
 - Failure to investigate issues of bullying

- Misconduct related to vacation time, occurred time off, and leaves of absences
- Mishandling of personal information
- Violation of the Conflict of Interest Law
- Failure to follow procurement procedures
- Failure to report misconduct
- 20 of the 27 OLR Investigations completed identified findings of misconduct. 14 of the 20 employees where OLR determined misconduct identified as people of color. 6 of the 20 were white. **This data clearly demonstrates bias with 70% of the investigations from OLR resulted in findings of misconduct against educators of color.**
- The bias in this discipline data is further demonstrated in the outcome data for each of the twenty findings of misconduct. Of the six White employees where there were findings of misconduct, one received a separation agreement, one a written warning, and four resigned. On the other hand, the 16 educators of color where there were findings of misconduct-one received a written warning, one received a suspension with a reassignment, five resigned, one was suspended and two were dismissed. Two employees had discipline pending and one had no discipline resulting from a finding of misconduct. **Only educators of color received discipline from misconduct in the form of a suspension or dismissal (4/20 Educators or 20%).**
- The District placed four Central Office Managers and School Leaders on PAL for “Poor Performance” during the relevant period and all four were people of color. The report indicates Superintendent’s Circular HRS-PP19 (“Performance-Related Dismissal Process for Teachers”) was followed. This is highly concerning in that this Circular applies specifically to teachers and other collectively bargained employees, not principals and central office managers who do not have union representation. Principals and central office managers are required to pay for their own legal representation, which for an initial retainer costs an employee \$3,000, even if no discipline is substantiated. Two of these employees of color were terminated, one resigned in lieu of dismissal, and one was initially dismissed and later reinstated to another position in the district.

Table B: Completed Findings from OLR of Misconduct

	Misconduct Type	PAL Determinations	Outcomes	Total Number
BIPOC	Failure to follow protocols or procedures	Failure to Investigate Bullying -1 PAL	Dismissal	1
		Misconduct related to time reporting -1 PAL, 1 No leave	Suspension with reassignment	1

		Mishandling of personal information - 1 PAL	Written Warning	1
		Violation of the conflict of interest law -1 PAL, 1 No leave	Resignation	5
		Failure to follow procurement procedures -3 PAL	Separation Agreement	1
		Financial Improprieties -2 no leave	Discipline Pending	2
		Failure to report misconduct -1 PAL, 2 No Leave	No Discipline	1
	Hostile Work Environment	2 No Leave	Suspension	1
			Dismissal	1
White	Failure to follow protocols or procedures	Violation of the alcohol free workplace -1 PAL	Written Warning	1
		Failure to report misconduct -1 PAL	Resignation	3
		Violation of the conflict of interest law -1 PAL, 1 no leave		
		Mishandling of personal information -1 no leave		
	Conduct outside of Work		Separation Agreement	1
	Fitness for Duty Concerns		Resignation	1

Synthesis of the Data

As Mintz stated in their report, “the underlying facts of these completed investigations were not considered as part of this review” nor did Mintz “assess the fairness or thoroughness of any individual investigation”. **The mere fact that BPS hired Mintz to complete an investigation, yet did not allow them to interview employees who experienced the discipline process or to explore the underlying facts of the completed investigations raises significant concern regarding the transparency of BPS.**

Despite the limitations of the Mintz report, the data collected in the Mintz show the concern about the fairness and consistency around employee discipline in BPS. OLR stated they use the following determination to place an employee on paid administrative leave:

- a.) Whether the alleged misconduct involves actual or threatened violence or raises other student or employee safety concerns;
- b.) Whether the employee’s continued presence at BPS would jeopardize the integrity of the investigation or BPS operations
- c.) Whether the alleged conduct is so egregious that the failure to place the employee on PAL would erode the public trust.

Mintz did determine that BPS employs informal, varied, and unwritten criteria for Paid Administrative Leave determinations. From the data collected by Mintz, there is great concern that BPS is not following their own policies in regards to making the determination to place an employee on PAL. For example, two employees had alleged misconduct for mishandling of personal information. The BIPOC educator was placed on PAL, while the white educator was not placed on PAL. Two BIPOC educators had alleged misconduct for time reporting where one was placed on PAL and the other was not placed on leave. Three employees failed to report misconduct and again, two were placed on PAL and two were not placed on leave. This same rings true for a violation of conflict of interest where two employees were placed on PAL and two were not placed on PAL. **There is great inconsistency around the decision making of placing an employee on PAL, which raises substantial questions about the bias and discriminatory practices used by the Office of Labor Relations.**

The [Bay State Banner](#) covered the release of the report in September 2023. The article stated, “The report found that, of the investigations conducted by the BPS Office of Labor Relations, which handled more of them over the three-year period, 61% that resulted in paid administrative leave involved staff of color. In contrast, averaged over the three years covered by the data, about 54% of BPS administrators and school leaders were people of color.” The article goes on to cite, **“Over the three-year period, the annual percentage of Black administrators alone hovered at or below 35%. In that same time, Black employees made up about 46% of cases of paid**

administrative leave among senior administrators.” The analysis of the data demonstrated that only educators of color received discipline from misconduct in the form of a suspension or dismissal (4/20 Educators or 20%).

This data raises significant questions about who is actually making the decision to place employees on paid administrative leave. The Mintz report states that OLR submits a memorandum detailing the relevant facts to OHC for approval and signature. From conversations with employees, this is consistent with the letters received signed by either Al Taylor, Rae Catchings, or Francesse Canty in the Office of Human Capital. Yet, in conversations with staff from OHC, there are significant concerns about whether OHC is actually well informed about the details of the situation and are a part of the decision making process to determine if paid leave is necessary. **It is highly concerning that some staff who were placed on paid leave were not even made aware of this decision through formal BPS processes.** Every staff member who was placed on PAL reported feeling completely taken off guard by this decision as most of the employees had received stellar evaluations in the past and had not received any structured feedback to improve performance prior to this decision.

The report stated that “The narrow focus on PAL determinations does not invalidate the impact of other decision points in the life span of investigation.” The Investigatory Meetings were outside the scope of their investigation and Mintz was “unable to assess whether the underlying investigations were conducted in a fair and consistent manner.” The findings from conversations with employees who endured the discipline process from BPS are summarized in the next section.

Employee Discipline Process

As Boston Public Schools employees, if there is speculation that an employee is negligent they are subject to the processes outlined in circular HRS-PP10 on Employee Discipline procedures. This circular specifically states, “The primary objective of disciplinary action is to provide a structured opportunity for employees to improve performance and remedy misconduct before poor performance or misconduct jeopardizes employment.” The circular lays out the procedures for employees to be afforded their right to “due process.” The essential elements of “due process” are notice, an opportunity to be heard, and to defend in an orderly proceeding adapted to the nature of the case. Due process requires that discipline reflects a consistent and impartial application; a fair administration, including investigations, notice, and an opportunity to be heard; right to representation; and prompt resolution. According to the BPS circular on employee discipline, it states, “an employee should have knowledge of the conduct expected of him or her and of all rules and regulations they are expected to follow.”

Due Process Rights

The Mintz report illuminated concerns about violation of Due Process rights stating, **“Mintz is assured that the District is cognizant of community concerns about the opaque nature of its investigatory process and its perceived lack of fundamental fairness and is hopeful that the District will implement measures to restore community trust.”** The report noted, “variations in the District’s procedural and record-keeping practices that were expressed by both internal and external stakeholders.”

From conversations with employees who experienced “discipline” in BPS, there was evidence of repeated willful violation of due process rights through the failure to conduct investigations in a fair, impartial, consistent, or timely manner. From interviews during the 2023-2024 school year, there have been no changes to their practices since the release of the Mintz report.

The practices of BPS were exposed in two recent jury verdicts. In the case of Charles Sherman Neal vs. BPS, the Superior Court ruled in favor of the plaintiff for retaliation with the jury awarded plaintiff compensatory damages of \$436,500, and punitive damages of \$950,000. Neal’s lawyer named the violations of due process stating, “I think they mishandled the whole thing

from the beginning to the end,” adding that the school system often didn’t follow its own policies and procedures. The jury agreed and the case opinion by the Judge identified the following violation of due process and retaliatory actions of BPS:

The evidence supported a very different narrative than the City’s version. Based on the evidence that, shortly after filing a complaint with the MCAD and after filing grievances through the procedure approved by the Boston Public Schools (“BPS”), and notwithstanding his favorable performance reviews, BPS placed plaintiff on administrative leave without conducting a meaningful investigation; ordered plaintiff isolated from BPS’s facilities and its employees; required plaintiff to produce a psychiatric evaluation of his fitness to perform the duties of his job; and ultimately terminated him. Drawing all inferences in plaintiff’s favor, the jury was well within bounds to find that the City’s decisions to take adverse employment actions against plaintiff were causally linked to his protected conduct.

A second jury in the case of *Edwards v. BPS* ruled that BPS retaliated against him after he made a complaint about workplace discrimination. The jury granted him \$410,080 in back pay and \$533,110 for “emotional distress”—a total of \$943,190.

Employees reported they were not afforded due process including “consistent”, “impartial application”, “fair administration, including investigations, notice, and an opportunity to be heard” and neglected all aspects of “progressive discipline”. Some employees reported being put on paid administrative leave before ever receiving an investigatory hearing notice. Other employees reported receiving an Investigatory Meeting (IM) notice that included vague and non-specific language, leaving the employee completely unclear on their actual conduct violation. One employee said they never really knew what BPS was actually investigating, yet the employee endured hours of questioning. Many employees reported feeling blindsided and completely unaware of any concerns. In some cases, supervisors lied to employees pretending to be supportive and helpful to later learn this individual was the reason the employee was being “investigated”. Many employees reported the “gaslighting” tactic that is used to try to fool the employee. A common theme throughout the stories were the “lies” and “rumors” that BPS created about the educators both within the system and with the community. Employees reported they felt as though BPS views their leaders as “disposable” in a system with a “short memory”, meaning people quickly forget about the employee after they leave the system even if there was clear evidence the employee faced discrimination and retaliation.

Investigatory Meetings

In the [Bay State Banner](#) in October 2022, a BPS spokesperson suggested the letter writers from the retired educator of color are wrong to see “investigatory meetings” as hostile or intimidating. “Investigatory meetings are not disciplinary in nature,” the spokesperson said. “An investigatory

meeting is an employee's opportunity to have their account heard when students, families or coworkers have made allegations of misconduct involving them."

Principals and managers who had conducted investigatory meetings with their employees in the past reported that the manner of district-led meetings were "drastically different" than any meeting they have ever facilitated with their staff. Multiple employees reported that it was clear they were "presumed guilty" before any investigation even took place. One lawyer shared, "There are concerns across all bureaucratic systems but BPS is on steroids." Employees reported sharing pertinent information to the case with investigators to later receive a report with all of this relevant and critical information omitted. Employees reported that the investigators treated the meeting more like a "court hearing" than an investigatory hearing where the employee should have an opportunity to be heard.

In the words of employees who experienced Investigatory meetings (IM) from Central Office staff reported the process as "dangerous", **"dehumanizing"**, "harmful", "oppressive", "insidious", "abusive", "highly inappropriate", "disrespectful", **"traumatizing"**, "demoralizing", **"deplorable"**, "insulting", **"cruel"**, "unethical", "humiliating", and "detrimental" to their mental health and professional careers.

Employees reported being "set up" in the IM process. The hearing notices did not provide specific allegations to allow employees to come prepared to the meeting. The language was so vague that one employee repeatedly stated, "I had no idea what they were even investigating me for." They described being asked "random" questions and shared some quite absurd remarks made by the investigator. Employees who were placed on PAL described the experience as being "thrown away" and "silenced". When the employees were placed on PAL, their access to their computer, emails, and all relevant documentation to "prove their innocence" was removed. Essentially, employees had to "recall" events from memory, and then were reported as "liars" for misrepresenting a specific detail. Some employees reported being "investigated" but were never provided notice that an investigation was occurring.

Every employee who participated in an IM led by an investigator in Labor Relations or hired by BPS reported that the process they endured was not fair or consistent and definitely did not provide them an opportunity to be heard. The meetings they described were intensely "hostile", "intimidating" and "humiliating". As indicated in the data, many employees, 8 of the 37 (22%), resigned during the discipline process. **Employees reported feeling "extremely disrespected", "devalued" and "harassed" and decided that "quitting was the only option"**. Some employees reported they "resigned under duress" in lieu of being terminated by BPS.

Analysis

Employees reported that BPS practices use “mobbing” as a strategy to “target certain colleagues”. The “mobbing” practices against central office leaders were raised to the former Superintendent, Brenda Casselius and the current Deputy Superintendent of Operations, Sam Depina, during a meeting with the Chiefs of Color. Employees reported “purposefully being excluded from meetings”, “being targeted”, “ignored for their ideas”, “adding obstacles to get the work done.” Employees report the workplace culture of BPS Central Office “encourages mobbing” practices where “they are either part of the problem or they are putting their head down staying quiet, hoping they are not next.”

Employees reported there were phases of how they were treated in BPS. The first phase starts with “love bombing” and “gaslighting”, moving to “devaluation”, and then ultimately to “discard”. The sentiment of most employees indicated they were “thrown away” and “disposable” to the organization that many dedicated their professional lives to supporting.

Most managers at Central Office and principals/co-leaders who shared their experiences during the years of 2021-2024 reported retaliation for speaking up about discriminatory practices of BPS as the driving force behind what happened to them. Some reported discrimination to Equity or Labor Relations, yet, these reports were dismissed or ignored. We were able to talk with employees who faced discipline prior to the 2021 school year indicating these are not new issues to BPS. **It does demonstrate that despite public awareness of the “abusive practices”, no significant changes have occurred to address racial, gender, and age discrimination in BPS.** Reports from current employees indicate that discrimination and retaliation remains an issue in BPS and many report they do not feel safe to speak up or report.

Many employees reported “nepotism” being “alive and well” in BPS. Employees reported drastic differences in how certain employees are treated over others. This was quite evident as employees shared their experiences with the Conflict of Interest Policy as an allegation. It appeared from the data and from experiences of employees that only people of color are “investigated” for “conflict of interest” violations, while other blatant violations by white employees are completely ignored.

Principals and co-leaders reported that students' behavior or incidents were used as “weapons” by BPS. Instead of supporting the schools with responding to crises or student behaviors, principals were used as the “scapegoat” to “squash the story” in the media. One employee reported, a leader in Human Capital announced “we did not get in the Globe” as a celebration of an accomplishment that week. Some principals reported BPS leaders used “politically connected” families to “harass” and “make the job impossible”. One leader reported a family notified them after they were removed that BPS was “calling them repeatedly asking them to file

a police report on the employee”. Many leaders reported that the culture of BPS right now cares more about optics, “killing a story” in the media rather than exposing the truth.

One would expect that reports and investigations undertaken by BPS are not biased, misleading, conceal evidence, omit relevant facts, or argue one position neglecting to disclose evidence that would counter the argument. Yet, in a review of multiple reports written by Labor Relations or investigators hired by BPS, the reports contain “critical omissions” and “misrepresentations” of information presenting a scathing review of the employee. Anyone reading the report written by the investigator would agree with their determination around employee discipline given the highly “selective” and “sensationalized” account of the alleged misconduct. The investigators from BPS served as the judge and the jury, ignoring any relevant documentation that offered a counter argument to the initial claims, writing a report to validate their initial assertions, representing the client-”Boston Public Schools”, while ignoring the rights of the employee.

City Council Hearings on Employee Discipline

While the Mintz report was the sole attempt to “investigate” bias in the discipline procedures of BPS, the city council hearings conducted on September 21st, 2023 and on May 29th, 2024 illuminates the concerns and practices to the public. City Councillor at Large and Chair of the Government Accountability, Transparency, & Accessibility, Julia Mejia ordered a hearing (Docket [#1307](#)) to audit the City of Boston's hiring, firing and promotion policies, practices and procedures and repeated the hearing again (Docket [#0585](#)). Mejia stated she will be ordering another hearing for September 2024.

The first hearing began with Councillor Mejia reading an affirmation focused on the difference between fact and truth. She read a powerful statement including the following excerpts: “There is a difference between a fact and the truth”; “Facts are often defended with statistics that support the position being promoted”; “Truth must be reckoned with.”; and “You can never trust facts. You can always trust the truth”. She went on to say, “We have to build more trust building opportunities for a system that has constantly devalued and disregarded and in many ways, disrespected us as parents, as students. We all carry that trauma into the places and spaces we are in.” Councillor Mejia encouraged the participants to be vulnerable and to seek truth, while maintaining a respectful dialogue in the spirit of improving the educational experiences and outcomes for the students within BPS.

After hearing the opening affirmation, Superintendent Skipper testified stating that she personally committed to creating a work environment free of bias and retaliation, high professional standards and is accountable to our students. She then went on to share statistics and data on the demographics of the staffing within BPS reading off percentages of staff who identify by each racial group. She then stated, “We must acknowledge the historical harm of our institutions and shift the culture” and passed the microphone to Rashaun Martin, who also talked about the “data” citing facts about the diversity of the workforce in BPS. He talked about intentional work and stated they are “doubling down” focusing solely on strategies with teachers, never identifying any work being done to retain principals or central office employees.

There were three panelists at the hearing who shared passionate testimony about their concerns with what is happening in BPS to Black and Brown educators.

Councillor Mejia then asked about the BPS do not hire list. Francesse Canty, Chief of Human Capital said, “We do not have a do not hire list.” She did say, “We do have former employees recommended for not re-hiring.”

Skipper acknowledged they were seeing high levels of churn in leadership in BPS. Councillor Mejia asked about the transition with the Chief Equity Officer. Skipper refused to answer if the chief equity officer transitioned from the district saying, "That is a personnel question and I am not going to answer that." Mejia responded saying, "There seems to be a trend of Black well regarded folks that have left." Skipper responded, "I think Chief Canty has statistics on our leadership," never naming that the Chief Equity Officer did in fact leave BPS and the position had yet to be filled by another candidate.

Then Councillor Mejia said, "In the spirit of showing what is possible, I ask each of my colleagues to ask a question." A voice is heard in the background saying something about the administration having other meetings. At this point only forty five minutes into a scheduled three hour long hearing, Superintendent Skipper, Chief Canty, and Chief Martin got up and left the hearing.

District 7 City Councillor Tania Fernandes Anderson of Roxbury expressed concerns about their early departure. Councillor Anderson asked if the hearing could be postponed and stated, "It is not a conversation if the other side is not here." Mejia let the process unfold and was incredibly gracious in her appreciation to Superintendent Skipper for her attendance at the hearing.

Despite the BPS administration leaving, the hearing continued with testimony from Maria Alejandra Mosquera, a BPS social worker and Lea Serena, BTU Elementary Field Representative. Both shared impassioned testimony about the importance of hiring and retaining educators of color for our students and families. Mosquera asked, "What are we doing?" saying "I am looking at highly powerful individuals in front of me" urging for action. She shared, "Our students of color grieve consistently at the loss of their role models." She tied her testimony back to students saying, "I am telling them (our children) to be great. Be empowered. Be powerful. Someone once told me systems of oppression do not mind having children of color, Black children, in their buildings. They mind when they decide to take back their power." Lea Serena said, "I have sat in hundreds of investigation meetings. I see a lot of meetings where I question the biases of the people holding power and the decision makers." Serena went on to say, "There are no systems in place to hold the office of equity accountable either. Time and time again I have black educators calling me to share the stories of how they were discriminated against, are made to feel unsafe, They reported and felt as if their complaints went nowhere". Mosquera asked, "Would I put somebody who's been impacted and a victim of something in front of the perpetrator?" Lea Serena stated that when receiving Investigatory Hearing notices, "It is really traumatic for the employee. They hand out Investigatory meeting notices non-stop. I mean I am in Investigatory Meetings 24/7 over very tiny things that could be a conversation."

City Councillor Questions during the hearing:

- President Flynn asked about the BPS Do Not Hire List and expressed he was troubled by this list. He also asked about who in BPS makes the decisions about hiring and whether superintendents are aware.
- Councillor Worrell shared his concern and thanked members for their advocacy. He shared that he had questions for the administration about the pipeline programs, treatment of educators of color and employee discipline. He also talked about exit interviews for educators leaving the system.
- Councillor Anderson expressed her concern about the administration's absence and disappointment in the lack of transparency. She named a huge concern regarding the lack of transparency. She also stated that City Councillors in the past have gotten involved in the firing of people in BPS who advocated against them and used their power and leverage to actually displace people.
- Councillor Durkan asked about the mental health of our educators of color and asked about recommendations to support the educators in BPS. She said we have a charge to be anti racists and to change systems.

During the hearing, participants referenced 50 years of busing using language that included “educational malpractice”, “racial trauma”, “terrorized by the system”, and “implicators”. Mejia stated during the hearing, “I am at a loss for words. Get lost in the politics of this and forget about the impact that it has on our children. It is happening in every nook and cranny of Boston. That is the culture. The work we are trying to do is not going to get legislated or put into policy because you can’t legislate hate or fear.” Mejia said, “You have my commitment to stand alongside you to move our people forward.” She went on to share that so many people submitted anonymous testimony for fear of retaliation. Councillor Mejia read an anonymously submitted testimony from a former BPS employee which can be found in the Appendix along with additional anonymous testimonies captured for this report.

The hearing, which had originally been scheduled for Sept. 5, had been postponed two weeks so BPS administrators could be in attendance. Even with the accommodation, BPS leadership did not make the commitment to attend the hearing in its entirety. Despite the significance of this hearing, only one media outlet reported on the hearing in the [Bay State Banner](#).

The hearing concluded with public comment where activist Mike Heichman said, “I am a whistleblower. We have been deliberately misinformed. Another word for this, being lied to.” He said they were all disrespected here today by BPS and that the racist cover up has continued. He closed by saying to the participants, “Truth has been exposed.”

A second [hearing](#) was conducted on May 29th, where again the superintendent displayed no apparent interest in the topic, only bringing one member of her team this time, Francesse Canty,

and again, only staying at the hearing for the first hour. Present at this hearing was Councillor Flynn, Councillor Weber, Councillor Breadon, Councillor Anderson, and Councillor Santana.

Councillor Weber asked where the disparate treatment to employees is stemming from, asking how they can begin to address the concerns. **Lea Serena responded saying, “I think accountability has to start at the top. We’ve seen more investigations in the union in the last few years than we ever did before.** Some of it has to do with fear from the things that have happened. But that is the direction coming from the Office of Labor Relations. There are often times when school leaders do not want to hold an investigation meeting but the office of labor relations is telling them that they have to over things that could just be a conversation.”

There were three employees who testified during public comment sharing their experiences of discrimination and retaliation by BPS, offering case examples of how employees in BPS are treated. Councillor Mejia concluded with her commitment to continuing the discussion planning another hearing for September.

Reporting Discrimination in BPS

Office of Equity

All employees of BPS should have protections under the Equal Employment laws protecting them from discrimination and retaliation. Specifically, the law states, “All of these Federal laws prohibit covered entities from retaliating against a person who files a charge of discrimination, participates in a discrimination proceeding, or otherwise opposes an unlawful employment practice.” In BPS, the Office of Equity is responsible for ensuring the system “is an educational and working environment unimpeded by bias or discrimination, where individuals of all backgrounds and experiences are welcomed, included, encouraged, and can succeed and flourish.” Employees should have protections against unlawful discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in employment exercising their rights of the following: Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Massachusetts and Federal Equal Opportunity Laws; and Age Discrimination Act of 1975.

The [Hinkley Allen Report](#) stated, “Equity is a well-regarded office within the District with a reputation for responsiveness.” Yet, in conversations with current and former Black and Brown leaders and women, the vast majority did not share this same sentiment. Multiple current and former employees indicated they reported conduct of discrimination and harassment to the Office of Equity and their claims were either ignored or dismissed. Conversations with current and former employees clearly indicate the culture of BPS largely ignores workplace harassment, bullying, and discrimination on the basis of gender, race, and age against central office managers, principals and co-leaders.

Experiences of employees demonstrated after reporting bias or discrimination to the Office of Equity, they faced retaliation using harsh discipline measures and their allegations brought forth were never investigated. Publicly available documents from lawsuits filed against BPS validate the statements made by employees about the Office of Equity. The [Boston Globe](#) reported on settlements associated with discrimination claims highlighting a case with a former employee who received a \$750,000 settlement in 2023. The article states she reported discrimination to the Office of Equity based on pregnancy and gender and “within days of her boss becoming aware of her complaint, she faced retaliation”. It states she filed a second complaint to the Office of Equity to “learn she was placed on a Do Not Hire” list.

On July 19, 2018, Sarika Ram submitted a [public records request](#) to BPS soliciting “complaints related to discrimination and harassment submitted to the Boston Public Schools Office of Equity during the 2017-2018 school year” requesting the materials come on a rolling basis. Pursuant to Massachusetts Public Records Law, these records should have come with a ten day period. She resent this same request fifteen more times with the last request on March 1st, 2019. Shawn Williams, Director of Public Records for the City of Boston finally responded on March 1st stating, “There are no records responsive to this request”. We know from talking with employees from the 2017-2018 school year, reports were filed to the Office of Equity for discrimination. We know from a report in the [Herald](#), there were “34 black and Latino educators who have filed complaints against Boston Public Schools with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination that allege race discrimination”. The cover-ups have continued with public records requests coming from [SchoolYard News](#) in March 2023 where again Williams failed to disclose the documents. Even after appealing to the Secretary of State where the office directed Boston officials to respond to the public records request within 10 business days, BPS failed to provide the documents. The lack of transparency and sharing to the public has intensified the mistreatment of employees in BPS, particularly for our Black and Brown leaders and women.

Most recently, a [lawsuit](#) was filed on May 22, 2024 and alleges BPS violated the whistle-blower statute by terminating Lambert in retaliation for raising concerns about racial discrimination. In a statement to the [Globe](#), Lambert stated “Being unsupported by an organization you have been so committed to is extremely damaging and silencing, especially when your attack is motivated with racial hate and you are working to defend Black and Brown students, faculty and families.”

While some employees are pursuing legal remedies from MCAD or filing in Superior Court, the vast majority of employees are too “traumatized” to relive the experiences of the “abuse” or are not in the “family or financial” situation to “fight the bureaucracy” of BPS. Many reported feeling so “overwhelmed” and “beat down” by the process, they just signed the NDA’s and left BPS. Reports from employees indicate there is no internal accountability for discrimination and retaliation and the rights of employees are willfully violated.

Office of Equity Reporting

In a December 2023 presentation to the School Committee, The Office of Equity submitted their [annual report](#) for 2022-2023. The presentation states the office completed 77 training sessions during the course of the previous school year for employees. There was no indication of the actual number or percentage of employees in BPS receiving these training sessions. There was also no outcome information about what would change as a result of these training sessions for employees in regards to the stated objective, to “increase dialogue and comfort within the

District in talking about issues of racism, bias and inclusion”. Principals reported there was essentially no change in the content from year to year from the presentations. Principals reported the presentations from the Office of Equity focused on the “compliance” of reporting and provided no opportunity to ask questions or gain additional clarification. This means that principals or co-leaders who are required to participate in this training at the August Leadership Institute receive essentially the same training each year, never actually engaging in dialogue around issues of racism, bias, and inclusion. The presentation goes on to share that Equity Trainings for Students highlighting their program 24/7 Respect Week. The staff from the Office of Equity relies on school based staff to implement this program with the office serving solely in the role of “compliance” requiring staff to complete exit surveys to document their participation.

The report outlines the concerns brought to the office regarding bias-based conduct and sexual misconduct that impacts students and employees (and occasionally, families). They reported they received a total of 1,446 incident reports with 1,253 student to student incidents, 138 student to employee incidents, 31 employee to student, and 24 employee to employee. In BPS there were approximately 10,000 employees and 46,000 students. **This means that less than 1% (.002%) of employees in BPS reported incidents of bias, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation to the Office of Equity.** This data says that less than 1% (.02%) of students displayed incidents of bias based misconduct.

The report says the Office of Equity conducts nearly all investigations of concerns regarding possible bias-based or sexual misconduct by employees. The report says there were 77 total investigations of employee misconduct in FY 21 with 19 findings, 50 investigations in FY 22 with 23 findings and 68 total investigations in FY 23 with 33 findings. It is unclear from the report what “findings” mean to the Office of Equity or to the extent that “investigations” actually occur. This data shows that over a three year period 195 employees were investigated for employee misconduct and 38% resulted in some sort of “finding”. There is no breakdown of the “findings” or indication of where these reports occurred.

The report goes on to say, “concerns brought to the Office of Equity regarding employee conduct continue to be predominantly related to allegations of racial bias.” The report shows data for protected classes with “bias based misconduct by employees” showing 66 reports naming “race”, 12 “national origin”, 11 “sex”, 11 “disability” and 11 “sexual orientation” for a total of 111 reports made to the Office of Equity of bias based misconduct by employees. **This means that less than 1% of employees reported bias based misconduct to the Office. This data affirms the dominant narrative expressed by employees of “not feeling safe to report” incidents of bias, retaliation, and harassment as the culture of BPS. It also affirms what employees shared repeatedly saying “the office of equity won’t do anything anyway” so “why report?”**

There were reports from principals and co-leaders about the weaponizing of cumbersome equity policies to “target” them for incidents, placing our students as victims in an “evil and deceptive game”. BPS requires schools to report incidents of sexual misconduct and bias based misconduct to the Office of Equity. Schools also need to report incidents to their Operational Leader, DCF, Succeed Boston, and communicate with families. The work of managing student misconduct at schools completely falls on school personnel, with BPS central office staff in the roles of “consult” or “compliance” as stated by employees. According to the report, there were a total of 601 reports of bias based misconduct by students (324 Race, 111 Sexual Orientation, 69 Sex, 27 Religion, 26 National Origin, 22 Disability, 13 Gender Identity, 5 Ancestry, and 4 Color) up from 377 in the [FY22](#) presentation. It is unclear from this slide the timeline of this data but it is inferred this was collected during the 2022-2023 school year indicating less than 1% of our students in BPS demonstrated bias based misconduct. Yet, in the next slide, it shows confusing data indicating that in FY23 there were only 255 reports of student on student bias based misconduct showing an even smaller percentage of reporting to the Office of Equity. This data is confusing and raises significant red flags about the reporting from the Office of Equity. If there were in fact 601 total reports made to the Office of Equity for student on student bias based misconduct but only 255 were student on student, what does this mean for the remaining 346 reports?

This same confusion exists for sexual misconduct reporting in this presentation. In FY 21 there were 77 reports made to the Office of Equity, 758 in FY 22, and 884 in FY23. The report says “It is important to note that sexual misconduct is a broad category that is primarily composed of minor incidents, such as a single inappropriate remark or text message.” **It is quite alarming that the Office of Equity has not designed a reporting mechanism to disaggregate this data to demonstrate “sexual misconduct” from a “single inappropriate remark” in the last five years.** This data suggests that less than 1% of students in BPS engaged in an inappropriate sexual remark or text message during the entire academic year in 2023?

Succeed Boston staff presented data from the Center for Children stating, “Ninety-seven percent of all high school students hear an average of 25 anti-gay slurs a day.” Recent research has indicated that half of adolescents (ages 13–18 years) experience bias based peer victimization. This means across BPS in grades 6-8, at least 11,499 students would have experienced bias based peer victimization just last year. According to BPS circulars, every one of these “biased based peer victimization” and “anti-gay slurs” should have been reported to the Office of Equity and logged into ASPEN across all 109 schools. Using the research, one high alone would have upwards of 2.5 Million reports to the Office of Equity every year. Take this to scale, across just our high school population in BPS if every school reported to the office of equity every “anti-gay slur” there would be upwards of 60 million reports at year to the Office of Equity.

The Hinckley-Allen report exposed some of the challenges associated with the Office of Equity. The report stated, “we learned that there was some confusion about what falls under Equity’s jurisdiction. Confusion also exists about what types of bullying are handled by Succeed Boston and what might be considered bias-based bullying handled by Equity. Investigators also learned that when Equity does conduct an investigation, it creates a report and includes recommendations within the report. Equity does not ultimately make final decisions about the recommendations, implement them or track them.” The Investigators recommended that equity clarify its website and improve its communications to families and BPS personnel, which it has yet to do.

This data leads to some serious concerns about the “weaponization of student incidents” against principals, particularly as it relates to our students with disabilities of emotional impairments and students with severe trauma. The Central Office should be supporting principals and co-leaders to manage these incidents, not using specific incidents or concerns from families to target specific schools or principals. These reports also raise significant concern about the accountability of the Office of Equity. It is also quite concerning that these “reports” are provided to the School Committee each year with little to no attention paid to the content.

It was reported by a senior level leader at Bolling the district’s stated practice was “to obtain outside independent counsel to investigate allegations” if they are made against senior level administrators at Bolling. The Office of Equity and Office of Labor Relations cannot do an investigation of staff who are senior to them given the conflict of interest. **Central Office employees reported that “independent outside counsel” did not investigate their allegations made to the Office of Equity, resulting in no accountability for senior administrators at Bolling.**

We know that there are reports that were filed to the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) made by current and former employees, which could be obtained from a public records request. While some employees reported to the Office of Equity or Office of Labor Relations, multiple other staff have shared stories of discrimination and bias but were too fearful of the retaliation that their colleagues have endured to speak up.

From interviews of impacted employees during the 2023-2024 school year, there is no evidence that any action has been taken to address the bias against women, people of color, and those over the age of 40 within the discipline procedures for principals, co-leaders, and central office managers. Current BPS principals, co-leaders, and central office managers report “fear” and a “toxic workplace culture” with many expressing the need to seek employment outside BPS. It is likely there will continue to be high levels of churn in leadership positions that desperately need stability and continuity in order to address our deeply concerning outcomes for students.

While the actions of BPS have a deep history of concerns, the current superintendent has been made well aware of the concerns around the employee discipline process. Previous attempts to expose the practices of BPS have not been successful with the vast majority of employees resigning from the system out of fear or settling signing legally binding Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDA's) that do not allow employees to speak to anyone about their situation or pursue legal remedies. While BPS was successful in many situations to get employees to sign these agreements, not all of the employees agreed to these conditions, which serve as the evidence included in this report.

Lawyers for Civil Rights Lawsuit

It is of significant importance that the Lawyers for Civil Rights has taken the case representing a former BPS employee, Aketa Narang Kapur. The case states, "The Plaintiff, Aketa Narang Kapur ("Kapur"), brings this complaint against the Defendants, Boston Public Schools ("BPS") and Drew Echelson ("Echelson"), for discrimination on the basis of race and color; retaliation and interference in violation of M.G.L. c. 151B § 4(1), 4(4), and 4(4A); retaliatory termination in violation of the Massachusetts public employee whistleblower statute, M.G.L. c. 149, §185; and common law claims of termination in violation of public policy and interference with advantageous employment relationship."

The [Globe](#) reported, "Aketa Narang Kapur, who briefly served as an assistant superintendent in Boston Public Schools, filed a whistleblower lawsuit against the district Friday, alleging she was discriminated and retaliated against for raising concerns about moving more than 200 English learners into general education classrooms without the appropriate supports." Narang Kapur was placed on leave Dec. 11, two days before she was to attend an introductory meeting with the Department of Justice. John Mudd, a longtime Boston Public Schools watchdog said in the [Globe](#), "She just disappeared, no explanation. Nothing."

According to the [Globe](#), under Superintendent Brenda Cassellius, six people have been in charge of education for English learners in less than three years. "The director of the office before Kapur lasted just five months. And, the woman before her, recruited from Wisconsin, left the position after about five months, as well. There was an interim director before the Wisconsin recruit who was in the job about nine months. The last director to hold the position for any length of time left in 2020, after nearly three years on the job." When Kapur went on leave, Deputy Chief Academic Officer Farah Assiraj was overseeing the Office of English Learners. The [Globe](#) reported, "starting in January of 2024, Joelle Gamere, assistant principal and director of the Toussaint L'Ouverture Academy at Mattahunt Elementary School will lead the department, making her the seventh person to helm the office since 2019."

[Reports](#) about how BPS supports English Language Learners are quite concerning. BPS banned access of information to the lawyer, Roger Rice, who oversees the [1994 case](#) where the judge ruled BPS to stop discriminating against English Learners in the use of federal Title 1 funds. Rice was told that for legal reasons he needed BPS Chief Legal Counsel Lisa Maki's permission to address the School Committee, and she said no. Rice was also banned from talking to school personnel and from visiting schools to observe the delivery of services. **In school year 2022, BPS should have spent at least \$13,400,000 of Title I funds to address the particular needs of ELLs, yet Rice stated BPS is “not able or not willing (we do not truly know which) to account for whether it has complied with the equity standard for ELL's and Title 1”.**

In October 2023, the [Globe](#) reported, “eight of the task force's 13 appointed members said the district's plan to integrate English learners — who represent nearly one-third of BPS students — into general education classrooms will lead to worse outcomes, including higher dropout rates. A ninth member resigned separately.” Their letter said, “Continuing to serve on the Task Force would be a tacit endorsement of the compromised direction that BPS has chosen to take.” One community advocate stated, **“BPS just writes their way out of every issue.”** Roger Rice confirmed this, saying, “That is true. BPS can write reports and create policies but there is not a lot of action and the practices do not match.” He went on to say, “BPS spent a lot of money on plans over the years but never really implemented any of them.” He shared that [BPS committed](#) to 25 new dual language programs by 2025, yet current data indicate there are still only 9, with one of them being a partnership run by a community organization. According to the [Globe](#), only 7% of English Language Learners are in dual language programs. **Rice closed by saying, “What is the point of designing these presentations if you're not going to do anything?”**

Narang Kapur wrote in a May 17 letter to the Department of Justice that she supplied to the [Globe](#), “The actions that the BPS took to benefit itself as an organization rather than the students, families, and teachers should be carefully scrutinized.”

Confidential Settlement Agreements and Non-Disclosure Agreements

A [nondisclosure agreement](#) or clause is a contract or part of a contract that prevents workers from disclosing specific types of information about the employer and/or workplace conditions. Senator Diana DiZoglio wrote about the “[Status of Non-Disclosure Agreements](#)” in MA advocating to end the abuse of NDA’s. She talks about the #MeToo Movement opening the floodgates, “with hundreds of survivor stories evidencing a widespread perpetuation of discriminatory workplace environments facilitated by the use of NDAs to suppress and silence”. The [Workplace Psychological Safety Act](#) (WPSA) in MA is attempting to bring attention to the widespread issue of workplace bullying and abuse to provide workers additional protection. Proponents of the bill report, “anti-discrimination law used to work when it focused on impact. The courts’ shift in the 1980s to a focus on intent has rendered anti-discrimination law nearly useless. It’s no secret it’s an epic failure.” The [WPSA](#) cited a Rutgers study that “revealed that “more than a third... of those who reported unfair treatment in the workplace opted not to do anything.... Some 29% said they reported the incident to a supervisor, 19% filed a complaint according to company procedures, 10% avoided certain areas or people in the office, 4% quit, and 2% confronted the person. *Only 3% said they sued the company or their coworker.*”

This data is consistent with reports from employees where the vast majority have chosen to resign and walk away from BPS, despite their rights being violated and enduring racial or gender discrimination. According to a [Herald report](#), “The city sets aside a few million bucks a year under the assumption that they are going to have to shell out some of it. This fiscal year (2021) — this past July through this coming June — the budget includes \$5 million for settlements and judgments against the city, according to a spokeswoman for Mayor Michelle Wu”. All the settlements and lawsuits could be avoided if BPS simply treated their employees with dignity and respect. This money could be rerouted to provide real services to the children and families in the city.

BPS widely attempts to use NDA’s and settlement agreements as a way to silence employees from sharing their experiences with BPS and from pursuing litigation. [Commonwealth Beacon](#) reported in September 2020, BPS officials “shelled out \$762,000 over a nearly two-year period for settlement agreements with 17 school employees”. Another 50 settlements did not involve any financial payouts. All the agreements included NDA’s with provisions barring future lawsuits against the city for discrimination based on age, disabilities, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Hinkley Allen reported,

During our Phase III Investigation, we learned that BPS has a practice whereby, in settling disciplinary allegations against BPS employees, including school leaders, it will agree to designate the settlement agreement as “Confidential” and will exclude the settlement agreement from the personnel and disciplinary files of the employee. BPS typically states in the document that it will, notwithstanding the agreement’s designation as “Confidential,” disclose the record if legally required to do so. We take no issue with the practice, where appropriate, of negotiating a settlement of disciplinary matters, as they can expedite the resolution of employment misconduct and disciplinary allegations. We also recognize that internal personnel rules and practices and personnel files are exempted from disclosure under the Massachusetts Public Records Law (see M.G.L. c. 4, § 7), meaning that such documents are generally excludable when responding to public records requests. **The problem with the practice of excluding such settlement agreements from BPS personnel and disciplinary records, however, is that it can result in the concealment of misconduct from supervisory staff within BPS.**

The Commonwealth Beacon [article](#) from 2020 quotes Sam Tyler, the former president of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau who said settlement agreements can serve legitimate purposes, but they should be openly acknowledged and accounted for. “The cumulative expense of these agreements for the school department should be reported in the city’s annual financial statements, and a uniform policy stating the authorized purposes for a settlement agreement should be adopted,” he said.

BPS has not made any changes to their practices and many employees reported being asked to sign NDA’s, with some being offered settlement agreements. **The conversations from employees in this report refused to sign NDA’s with one person stating, “you cannot buy my silence” and another saying, “my integrity is not for sale”.** Many former and current employees have attempted to expose the racist and discriminatory culture in BPS, yet the practices of BPS have not appeared to have changed.

Former employees strongly agree that they were “silenced” with the abusive use of a settlement and a non-disclosure agreement. It is strongly recommended that it is of the utmost “public concern” and this practice should be closely examined in BPS and the voices of those who were “silenced” should be heard. One employee asked, “what is BPS hiding that they had to have so many staff sign non-disclosure agreements?”

Costs Associated with Employee Discipline

Paid Administrative Leave

A clear example of the fiscal mismanagement in BPS is the increase in the use of paid administrative leave within the employee discipline process. PAL was traditionally a legitimate personnel practice reserved primarily for employees who posed an immediate threat that originated from the only existing regulations authorizing PAL, Office of Personnel Management regulation 5 CFR §752.404 (b) (3). It was to be used in those rare circumstances where the agency determines that the employee's continued presence in the workplace ... may pose a threat to the employee or others, result in loss or damage to government property, or otherwise jeopardize legitimate government interest, the agency may ... place the employee in a paid, non duty status for such time as is necessary ...” PAL is a personnel action and public employees have privacy rights related to personnel actions. Therefore, an employee's work status is, “a confidential personnel matter”. In [publicly available documents](#) and a public records request (Appendix), BPS provided a breakdown of instances of employees on paid administrative leave.

SY 19-20	SY 20-21	SY 21-22	SY 22-23	SY 23-24 Jan 1st-Sept. 1st
34	104	119	168	123
\$1,212,536	\$1,425,590	\$1,740,116	\$2,733,957	\$2,204,643
Brenda Cassellius	Brenda Cassellius	Brenda Cassellius	Drew Echelson/ Mary Skipper	Mary Skipper

FY 20 July 1, 2019- June 30, 2020	FY21 July 1, 2020-June 30th 2021	FY22 July 1, 2021- June 30th 2022	FY 23 July 1st, 2022- March 2023 <i>Missing data from April-June</i>
52	48	121	107

The cost associated with this drastic increase of the use of PAL is significant, coming from the taxpayers in the City of Boston. We know that many of the employees put on PAL languished for months, some years, waiting for resolution. According to media reports investigating paid administrative leave in the City of Boston, employees on paid leave were off the job for an average of nine months, close to being a full academic year for educators. In addition to paying the salaries and benefits of employees who are on leave, the district has to pay another salary for an acting principal or replacement to a central office manager. The data clearly indicates the prevalence of paid administrative leave has drastically increased starting in July of 2021. Due to the fact the courts do not yet identify being placed on paid administrative leave as an adverse action, we assert the BPS abusively uses this provision as a strategy to silence employees who speak out against discriminatory practices and ineffective policies costing the taxpayers millions of dollars each year; mismanaging money that should be spent on our students and our schools.

We received employee accounts of being on PAL for as little as two weeks with the maximum of three years. The large number of employees who were put on paid administrative leave resigned as confirmed with data in the Mintz report. Employees reported feeling so “abused” in the process that they felt their only option was to resign. Others who remained on PAL were committed to clearing their reputations and wanted to see the process out. While we do not have all the data, it appears those who remained with BPS were required to sign NDA’s, forcing them into silence about their experiences.

BPS provided the financial data on the cost of PAL through a public records request in the appendix. We believe a full financial audit should be completed of BPS that includes a closer analysis of the true cost associated with their employee discipline practices in BPS. As stated earlier in the report, in a review of the [2022 BPS budget](#), BPS contracts with law firms to conduct employee investigations related to employee discipline and the full cost of this is not transparent from publicly available documents. We know from reports that Hinkley Allen and Mintz also provided reports to BPS, yet the contracts with these law firms were not clearly identifiable in the publicly available budget documents. The scope and outcome of each of these relationships was outside the goal of this report but is highly recommended that the contracts of BPS Central Office should be examined.

Principal Churn

The [BPS website](#) lists there are 119 schools in their portfolio, 3 Exam Schools, 19 Pilot Schools (with one closing end of next year), 6 Horace Mann, 11 Innovation, 2 International Bachelorette, 9 Dual Language (one seems to be a new BPS partnership), and 1 receivership. [DESE website](#) lists there are only 109 schools in the district, which is the data set we used for this report. To determine the extent of churn in the BPS since the 2021-2022 school year, we used the once

popular [BPS Blue Book](#) that includes a directory of BPS Schools listing the school principal. We then compared the “principal name” in the directory to the current [DESE profile](#) for that school for 2023-2024. Since the 2021-22 school year, four schools including the Jackson-Mann, Mission Hill, Irving, and the Timilty were all closed. The Federick and the West Zone Early Learning Center are proposed to close at the end of the 2024-25 school year. Currently, the district is merging the Shaw and the Taylor Schools and the Sumner and Philbrook Schools. Additionally, the district has been reconfiguring schools from the K-8 model to a K-6 model adding additional schools each year. The school closures and mergers since 2010 are captured in the appendix.

To determine the rate of churn in BPS, we used language obtained from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) (NCEA) to assess how many principals from the 2021-2022 school year still worked as a principal in the same school during the 2023-24 school year (“stayer”), how many had moved to become a principal in another school in the district (“mover”), and how many were no longer working in the district (“leaver”). We modified this framework slightly to only focus on whether staff remained within BPS as a and did not investigate whether employees continued as principal outside of the BPS system. Any principal who was no longer employed by BPS as a principal or central office manager was coded as a “leaver”.

NCEA [reported](#), “roughly 1 in 10 (11 percent) public school principals left the profession between the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years”. “Among all public school principals in 2020–21, approximately 80 percent remained at the same school during the following school year (“stayers”), 6 percent moved to a different school (“movers”), and 11 percent left the principalship (“leavers”).”

According to the current DESE Profiles of Schools, BPS comprises 109 schools (77 serving grades K-8, 25 High Schools, 1 Middle School that is scheduled to be closed at the end of the 2024/25 school year, 6 Special Schools).

- 36 of the 78 (46%) schools serving students in grades K-8 have a different leader listed for the 2023-24 school year than the 2021-22 school year
- 5 schools have transitioned leaders two times since the 2021-22 school year (Condon, Harvard-Kent, Mendell, Mozart, Shaw)
- 9 of the 25 (36%) schools serving high school age students have a different leader listed for the 2023-24 school year than the 2021-22 school year
- **45 of the 109 schools (41%) in BPS have experienced leadership churn from the 2021/22 school year to the 2023/24 school year**

We then categorized principals from 2021-22 into four categories of “Stayers”, “leavers of BPS”, “Movers in the principalship”, and “Movers to Central Office”. We identified 49

principals who have left their position since the 2021-22 school year. While of great interest to the writers of the report, we do not have the demographic breakdown of these employees. It would be a simple data pull from BPS Central Office to demonstrate the retention rate of principals by years of experience, race, and gender and it is highly recommended that a report of this data is compiled.

Stayers:

- 41 of the 77 principals (53%) serving grades K-8 stayed at their school from 2021-22 to 2023-24
- 16 of the 25 (64%) principal serving high school age students stayed at their school from 2021-22 to 2023-24
- 6 of the 6 principals listed as leading special schools all remained in their role from the 2021-22 school year to the 2023-24 school year.

Movers to Central Office:

- 8 of the 49 (16%) of the principals who left their position since the 2021-22 school year moved to a role in the BPS Central Office.

Movers in the BPS Principalship:

- 5 of the 49 (10%) principals moved to another BPS school from the 2021-22 school year to the 2023-24 school year.

Leavers

- 36 of the 49 principals who left their school from the 2021-22 school year to the 2023-2024 school year left the principalship in BPS and did not get promoted to a central office position.
 - While not exhaustive, we were able to determine at least four of the 49 principals who left the principalship were still employed by BPS in a school in some capacity. This was not the focus of this report and therefore, we did not continue to investigate if they pursued other roles outside of the principalship or central office management in BPS.

Data obtained from this analysis was used to identify additional principal's about their experiences with employee discipline, discriminatory practices, and overall treatment as an employee of BPS. Much of the data obtained in the discussions with employees mirrored the results collected from an anonymous survey of K-8 principals in the spring of 2020 and the letter generated by BPS High School Association.

Principal Voice

The original purpose of the K-8 survey was to collect honest feedback to identify current successes and challenges within the role of principal in BPS. The K8 Association gathered open ended responses and organized these to high level trends, which became overall categories. This

confidential letter that was meant for Dr. Cassellius was somehow leaked to the [Globe](#), which led to increased mistrust among principals and further challenges with the district.

<u>K8 Key Challenges:</u> 1. District Level Operations and Structures 2. District Level Communication 3. District Time and Resource Management 4. Trust Between School Leaders & District 5. District Culture	<u>Head of School Letter</u> This letter details the strong concerns that the Boston High School Heads Association have regarding the proposed BPS High School Redesign process, leadership of the high school division in general, and additional high school network issues. 1. Removal of School Leaders 2. Poor Evaluation Practices 3. Ignoring School Governing Boards
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The high school association letter in July of 2020 was the first documented concern of district practices with the removal of school principals alerting the BPS School Committee that “six high school leaders were removed from their positions by the Superintendent during the pandemic shutdown this spring”. The letter went on to say, “changes made under these circumstances are absolutely detrimental to morale, dismissive of the strong work done by those leaders before and during the COVID emergency, and reflect poor practices by the BPS in supporting and evaluating school leaders. These personnel changes exacerbated long standing issues with principal turnover and lack of trust between school leaders and the central office that were [documented in the DESE review of BPS released in March 2020](#). In addition, the installation of new leaders into these positions violated the BPS policies and circulars regarding the involvement of School Site Councils, Governing Boards, and staff members in the selection of school leaders.” The High School Association urged the School Committee to “closely monitor the BPS turnover rate of school leaders, the timing of and rationale for those decisions, and the impact it has upon a corp of school leaders that already suffers from high turnover (50% of school leaders have departed the BPS over the last three years).”

While there was another leadership transition in the Superintendency of BPS in the fall of 2022, these key challenges continue to exist in BPS and served as many of the main reasons principals reported they left their positions. Many have indicated the culture and treatment of principals in BPS has gotten worse in the last year. **Multiple principals referenced being “scared”, “just trying to survive”, “keeping their heads down”, “trying to remain invisible” or “needing to leave before they were next”.** Others, particularly leaders in the high schools, reported they remained hopeful that Skipper would fulfill her promises, sharing her stated commitment to autonomous schools, school safety and inclusion, noting they did not want another leadership transition in the superintendency role.

Analysis of Principal Churn

Retaining principals should be of the district's utmost priority as a key lever to improve our city's schools. It is clear from the data collected that workplace culture is a major contributing factor to principal churn and that without intentional efforts to improve the climate of BPS, this churn will continue in the coming years. While Churn is an area of concern for the entire district, churn has been most evident at [Madison Park High School](#), which hired its eighth school leader — permanent or interim — overseeing Madison Park in eight years. Despite the district's stated commitment to Madison Park, their actions do not support this claim, with another leadership transition occurring in February of 2024.

When employees were asked why they stayed in such a harsh workplace culture, the answers fell into two categories. The first was the love and dedication to the children and families of the Boston Public Schools. There was without question a deep commitment to improving educational outcomes for students, which drove people to stay. The second was around compensation and benefits in BPS. As one employee stated, “they have us in the golden handcuffs”. Some employees reported having to take pay cuts to go to jobs outside of BPS. When former employees were asked how life is after BPS, they all responded favorably. One former employee described leaving BPS as finally getting out of an abusive relationship.

There were reports obtained from former employees about why they left describing the need for more work life balance or family obligations. Not all employees reported being “abused” by the system but all reported a level of system dysfunction that is deeply alarming.

It was quite astounding to hear the principal experience through grade reconfigurations, mergers, and school closings. The most recent school closure announcement in the [Globe](#) had their principal removed last year. There are no publicly available documents to share why this long standing BPS employee was removed but it raises significant concern over whether BPS uses employee discipline as a way to silence leaders in the facility master plan process. The facility master plan is beyond the scope of this report but warrants additional attention given the highly concerning details shared about the lack of a transparent process, poor communication to school leaders, dismantling of models of excellence, and silencing of families.

It is interesting to hear that instead of closing buildings, BPS stated they are investing in bilingual programs and the community HUB model. Employees from the longest standing community HUB school indicate that the district actions have pushed out five HUB school employees and the principal and the programming that took decades to develop are being dismantled. Furthermore, dual-language programs, which are considered by researchers the [gold standard](#) of bilingual education, currently serve just 7 percent of the district's English learners. According to the [Globe](#), BPS submitted a strategic [plan](#) to the state Department of Elementary

and Secondary Education saying it would add 12 new bilingual programs in the 2023-24 school year, with a total of 25 new ones launched by June 2025.

The stories obtained by principals are deeply disturbing and warrant immediate and urgent action from all stakeholders responsible for oversight of BPS to retain a diverse workforce in the district.

Central Office Management Churn

In the span of less than ten years from 2013-2022, BPS had four Superintendents: John McDonough (2013-2015); Dr. Tommy Chang (2015-2018); Laura Perille (2018-2019); and Dr. Brenda Cassellius (2019-2022). None of these Superintendents had a tenure of more than three years. In addition to the high turnover creating a lack of continuity and institutional knowledge in a large and complex school system, each new Superintendent changed policies, procedures, and the organizational management structure of BPS. As a result of the constant turnover and evolving standards, there was inconsistent follow-through among BPS officials and limited incentive to make substantial structural improvements or change the status quo as a new Superintendent could quickly reverse course or a manager could find themselves out of a job in the next administration.

[Hinckley Allen Report-Phase III](#)

The superintendent churn in BPS has been widely reported as a leading factor in the district's lack of progress. Superintendent Skipper assumed her position in September 2022. [The School Committee](#) provided her with a proficient rating at the end of her first year. The Globe stated, “Skipper said she was effective in all four areas. She presented a long list of areas where she said the district has made progress, such as improved instruction for multilingual learners, school bus transportation, and collaboration among departments”. Others, including Ruby Reyes, from the Boston Education Justice Alliance, voiced concern over the proficient rating. She was quoted as saying, “Superintendent Skipper’s evaluation process does not incorporate the voices and feedback of those most directly impacted by her poor leadership, which is BPS parents, students, and educators. School communities continue to testify and organize around the many broken promises of communication, community engagement, rash building decisions, staff not getting paid, persistent transportation disasters, and a budget process that was embarrassingly uninformed.” The school year 2023-2024 has continued to be rife with [concerns](#) from all stakeholders, demonstrating minimal progress towards her stated goals.

It is of particular note that both former superintendents of color, [Tommy Chang](#) and [Brenda Cassellius](#), resigned before the end of their contracts. The departure of Cassellius led to a rushed

hiring process, which many voiced [concern](#) over, including Tanisha Sullivan from the NAACP. She stated in a letter to the School Committee, “The lack of representation in the finalist pool should have immediately caused the process to pause, review, and reopen (if necessary). How can we hold school leaders accountable for representative candidate slates, if we are not leading by example at the top?” There were concerns raised by employees and community activists about the transparency and fairness of the hiring process resulting in Superintendent's Skipper's appointment. Recruiting and retaining diverse leaders in the role of the superintendent in Boston should be a huge priority and of the utmost concern to the Mayor and School Committee. It is deeply concerning that as a city we pushed out two leaders of color in the superintendency. Yet, even with the community outcry for the need for immediate and urgent change, the School Committee remains steadfast in their commitment to Skipper, a white superintendent and to white senior leaders in the district.

It is much more challenging to determine the rate of churn in Central Office Management given the ever changing organizational chart within BPS and opaqueness of departments and staff at the Bolling Building. The first goal was to generate a list of Central Office Managers to determine who left their position from the 2021-22 school year to the 2023-24 school year. A google search of “BPS Organizational Charts”, a review of school committee presentations, and a review of DESE reports resulted in over a dozen different versions of organizational charts since 2020, making it extremely challenging for anyone to understand the systems of BPS.

The first analysis of churn was of the [leadership team announced](#) by Mary Skipper in March 2023, after her initial onboarding in the fall of 2022. There were 22 individuals named as the BPS Leadership Team. She also announced she was recruiting for several priority positions through a national search. **In March of 2024, just one year later, nine of the individuals on the BPS leadership team had left BPS altogether (41% Churn in one year).** The Chief of Communications has had three people in the position over the course of the year, replacing two people of color with a white man.

The BPS website provides an overview of the [BPS Executive Team](#) and includes an organizational chart of the [Superintendent's Leadership Team](#) and the BPS Leaderships with each Department. Multiple reiterations of these charts were obtained indicating the turnover within each of the positions. On the BPS Website, there are 37 names and photos of employees listed as the “BPS Executive Team”. On the BPS Organizational Chart of the Superintendent's Leadership Team, nineteen of the staff from the BPS Executive Team are omitted from the organizational chart. Ten of these staff with photos of the Executive Team are “Regional Superintendents. According to the publicly shared organizational charts, these staff fall under the Senior Deputy of Superintendent of Academics (Linda Chen) and then under Chief of Schools and Accountability (Drew Echelson). It is unclear if the Regional Superintendents are considered part of the BPS Executive Team and meet regularly as part of the Superintendents Leadership

Team. It is unclear if the other nine names fall under the Chief of Staff where there is a box listing positions with no names (Legal Advisor (CoB), Senior Advisors, SIP Implementation, Compliance and Risk Management, Problem Resolution System (PRS), and Intergovernmental Relations (IGR). It is unclear if there are staff in these roles in BPS, their actual job responsibilities, and where they fall in the organizational structure of the Central Office. The nine names and positions listed on the BPS Executive Team Website but are not listed on the Organizational Chart are 1.) Director of Emergency Management and Preparedness, Christian Tre Woodson; 2.) Deputy Chief of Schools and Accountability, Lindsa McIntyre; 3.) Director of Technology, Mark Racine; 4.) Assistant Superintendent for Data Strategy and Implementation, Monica Hogan; 5.) Senior Advisor, Megan Costello; 6) Senior Advisor of Specialized Services, Christine Trevisone; 7.) Senior Advisor of Operations, Anu Medappa Jayanth; 8.) Senior Advisor of Organizational Development and Equity, Mariel Novas; 9.) Deputy Chief of Communication and Strategy, Meredith Ply. The Chief of Equity and Strategy remains TBD on the organizational chart.

DESE reports have stated that there have been endemic levels of leadership turnover at the central office, and our analysis confirms that this level of churn has continued. Analysis of BPS Administrative Office staff from the BPS Blue Book from the 2021-22 school year resulted in 120 of the staff with “invalid” emails using a reliable online email tool called Pabbly. We did a review of the first page of the Directory outlining the Executive Team and Department Contacts to determine “leavers”, “stayers” and “movers” from the Central Office.

There were 27 names in the Executive Team on the first page of the 2021-2022 BPS Directory.

- 13 of the 27 people are “leavers” from BPS (48%)
- 7 of the people are stayers (26%),
- 6 of the people are movers (22%).

There were 32 departments listed with names of contacts on the first page of the 2021-2022 BPS Directory. One department was TBD.

- 11 of the 31 people in the department are “leavers” (35%)
- 5 of the people in the department are “movers” (16%),
- 15 of the people in the department are “stayers” (48%).

While not exhaustive, we counted from the many iterations of organizational charts the loss of 43 Central Office Managers in leadership positions from the 2021-2022 school year to the 2023-24 school year with the vast majority of these individuals being people of color and women. Data

clearly demonstrates that the churn at Central Office continues to demonstrate endemic levels of turnover, with no intentional focus being made to reduce this alarming trend.

The leadership culture at BPS Central Office has been widely documented in costly and lengthy reports that include the following statements::

- Based on the interviews and review of data and documents, key themes surfaced with many requiring urgent actions for BPS to take. Inconsistent leadership in BPS and across departments, which has contributed to ineffective development/implementation of policies, procedures, and practices that impact SwDs, including within the Office of Special Education (OSE). (CGCT, 2022, [pg 12](#))
- DESE wrote in its [2022 report](#), “Without immediate steps to develop an agreed-upon plan for prioritizing and remedying these challenges, for stable and effective departmental leadership, and for effective implementation of improved policies and services, frustration and mistrust among families and other key stakeholders will continue to increase, and students will miss out on critical opportunities to learn, develop, and thrive.”
- Overall, 52 percent of school administrators and central office employees are not engaged in their work, “putting time — but not energy or passion — into their work,” the survey found. Another 20 percent of employees are “actively disengaged,” meaning they are resentful that their professional needs are not being met and are “busy acting out their unhappiness.” Some 75 percent of the system’s 805 central office workers and school leaders participated in the survey. ([Globe](#), June 2021)

Cost of Leadership Churn

In addition to the abusive use of paid administrative leave, the Central Office has demonstrated leadership churn at endemic levels also costing the taxpayers millions of dollars. BPS loses at least 20% of their school leaders each year, with data to suggest this turnover is much higher in BPS. Conservative [estimates](#) of the cost to develop, hire, and onboard a new principal is \$75,000, costing taxpayers roughly \$1,875,000 a year. The DESE review noted that 37% of district central office leaders left the district. The Office of Multilingual Learners now has their seventh person to lead this office since 2019 and the Office of Special Education has been in constant turmoil with a rotating door of leadership. Conservative [estimates](#) indicate it costs roughly \$20,000 to replace a senior level central office position. **The current leadership churn in the central office is approximately 30% yearly, costing the taxpayers roughly \$5,886,000 in just hiring**

and onboarding costs. This does not even consider the cost of the loss of institutional knowledge around major district investments and initiatives.

The city has a \$4.3 Billion dollar budget with school buildings that are literally crumbling and student achievement levels that are alarming. The public faith in our schools has drastically declined with families fleeing our city schools. It is time to take immediate action to regain public trust and lead with transparency, honesty, and integrity.

Hiring Practices

BPS [claims](#) they have a comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive process for hiring of [principals](#) and central office managers. Yet, when principals were put on paid leave, BPS appointed “inexperienced” and “unlicensed” educators in these roles who appeared to be mostly white. One employee shared, “He befriended a very challenging staff member in my building to get information. The writing was on the wall for me. And then he put in that informant as the principal of the school. And passed over the person who was most qualified.” Multiple principals shared stories of “deception”, “going behind my back”, and “colluding with BTU members” to find fault and then “rewarding” the deception with a “promotion”. The process of hiring a replacement principal did not allow more experienced educators or educators of color to even apply for these roles. In cases of autonomous schools, Governing Boards were “hijacked” by the district stripping them of their power. Allison Cox, a parent who served on the Mission Hill Governing Board wrote about her [experiences](#), only to have the “truth” essentially ignored. She mentions the “level of mistrust” and “presumed fault” saying “the district is deeply flawed and mismanaged.” The district touted their “support” to the schools where principals were placed on PAL, yet the voices of insiders from those schools demonstrates a drastically different experience. Insiders from the schools reported “no accountability”, “deception”, “loss of programming”, “exclusion of families”, “no support”, and the district actions promoted a “toxic culture”. Principals reported the district used the voices of “underperforming” or “highly concerning” employees to justify their actions, ignoring the fact that these “voices” were mostly coming from employees who were being held accountable for improved performance, including simply coming to work. It is highly concerning that the district does not support principals to hold staff to high standards of performance and accountability, which clearly negatively impacts our students and families. Employees shared their experiences of “nepotism” and “favoritism” in the hiring process for principals and central office managers. Some positions in the central office were filled by candidates before a position was even posted. One former employee said they filed with the Office of Equity about the district hiring practices. The Equity Office said, “it was bad practice but not discrimination”. One employee was told they had to hire a White person into a position “because she was friends with a person in the Central Office.”

Another theme that came up in the discussions is the BPS “Do Not Hire” list. While BPS has refuted the existence of this list at the City Council Hearing in September and in the [Hinckley Allen report](#) stating “According to (CONF. INFO) despite what people believe, there is no such thing as a “No Rehire List” at OHC.” BTU leadership, Lea Serena, vigorously disagreed with this statement at the City Council Hearing in September. It is unclear if there is an actual list but

it is very clear that some staff, particularly outspoken ones, are not welcomed back to be employed by BPS.

Another statement from the Hinckley-Allen report stated, “(CONF. INFO) advised that BPS must do a better job in hiring skilled and competent school superintendents, who should be the “first alarm bell” for problems in the schools. Therefore, (CONF. INFO) believes it is essential that the right people hold those positions. advocated for re-interviewing every current [academic] superintendent to ensure that only the most capable are serving in the most critical positions in the system.”

In 2012, Superintendent Carol Johnson [announced](#) she was planning a full review of the leadership team to “look at every aspect of the organization to ensure we have systems and structures in place to address the academic needs of students and their well being”. This statement came in response to allegations where a former principal abused his partner and was not placed on leave from his position in BPS. There was a flurry of media stories about this incident along with public calls for Johnson’s resignation. Over ten years later, there has yet to be an audit of central office staff or a thorough review of the systems and structures in place to ensure our students are learning and are safe in our city's schools. **There are lots of reports with lots of recommendations, yet there is very little progress, if any at all, in the last decade to reform BPS Central Office.** As one parent said, “Boston’s students, families, and educators deserve far better.”

Workplace Culture in Boston Public Schools

The [Hinckley Allen Report-Phase III](#) stated, “Over the course of our investigation, it has become apparent that the Boston Public Schools and its Central Staff reflect a bureaucratic culture that pervades much of its operations and, at times, impedes its ability to educate and protect its students and is very-much in conflict with the above-presented vision and mission. This is not to say that there are not highly competent, committed and hard-working leaders, officers and departments in the Boston Public Schools; there are many. However, we would be remiss if we did not recognize certain widespread institutional problems at BPS which undermine its effectiveness.” The report states, “**Among the significant and recurring manifestations of a deleterious Central Staff culture, which came to the attention of investigators, are the following**”:

1. **Lack of Responsiveness:** The most often-cited complaint made by BPS parents, school leaders and, even, by Central Staff members, is that many Central Staff leaders and members are not responsive to queries, requests for information and complaints. Investigators, unfortunately, experienced a similar lack of responsiveness during the investigation.
2. **Lack of Accountability:** Another manifestation of the culture at BPS, unsurprising when viewed in the context of the above-described non-responsiveness, is a lack of accountability on the part of many Central Staff members. School leaders and senior officials recounted recurring failures of key staff members to appear for scheduled appointments and, in one notable case, a critical hearing, despite having agreed to do so. BPS must facilitate or demand accountability.
3. **High Turnover Within BPS:** In 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) found, among other things, that the BPS system lacked “a stable, supportive and trusting relationship between the school and district staff due to in part to frequent turnover of superintendents and Central Office Staff.” Consistent with this finding, we also determined that high turnover within BPS negatively impacted the entire school system.

The report quotes former Interim Superintendent McDonough who explained, “BPS is a very large bureaucracy ... Central administration had a fairly traditional siloed org chart.” “We overtax school leaders by having too many bosses to report to ... in academics, in operations, in SPED, someone else in English Learners, someone else in budget and finance.”

Conversations from current and former employees indicate the workplace culture is beyond just dysfunctional and incompetent. Many employees reported the “underworld” within BPS, noting the culture as being “corrupt”, “rampant with lies and cover-ups”. Many employees discussed the “pervasive racism” naming the deep rooted historical institutional racism but also naming interpersonal and internal racism as major issues within BPS. **A few employees who worked in other districts prior to coming to BPS, shared that the “dysfunction and racism of Boston is the worst of any of the districts” they previously worked.** Another employee stated, “racism exists everywhere to some degree, but Boston is intense”. Some employees talked about the implicit bias that many employees display, including people of color. Employees reported “feeling disappointed” in certain employees who were elevated to positions of leadership but did not call out the racist and discriminatory practices of BPS. **One employee who attempted to call out the racist culture at Bolling reported “some of us tried everything we could. We told the superintendent, and we documented our concerns. But at the end of the day, they didn’t listen. What more could we do? So a lot of us, we just resigned and left”.**

The BPS Climate Survey of Central Office staff indicate concern over how central office functions with only 13% of teachers and staff reporting favorably that “BPS Central Office takes responsibility for improving schools” and only 10% of teachers and staff reporting favorably that “I fully comprehend the organizational structure of BPS and know who to contact for support”.

As one former central officer manager stated, “if you want to hide with no accountability in BPS, go to the Central Office”. It is unclear how the performance of central office managers is determined and who actually completes these evaluations. In an opinion piece on November 2nd, 2022, [Ruby Reyes](#) asked incoming Superintendent Skipper, “The big question is, will she make an effort to change the culture, starting by removing long-time central-office staff who have a proven track record of failure?” Quite a few employees from the Central Office reported that BPS uses “harassing behavior” with the “hopes you will just quit”.

Many employees reported requesting a medical leave of absence for the abusive and discriminatory treatment they endured. Employees reported the process to obtain their leave as “extremely challenging.” Many employees reported not receiving calls back or having their requests denied, even with ample medical documentation. One employee was told by a central office employee “there are different rules for managerial employees” to approve a leave of absence. Some employees reported the “abuse” getting worse after requesting a medical leave of absence. Principals and central office managers reported evidence of discriminatory practices within the medical leaves of absence process with examples of certain employees being approved of an accommodation, while another was denied for that same accommodation. One doctor reported their “dismay” that BPS would deny medical leaves of absences, given the “medical necessity they provided in their documentation.” The number of employees who requested medical leave for “workplace abuse” and “discrimination” was quite significant,

demonstrating the negative impact on employees' individual health/mental health and the health of the organization.

There is growing research on [Workplace bullying](#) and the impacts causing [Workplace Trauma](#). The [working definition](#) of workplace bullying is:

Workplace bullying is mistreatment by one or more employees of an employee; abusive conduct that takes the form of verbal abuse; or behaviors perceived as threatening, intimidating, or humiliating; work sabotage; or in some combination of the above.

In studying workplace culture, researchers have examined the [dark side](#) of organizations. The dark side consists of ‘situations in which people hurt other people, injustices are perpetuated and magnified, and the pursuits of wealth, power or revenge lead people to behaviors that others can only see as unethical, illegal, despicable, or reprehensible’. The research talks about “*insidious workplace behavior*”, which is “*harmful workplace behavior* that is legal, subtle and low level (rather than severe) and directed at individuals or organizations”.

Sadly, according to the [WorkPlace Psychological Safety Act](#) and the [Healthy Workplace Bill](#) (HWB), current discrimination and harassment laws rarely address bullying concerns. Though bullying is more harmful to victims’ health than sexual harassment, it is still legal in the U.S and thrives in environments with high turnover and unhealthy work cultures like that of BPS. The research on workplace bullying states, “targets are often high performing, highly ethical employees whose competence poses a threat to their low performing, low ethical bosses. The bully's motivation is to keep the upper hand — an ego-driven control move that's about abuse of power. Bullied are often deceptive managers who trick others into thinking the target is the problem, setting the stage for mobbing”. The [testimony](#) for the Workplace Psychological Safety Act in Massachusetts in October 2023 clearly outlines the issue of workplace abuse and the impact it has on employees and organizations.

The research on [workplace culture](#) attempts to identify “why” these behaviors occur in organizations. They named the following three benefits of misbehavior:

1. Misbehavior that intends to benefit the self
2. Misbehavior that intends to benefit the organization
3. Misbehavior that intends to inflict damage

In talking with employees, we asked questions related to “why”. Most responded that they felt the actions were in retaliation to speaking out. A few responded that they really did not know why, but expressed they felt “discriminated” against by BPS.

It is still unclear “why” BPS and the City of Boston would allow a workplace culture that is so insidious and pervasively practices racist and sexist behavior. **A lot of the discussions with employees share the sentiment, “the system is working exactly as it is intended”.** There is no urgency to change and there is no will. While hopeful about this report, most employees did not believe anything would actually happen as a result. One said, “it is not like they don’t already know”.

Employees reported [PTSD symptoms](#) and trauma from their treatment in BPS. Symptoms included all the symptoms of PTSD, “hypervigilance, fatigue, persistent anger, fearfulness, fragility, numbness, forgetfulness, hypersensitivity and somatic symptoms such as loss of sleep and heart palpitations.” Some employees reported “nightmares” where they woke up screaming. Employees who left BPS reported they were “moving on”, yet many said “I am always looking over my shoulder waiting for another attack”.

Research indicates [workplace mistreatment](#) “results in serious harm including feelings of shame, humiliation, anxiety, depression, suicidal tendencies, and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder.” A study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* in September 2015 revealed that bullied targets are “twice as likely to have suicidal thoughts than those who were never bullied”. The impact of workplace culture impacts peoples lives as demonstrated in the tragic [suicide](#) of Antoinette Candia-Bailey who took her own life after experiencing abuse from Lincoln University’s first white male president in 150 years saying he “appeared heartless” and “hurt people intentionally”. According to [The Guardian](#), suicide was the 12th leading cause of death in the United States in 2020 and has highest suicide rate of the 11 high-income countries. Sadly, as reported in the articles about workplace suicide, these lives could have been saved if we simply treated them with dignity and respect. **All employees agreed that feedback to improve performance is necessary but the manner to which BPS engaged in the discipline process was described just as Candia-Bailey shared, “heartless” with the “intention” to harm.**

The research on workplace bullying identifies the impact on current employees as well. It says, “The most pernicious effect, however, is that it takes very little time for a bullied employee to begin to engage in conduct that escalates and appears to give legitimacy to the bullying; they engage in avoidance behaviors such as absenteeism, defensive behaviors such as aggression or hostility or self preservation behaviors such as withdrawal. **According to research from [MIT](#) studying the great resignation, “A toxic culture is 10.4 times more likely to contribute to attrition than compensation.** Our analysis found that the leading elements contributing to toxic cultures include failure to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion; workers feeling disrespected; and unethical behavior”. The internal Gallup Poll of Central Office employees affirms this data indicating a large percentage of employees are not engaged in their work. A parent was quoted in the [Globe article](#) saying, “If the people at top are this unhappy, what does that mean for the rest of us? It will ultimately trickle down to children and families.”

Employees reported “silence” from those who “had the power to do what was right” and from “those who knew what was happening was wrong” as one of the hardest things about the discipline process in BPS. Most would say some form of the following: “I get it. They are scared”, giving an excuse to the silence. Many employees relied on family, friends, and faith to endure the trauma of the employee discipline process in BPS. **Employees talked about their decades of committed service to students, families, and the City of Boston to literally be “thrown away” as if “I never mattered”.** As one employee said, “the betrayal is real”.

Retaliation for Speaking Out Against Ineffective Practices and Policies

All employees of BPS should have protections under the Equal Employment laws protecting them from discrimination and retaliation. Specifically, the law states, “All of these Federal laws prohibit covered entities from retaliating against a person who files a charge of discrimination, participates in a discrimination proceeding, or otherwise opposes an unlawful employment practice.”

A through line across many of the reports from employees was retaliation after speaking out against ineffective practices and policies to support our marginalized students in our system. Employees reported they were advocating for changes for our students of color, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, homeless students, or our undocumented students. This is highly concerning given the current major initiative in BPS is focused on [inclusion](#) for students with disabilities and multilingual learners. Without any public discussion, employees reported BPS slipped into their inclusion plan a last minute move of students in SEI programs into general education English only classes. When members of the BPS English Language Learners resigned in protest, BPS dissolved the task force. The targeting of principals and lack of district support for inclusion has a long history in BPS. A case was highlighted in the [Globe](#) where a Suffolk Superior Court judge found that Boston Public Schools officials wrongfully terminated a former principal. She stated she “was the victim of politically connected parents and teachers” and the “detractors attacked her professional character in hopes that her removal would also end inclusion.” BPS tried to justify their decision to terminate the principal but their claims “didn’t hold up under scrutiny in two separate legal arenas”. **It is deeply concerning that the district would use inclusion and advocating for our students as weapons to target principals and central office managers.**

BPS Problem of Practice

BPS does not consistently provide authentic learning opportunities for our students who are most marginalized to develop into self-determined, independent learners, able to pursue their aspirations. Our failures lead to disengaged students and significant achievement gaps.

The concerns regarding supporting diverse learners in BPS are widely known and documented, yet little actual change has occurred systemically. In the DESE 2020 report it states, “BPS system is lacking a stable, supportive and trusting relationship between the schools and District staff due in part to frequent turnover of superintendents and Central Office staff”. It further states, “BPS is not providing adequate services for students with disabilities and English Language Learners in accordance with applicable laws”. The [2022 DESE](#) report states the following:

- BPS has shown little to no progress in addressing the needs of its students with disabilities, English learners, and students at the district’s lowest-performing schools
- SPED “services remain in disarray, the district lacks well-understood special education policies and procedures as well as appropriate plans for educating students in the least restrictive environment
- Hundreds of English learners are still not receiving their required EL instruction, despite BPS being a party to agreements with DOJ in 2010 and 2012 requiring them to provide better instruction in this area
- BPS has failed to provide targeted support to the District’s 31 lowest performing schools that serve 14,000 students.

DESE’s conclusion, stated in the report, is that “the district has failed to effectively serve its most vulnerable students, carry out basic operational functions, and address systemic barriers to provide an equitable, quality education.” While we agree with this assertion, we are not suggesting that the state takes receivership over Boston Public Schools. This decision is outside the scope of our reporting and rests with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Concerns around serving diverse learners were also well documented in the reports completed by the [Council of Great City Schools SST](#), [Hinckley Allen](#) report and the 2009 [Council of Great City Schools](#) report. Excerpts from these reports contain the following:

- A number of SPED employees noted that when it comes to IEP issues, BPS generally becomes involved when parents are vocal and elevate issues to the Superintendent’s Office. Here too, BPS’s actions are triggered by the parent and/or guardian advocating on the student’s behalf. While this approach addresses specific complaints, it does not address the District-wide SPED issues identified by several interviewees and DESE, as referenced above. Furthermore, this approach creates an inequitable system within BPS where certain families, such as families with language barriers, are at a disadvantage because they may not be aware of this option and/or able to advocate for their children in the same manner.

- In short, the rotating door and siloing within BPS affects the District’s ability to act on reports the District commissions, which increases the likelihood that those issues go unaddressed.
- Investigators recommend that BPS conduct a review of the costs it has incurred over the past five years to remedy IEP issues to determine whether that money could better serve the District as a whole by adding additional support positions within the SPED Office or at the school level.
- As a final note, investigators heard that certain dedicated and experienced employees within the SPED Office left BPS because they could not keep “yelling into a vacuum” or “spinning their wheels” trying to implement systemic change that was not happening. These individuals’ departures are a significant loss for the District. Investigators recommend that BPS seriously consider these recommendations, along with others, to make real and meaningful changes to the District’s SPED practices, as the District will continue to lose talented and experienced staff if it does not make a concerted effort to remedy these District-wide shortcomings
- The two offices, OSE and OMME, with missions critical to executing necessary changes have both had leadership turnover and no visible united front.
- Where inclusive practices have occurred, they have been driven by individual school efforts with inconsistent results and led to a dichotomous approach with inequitable results. With the district's start and stop history of addressing this issue, central, regional, and school leaders individually address biases perpetuating segregation and inadequate instructional practices and supports.
- This work is complex as well as urgent. We must confront more than 100 years of history rooted in systemic racial disparities that historically limited equitable access and outcomes for our Black and Brown students, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners with and without disabilities.
- If we want to make lasting change, we must understand the systemic root of the problems and tackle the larger systems and practices that lead to our current realities of relegating students to being sorted into “categories” and “labels” while failing to provide the appropriate services.
- The BPS must take responsibility for the students we have failed. This is not one person’s fault– there are good intentions from past and current BPS staff. Still, we must recognize our responsibility to urgently and thoughtfully shift our practices to produce stronger student outcomes. And those practices must be consistent and sustainable. There have been strong examples of inclusive practice in BPS’ history, but if that good work is not rooted in a system that sustains it, then the cycle of failure will continue.
- In addition to the high special education identification rates and disproportionality in substantially separate settings, our attendance and academic data indicate that our current systems and structures are not providing the academic support necessary for our students with disabilities and English Learners to achieve academic success

- We have inconsistently addressed systemic bias and practices that have led to disproportionate identification of Black boys into substantially separate settings and identification of our English Learners with communication disabilities.
- Currently, 71% of students in grades 3-8 in Boston schools are not reading at grade level
- Sixty percent of school buildings in BPS were built before 1950, and the physical spaces we have do not meet the minimum standards to provide the inclusive educational environments described in this plan.
- For the 2021-22 school year, the dropout category, students with disabilities had a rate of 25.3 percent and the target for 2022-23 is 12.47 percent. Students with disabilities had the highest number of absences and highest rates in every area.
- The district's 26 percent emotional impairment rate was higher than MA (by 5 points) and the nation (by 13 points). In 2021-22 BPS black males were 3.63 times more likely than other groups to be educated in an emotional impairment substantially separate classroom.
- Black students comprised 42.9 percent of McKinley's student enrollment, almost 14 percentage points higher than BPS's 29.0 percent rate. Perceptions outside of McKinley the students were perceived as "scary," and some students perceived their placement as "jail." There was a strong perception that racial bias and profiling contribute to pathway to the school.
- This analysis confirmed perceptions that students of color are disproportionately placed in public day schools while white students predominantly educated in private day schools. Private Day. The students in this group were 27 percent white (15 points higher than the BPS rate), compared to 36 percent for black students (7 points lower than the BPS rate) and 36 percent for Latinx students (9 points lower than the BPS rate).
- The Council SST was informed that the budget for OODs is about \$43 million for next year. Also, while an in-district bus route is about \$44/day the OOD cost is about \$166/day. ([pg 80](#))

Even efforts to attempt greater equity to our district have failed. In an [evaluation](#) of the Home Based Assignment Plan, the Boston Areas Research Initiative reported, "In relevant part, the [researchers](#) found BPS's HBAP did not increase equitable access to high-quality schools and instead exacerbated existing inequities. Blacks, Latinxs, and those living in predominantly low-income, ethnic minority neighborhoods had fewer high-quality schools from which to choose, compared to whites, Asian Americans, and those living in wealthier neighborhoods. Furthermore, the high-quality schools available to them tended to be smaller in size with fewer seats available, creating greater enrollment competition for many students already disadvantaged in other ways". The researchers [wrote](#) in 2019, "Today, real children living in Boston do not have equal access to high-quality schools".

Many employees reported that change takes leadership from people who are disruptors who fight the status quo, identify systemic challenges, and address institutional racism. Sadly, the disruptors are silenced and pushed out and the enablers are rewarded with promotions. As stated by every employee included in this report, “our children and families are not the problem and they deserve so much better”

Transparency and Family Concerns

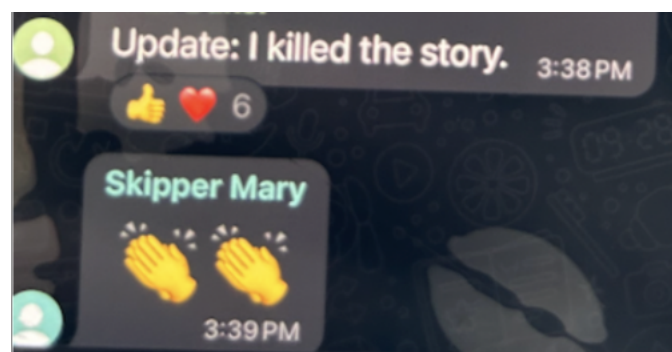
Families and the community are equally deeply concerned about the current and future state of BPS. [Stakeholders](#) are demanding action and transparency. School committee meetings contain hours of public testimony with pleas from families around adequate funding to their schools, clear and transparent facilities planning, improved service delivery for students with disabilities and multilingual learners, student safety, and district policies. Instead of responding to the public, the school committee is now even censoring questions from their own members.

One parent advocate shared, “BPS listens to no input from families. It is top down leadership. They manipulate information in ways to do whatever they want, with no accountability”. Families have attempted to organize to have their voices heard, with little to no success. Members of the Citywide Parent Council started organizing saying “enough is enough” noting “BPS has failed us.” Families voiced concern over having no accountability or outcome data for almost \$500 million dollars in ESSER funds and failing to provide services to students with disabilities and English Learners. Families expressed deep frustration with the lack of honest and transparent sharing from the Central Office calling out the “lying” and “gaslighting” , noting “BPS does not even follow their own policies”. Families are feeling defeated investing hundreds of hours on committees, task forces, and working groups to have their opinions and feedback completely ignored. Families report feeling like they are being treated like the “enemy” by the current administration.

One major area of concern from families is the basic safety of their children. In the [May 5, 2023](#) poll of parents of BPS students finds parents remain concerned about their children’s physical safety and emotional well-being while at school. In all, 68% say they are at least somewhat concerned with their children’s physical safety (see Appendix). Parents of color express greater concern about physical safety than do white parents. Another group of families concerned about school safety formed called [Safety of our Schools](#) noting BPS doesn’t “provide the essential safe space for good learning to happen”. The group summarized the [safety issues](#) from media reports noting there is a “safety crisis” in BPS. On the other side of the debate about safety, [Massachusetts Advocates for Children](#) released a statement about school safety in BPS calling for “meaningful restorative justice; effective and inclusive special education programming; leveraging and expanding structured after-school programs; expanding arts, music, and athletic

programs; peer mentoring; job placement programs; and dual college enrollment.” Ruby Reyes, [Director of Boston Education Justice Alliance](#) (BEJA) stated, “For Skipper and Wu, the school system is made up of chess pieces that they choose to close, move, merge and manage as pawns. Because of this approach, when there is a problem with school safety, the easy, quick answer seems less about building a safe and nurturing school community to address the root of the problem and more about quickly managing it.” Concerns regarding student restraints have also made headlines, noting there is not accurate reporting, staff training, and in some cases restraint holds are performed illegally. A recent [report on student restraints](#) stated, **“In BPS the larger story of physical student restraint remains incomplete, concealed behind a dysfunctional bureaucracy that hides trouble spots and curbs accountability, increasing risk of student mistreatment”**. Despite differing views on how to address school safety, [students](#) are expressing fear of coming to school and are being traumatized by the violence.

Upon assuming her role as superintendent in BPS in fall of 2022, Central Office initiated a “BPS Safety Chat” that at one time contained 60 members. While the stated purpose of the WhatsApp group was around student safety, it appears this chat is mostly about communication to control the narrative, “squashing the media” and “killing the story” before it becomes public. This chat contains messages that shocks the conscience and demonstrates the “normalizing” of behavior incidents that are occurring in our schools. The incidents themselves demonstrate what principals are managing on the front lines, with little to no actual support from the Central Office to respond to these crises. Incident reports are followed in the chat with “how many witnesses”, “any media”, “is there a video” using this information to determine if communication to the school community is necessary. While all the messages are incredibly disturbing, some of the most alarming responses were when the success of “killing the story” is celebrated with a “good job” or “applause emojis” by Superintendent Skipper herself, seeming to care more about optics, than transparent sharing with the public. Rarely, were there any questions in the chat about how the student, employee, or family member was doing physically or emotionally from the trauma.



Concerns from families are also well documented in reports. For example the Council of Great City Schools stated, “In the experience of family members with whom the Council SST spoke, family engagement is often an afterthought, and their feedback is not taken seriously or with respect”. In a MASSINC poll, conducted for the [Shah Family Foundation](#), only 29% of public school parents said they were “very satisfied” with Boston’s schools, a drop from 41% a year ago. Listening to the BPS School Committee meetings you can hear families' passion, frustration, disgust, anger, fury, and defeat. Families have reported they feel completely disregarded and silenced. **The Hinckley Allen report states, “Several senior BPS officials acknowledged that communication at BPS is poor and that it needs to be improved. As described, non-responsive communication is pervasive and problematic throughout the District.”** The district seems to hide behind attorney client privilege about specific investigations when convenient and then leak reports to the media when it benefits BPS.

Research is clear that empowering and partnering with families results in stronger outcomes for children across all indicators. Yet, the practices of the district marginalizes our families and ignores their pleas for action.

Media Caution

Some employees reported that the media often made the situation worse in BPS. Employees reported certain news stories were sensationalized with critical omissions of the truth. One reporter actually told an employee that they intentionally left out a part of the story, despite knowing the truth. It appears that some media outlets in Boston publicize whatever BPS says, even if the report violates employees' right to confidentiality.

The media often shows bias that perpetuates stereotypes. A clear example of the bias by the media and the impact on real people's lives were captured in the case of the [Exonerated Five](#) and recently highlighted in the Netflix series, “When they See Us.” [Racial bias](#) in reporting is dehumanizing. [Array 101](#) identified, “Sometimes in a frenzy to report and in response to the anxieties of the time, the media exudes racial bias that influences how the public perceives the innocence and guilt of individuals.”

Current and former employees urge the media to partner in the fight for equity and justice in Boston and to engage in “fair and honest” reporting. **Highly sensational stories may grab the attention of readers but these “headlines” also harm innocent people.**

Summary of Findings

The concerns about the Central Office have been well documented in reports including but not limited to DESE, Council of Great City Schools, Parthenon Report, and the Hinckley Allen Phase III report. Despite these well documented and deeply troubling reports, there has been little to no change in BPS practices or policies at the Central level. **The lack of urgency and the lack of transparency to the public about the deep rooted challenges in BPS Central Office are troubling.** As one central office manager stated, Central Office needs a “complete overhaul for any real change to occur in our schools”.

One employee reported, “you can’t improve schools in a broken system”. Many employees reported feeling “desperate” and “deeply saddened” for the children and families of BPS who have no other options for their children’s education. **When asked what it will take to improve BPS, a lawyer said it is beyond just litigation saying, “it is going to take a movement and right now there are not enough voices coming to the table”.** Data has clearly demonstrated that families who have the resources are fleeing BPS at rapid rates, which will likely continue in the years to come if urgent and immediate action is not taken to improve our city’s schools.

We know that some employees have filed claims with MCAD or are pursuing litigation. The sad reality is, all of these could have been preventable if BPS treated their employees human dignity and respect. BPS could have simply followed their own circulars around employee discipline providing employees structured feedback to improve. Every employee agreed that if actual misconduct occurred, employees should face discipline, including being placed on leave and if warranted, dismissal, to ensure the safety of our students. **The vast majority of employees in this report faced harsh consequences for circular or policy violations that are not being monitored or enforced for any other employee in BPS.**

Reports from principals, co-leaders, and central office managers indicate that employees are unfairly targeted for speaking out against the district dysfunction or for reporting practices that are ineffective or discriminatory. **There are 114 BPS circulars on the BPS website and extremely cumbersome policies and procedures across the multitude of departments. Instead of supporting employees to improve their performance if concerns arise, BPS weaponizes these policies and practices with harsh consequences.** There was solid evidence that employees alleged to engage in the same misconduct were treated drastically differently. Discipline in BPS for principals, co-leaders, and central office managers appears driven by personal vendettas and personal opinions rather than truth. **One employee said it is “like you are fighting an invisible enemy and you never know when they will attack.”** On the other

hand, there were stories collected that included evidence of instances where employees did engage in misconduct and should have faced discipline, yet, for reasons unknown, the employee was not even investigated at all.

According to Robert F. Kennedy's work on [human rights](#), "A dignity-centered organization recognizes the importance of treating its people—and inspires its people to treat each other—in a way that honors their value and worth and the role they play in the organization". In fifth grade, our students in BPS learn about The Universal Declaration of Human Rights that affirms that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Article 1) and that "[e]veryone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind" (Article 2)." **It is quite concerning to hear the lived experiences' of current and former leaders in BPS and the lack of basic dignity and respect they received from BPS.** It is time to model for our students what they learn in our classrooms by providing a workplace culture where employees in BPS are treated with dignity and respect.

Conclusion

For years, groups have been asking to conduct an investigation and compile a report into whether there was discrimination against people of color in the employee discipline process in BPS and whether employees who speak out against BPS ineffective practices and policies face retaliation. The clear cut answers to those questions have been exposed in the completion of this report. Yes, BPS discriminates in the employee discipline process against Black and Brown leaders who serve in the role of principal, co-principal, or central office manager. Yes, there is retaliation for speaking up against ineffective practices and policies. The discriminatory and retaliatory practices pervasive within BPS culture has been proven with “facts” and “truths”.

We ask a new question.

Now that you know the truth, what are you going to do about it?

Former Superintendent Tom Payzant reflected on his eleven years of leadership in BPS in the text, *A Decade of School Reform*, saying “I’ve often said and firmly believe that people are our most valuable asset. State of the art facilities, thoughtful policies, and robust curricula do not mean a thing without the right people in place to make use of them”. **When will we start to realize as a system that people matter. Without a strong and diverse workforce in a climate free from discrimination, bias and retaliation we will continue to fail our students and families in the City of Boston. Human lives are not disposable.**

Employees reported that they were not hopeful that any action would actually occur from exposing the truth. Yet, there was a strong sentiment of employees who expressed the validation of knowing “they were not alone” and “the truth was exposed”. One employee said, “if this report helps others to learn to thrive after the trauma, the hard work made a difference”.

While we have been warned about deep rooted bureaucracy in the City of Boston, we hope our new Mayor and our elected officials will stand in solidarity to uphold the promise to fight a system that wasn’t designed to work for everyone, particularly for women, people of color, and those over the age of 40. **It is time to act and demonstrate institutional courage to protect employees from the harm that has been caused by the institution that betrayed us.** Our students and families of the City of Boston deserve a school system that operates free from corruption, lies, and operates with honesty and transparency.

Recommended Action Steps

1. Principal and Central Office Leadership Churn:

- Given our findings during this investigation, it is recommended that principals and co-leaders engage in conversations with BTU and the district around their job description, contracts, and establishing some form of protection. Currently, MA law does not allow principals to unionize, yet a strongly recommended loophole to this provision would be to establish principal positions in the BTU like the Lyndon, BTU school, and the former Mission Hill School.
- It is recommended that Central Officer Managerial Employees advocate for employment contracts for their positions providing at least some protections in their positions, beyond being at-will employees. It is highly recommended that principals and managerial employees collectively advocate for a change to how they are supported and protected in their positions.
- Each year BPS Office of Human Capital presents to the School Committee on the racial breakdown of the staffing in BPS focusing on recruitment. The School Committee should go beyond recruitment data to monitor the retention rate by examining the Churn each year from BPS. This data should be disaggregated by position type (ie: BTU, Principal, Managerial Employee) and by racial demographic within each position type. The retention rate should be shared publicly and monitored each year.

2. Central Office Accountability for Performance:

- The School Committee should collect baseline data on the number and percent of evaluations that were completed in Vector during the spring of 2023 and for the spring of 2024 for all Central Office Employees, including those who are assigned centrally to schools but are managed by the central office. This data should be disaggregated by department, position type (managerial or BTU), and performance rating. This baseline data for the Central Office should be publicly shared and monitored on a yearly basis with the School Committee. Principals are held to the standard of completing 100% of their evaluations in Vector, Central Office Managers should be too.

- Any Central Office Employee who is not meeting a standard of excellence should receive an improvement plan with concrete feedback, coaching, and support to address any concerns.
- A comprehensive independent audit of Central Office positions should occur, clarifying roles, responsibilities, and ensuring positions are accurately coded within each department.

3. Accountability for Workplace Culture:

- The School Committee should demand an immediate publicly shared improvement plan that describes clear deliverables that can be measured and designed to improve workplace culture for Central Office Managers and Principals. The failure to change working conditions will result in continued rapid leadership churn in BPS, costing millions to the taxpayers and not resulting in any change to the outcomes for our students.
- Develop a district wide [anti-bullying policy](#) for employees and establish policies and practices for a respectful workplace culture for central office employees and principals
- Implement the recommendations in the [Workplace Psychological Safety Act](#) and the [Healthy Workplace Bill](#) that both passed the Senate in Massachusetts
- Establish a system where employees are encouraged to demonstrate [Institutional Courage](#) and stop the [institutional betrayal](#) that causes great harm to current and former employees. Provide training for employees on [DARVO](#) to recognize the signs.
 - DARVO stands for "Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender." The perpetrator or offender may Deny the behavior, Attack the individual doing the confronting, and Reverse the roles of Victim and Offender such that the perpetrator assumes the victim role and turns the true victim -- or the whistle blower -- into an alleged offender. This occurs, for instance, when an actually guilty perpetrator assumes the role of "falsely accused" and attacks the accuser's credibility and blames the accuser for being the perpetrator of a false accusation.
- Hold employees accountable for how they treat, speak to, and engage with colleagues across the organization as part of the evaluation process.

4. Employee Discipline:

- Overhaul the Office of Equity to put in policies and practices that protect the rights of employees. Monitor these practices through a yearly Equity Audit that includes data reported to the office and includes the voices of principals and central office managers. The Office should uphold the highest standards of

accountability to ensure that employees are in a work environment where staff are able to work free from bias and free from retaliation. The failure to act sends a clear message on the lack of commitment to creating a workplace free of discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation within BPS.

- Conduct a review of the Office of Labor Relations practices using a vetted and independent investigator that has no affiliation to the Boston Public Schools or the City of Boston. As part of this investigation, conduct a review of the discipline that has occurred since the arrival of Superintendent Skipper that includes non-disclosure agreements, settlement agreements, and terminations.
- Hire an independent mediator that operates outside BPS Central Office where principals and central office managers can seek support and advice about navigating the work culture of BPS.

5. Transparency:

- An immediate audit of BPS Central Office Budget and Central Office staffing should be conducted by an independent and vetted investigator who has no affiliation with the City of Boston or Boston Public Schools.
- The School Committee should make public the results of the internal Gallup Poll administered in 2021 of Central Office Managerial Employees and repeat this poll yearly
- While individual school results are shared publicly on [Panorama](#), BPS omits the data collected on the Central Office. The Central Office data from the yearly climate data should be shared in the same manner as schools. A Quality School Plan for improving climate should be set each year for the Central Office.
- Family voices should be elevated as the key strategy to improve BPS. Diverse family engagement should be the utmost priority to the School Committee and to Mayor Wu.

BPS Playbook

Employee Discipline with Central Office Managers and School Principals

Retaliation for Speaking Out Against Ineffective Practices/Policies or for reporting discrimination/harassment/workplace bullying

Steps in the Playbook:

1. Gaslighting. You think they are on your side and a support
2. The attacks then come fast and furious
 - a. Use BPS resources to go on a hunt to find fault in your performance or a violation of a circular
 - i. Search emails before you are notified
 - ii. Dig into your budget before you are notified
 - iii. Principals: Collude with BTU with field reps or school based union membership
 - iv. Initiate investigation into your practices without being notified (ie: Office of Equity reporting, discipline reporting)
3. Identifies a violation of a circular or policy
4. Notifies the manager or principal of a concern, but denies the person any ability to defend themselves
5. Partners with Office of Labor Relations
 - a. Place principal/central office manager on paid Administrative Leave if seen as a threat to the playbook
 - i. Languish for months in PAL
 1. Principals: BPS non-renews the principals contract, which is not an adverse action per the law rarely, if ever, receiving their section 41 meeting per state law
 2. Managers: At-Will employees who can be terminated at any time for “just cause”
 - ii. Employee loses access to all their information, including their emails, documents, and school files necessary to defend themselves
 - iii. Employees are silenced from talking to any BPS employee or students and denied access to any BPS building, including their own where critical information may be stored that the employee could be used to defend themselves.
 - b. Harasses the person until they resign

- c. Intimidate the person until they can regain control of the person (ie: go home and reflect, change of responsibilities/job)
 - d. Negotiates a settlement that includes an NDA that prohibits the employee from talking or taking any legal action
- 6. Office of Labor Relations Initiates an Investigatory Meeting
 - a. Vague and incomplete allegations in the IM, completely prohibiting the employee from being prepared to defend themselves
 - b. Abusive and degrading questioning
 - c. Attacks the employees credibility and integrity
 - d. Investigator seeks information that validates the initial allegation
 - e. Employee is already guilty before any investigation occurs
- 7. Office of Labor Relations completes a scathing report that validates one of the initial allegations
 - a. Report is full of misstatements, incorrect or false statements
 - b. There are critical omissions which is a failure to include something or state something correctly (libel by omission)
 - c. The reports are not “full, fair, or accurate” as required by the fair report privilege
- 8. Office of Labor Relations recommends termination to the Superintendent
 - a. Lawyers work to negotiate a settlement or termination agreement
 - i. Office of Labor relations agrees to allow the employee to “resign” in lieu of termination
 - ii. Settlement always includes a non-disclosure agreement requiring the employee to never sue and to not discuss any of the events that led to their departure from BPS
 - iii. Agreements include the employee never returning to BPS for any future employment
 - b. The termination is mostly never discussed and the employee leaves BPS with no mention of the individual other than an announcement of the new person to fulfill their role.
 - c. Rumors spread by Central Office of the employees misconduct become the narrative of why the employee left BPS

Challenges for the Central Office Manager/Principals/Co-Leaders

- Cost of the lawyer to defend for the IM process is out of pocket as neither employee groups have union representation.
 - Initial cost of the lawyer out of pocket for just the IM process is \$3,000 at a minimum. Some report spending upwards of \$40,000 to defend themselves in this process. When litigation occurred, it was much more.
- Cost of the lawyer to sue for discrimination and retaliation comes from the employer. Taxpayers pay for the cost of the BPS legal team. Proving discrimination and retaliation in the court of law without any of the employees documentation makes it nearly impossible for the employee to pursue legal action
- Extreme personal anguish and mental health challenges that come from the traumatic experience and workplace abuse/bullying/attacks
- Family stress as a result of the extremely public and defamatory libel
- Extreme fear and anxiety to the employee for their safety and the safety of their family (physical and psychological safety)
- Retaliation can continue after employee leaves BPS, continuing to cause extreme mental anguish and financial harm to employees

Case Example One: Central Office Manager

WHO AM I?

I am Black male. I have been employed by BPS for decades. I have had various positions within BPS. I was a teacher for many, many years. I was a curriculum designer. I helped to establish new schools and programs.. Toward the end of my career, I decided to leave my union-protected position, and all of its benefits, to apply for a position in central office. I took a position in central office that I believed in with a significant pay-cut. I was a teacher and educator with stellar performance evaluations, a career without blemish or reprimand.

I held the central office position for a few years, during the height of the pandemic, and can show with data the positive impact my work had on educators of color who, prior to my arrival, were faced with enormous barriers to career-advancing opportunities.

My disparate treatment was based on my race and gender.

WHAT HAPPENED

One late afternoon, after the workday, I received an email ordering me to appear for an investigation that was to be held the following morning at 9am. The email indicated that I could bring counsel if I wanted. In less than 15 hours, I had to find a lawyer, and make sense of the email's disturbing, unsettling, and shocking implications. The email did not disclose any information about the purpose or nature of the investigation.

Although I was able to retain an attorney with no notice, I know that it would be an impossible feat for anyone to retain an attorney on such a short notice. With no knowledge of the purpose of the investigation, it was impossible for my attorney to prepare or prepare me for the investigation.

My attorney and I arrived at the meeting with no idea what to expect.

I was interrogated by two internally assigned investigators. I learned that one of the "investigators" was also the director of a department that made accusations against me. This investigator, therefore, could not be objective and presented a conflict interest. Their prejudicial bias cannot be overstated.

I have come to understand that Division Chiefs play a role in conducting investigations against their direct reports. My Division Chief was a Black man and he was not present at my investigation.

At the investigation, I was asked a series of questions, which I freely and willingly answered. I was made aware of the accusations for the first time at this meeting.

I was summoned to a second investigation with the two same investigators about a month later. No communication or guidance on the purpose or goals of the investigation were given prior, during or after. The investigators never provided my lawyer with any substantiating documents underlying their accusations even though he requested them..

One month later, I received an email of charges and the investigators evidence and I was told to resign or be terminated.

My lawyer had no opportunity to defend me by providing evidence and witnesses to any of their accusations. Their accusations, which my lawyer and I were not permitted to respond to, were presented as grounds for resignation or termination.

I have never been given an opportunity to fully respond to their accusations. It was clear to my attorney and me that they were making the decision to fire me without ever giving me the opportunity to be heard. Subject to blatant conflict of interests violations and gross lack of due process, I was deprived of my right to defend myself.

I was summarily forced to resign or face termination and lose everything I earned for decades.

WHAT I EXPERIENCED

As a Black male in central office, I was subject to hostile and retaliatory work environment as follows:

- I worked for almost a year without receiving a pre-approved pay raise;
- I work 10-12 hours daily, including many weekends, because approved staffing positions on my team were not filled, were halted and sometimes delayed;
- I was under budgeted at levels below white-led teams that were doing less work;
- Job descriptions were rejected for already approved positions for hire;
- Multiple documents were requested from me to gain approval only to be denied.

I, as Black man, was subjected to hostile and retaliatory working conditions, where my ability to execute my duties were stopped or delayed; my appeals for support were unresponded to. The frequency of conduct, severity and humiliating conditions created a hostile work environment that included the inaction of supervisors to address paying my approved pay raise, evading questions and concerns when I voiced them.

Despite these conditions, I persisted in a hostile work environment at BPS, where my progress was halted or delayed in accomplishing my duties by supervisors. Yet, I achieved unprecedented success and I have the data to show my results.

As a Black man, the hostile and retaliatory conditions because of my race and gender were humiliating, isolating and unrelenting. I sought relief through my immediate supervisor who was unresponded to by their supervisors. The actions of white executives led to my forced resignation.

Case Example Two: Principal

I have worked in BPS for twenty-five years, serving in the role of a school principal for the last nineteen. I sustained through nine different superintendents and so many direct supervisors I lost count. I knew about our district's dysfunctions but I did not know the depth of the lies, corruption, and cover ups that exist in BPS, until I experienced the employee discipline process personally.

I received a stellar evaluation months earlier but suddenly a supervisor initiated attacks on my performance this fall. It started when our school went through a grade reconfiguration process. I questioned the process and called out the dysfunction. BPS then went on a fishing expedition to find fault in my performance. They called our partner agencies, our Board Chair, they solicited an investigation without me knowing, and colluded with union members to write a letter outlining their concerns with my leadership. The union representative bypassed all voting processes and excluded members who disagreed with their actions to write a letter that was never actually even shared with me. Many union members themselves were extremely upset and tried to rescind this letter. Their pleas were all ignored by the district and the union.

The stress from the sudden workplace abuse caused me extreme anxiety. I reported to the Office of Equity filing gender discrimination, retaliation, and intimidation and shared the extreme emotional pain I was experiencing. Instead of taking the concern seriously, the following day I started receiving urgent calls that they needed to see me at the central office immediately. I was forced to sit across from the person I just reported, while they read off an investigatory hearing notice and placed me on immediate paid administrative leave, took my keys and ID and sent me home. BPS immediately turned off my access to my computer, emails, documents, calendar, and directed me not to speak with any employees or students. I was directed to get a lawyer and report to a hearing in two days.

There was nothing fair or impartial about the employee discipline process and it definitely was not about the truth. The process was extremely dehumanizing and it was clear that I was guilty before any investigation even took place. The district where I dedicated my entire professional career did not protect my due process rights as an employee and did not even display an ethic of care to see how I was doing after reporting extreme emotional distress.

Case Example 3: Lawyers for Civil Rights Lawsuit Against Boston Public Schools and Drew Echelson

Advocate for English Language Learners Sues Boston Public Schools For Discrimination, Retaliation~Long-Time Employee Forced Out After Objecting To BPS's Mistreatment of English Language Learners

Lawyers for Civil Rights (LCR) and Pontikes Law, LLC, filed a lawsuit in Suffolk Superior Court on behalf of Ms. Aketa Narang Kapur, alleging discriminatory and retaliatory treatment by Boston Public Schools (BPS). Ms. Kapur, a South Asian woman with a profound commitment and deep expertise in educating and supporting English Language Learner (ELL) students, was forced out of her job by BPS after she objected to the improper mass transfer of ELL students into general education classes.

Ms. Kapur was promoted to Assistant Superintendent of the Office of English Language Learners (OELL) in 2021, after 15 years of employment at BPS. In that role, she oversaw the OELL department, its programs, and compliance with state and federal laws. Within days of starting in that role, she began raising alarm bells about BPS' treatment of ELL students. Specifically, BPS had recently dumped 200 ELL students into general education without allowing them to achieve sufficient proficiency in English and without parental input. As a result of Ms. Kapur's complaints, she quickly found herself forced out of the job.

Ms. Kapur's observations about the problematic transfer of ELL students was consistent with years of continuing violations BPS has committed against ELL students, for which BPS has been under decades-long monitoring agreements with the United States Department of Justice. She was the fifth leader forced out of the Assistant Superintendent role within a three-year period, indicating the challenge that BPS had in getting anyone to sit idly by while observing their abhorrent treatment of ELL students. Ms. Kapur is also one of nearly a dozen administrators of color who have been forced out of BPS in recent years using a punitive disciplinary procedure.

"I could not in good conscience sit by while BPS continued to treat their multilingual students

and families as if they deserved less than others or were merely inconvenient,” said Ms. Kapur. “Criticism of BPS’ treatment of ELL students was coming from all directions—the federal government, the state, countless stakeholders—yet BPS continued to fail our young people. I thought as a leader in the District, I could make a difference, but I never imagined that my whole career could be taken from me and my reputation tarnished because I stood up for what was right.”

“Massachusetts prides itself on being a mecca for education. As the oldest and largest public-school district in the Commonwealth, BPS shames that reputation with its treatment of English Language Learners,” said Sophia Hall, Deputy Litigation Director at Lawyers for Civil Rights. “When educators of color and leaders in the District like Ms. Kapur attempt to hold BPS accountable for its failings, BPS discriminates and retaliates against them and derails their careers.”

“Rather than fix a very serious problem that compromised the education of vulnerable students, BPS chose to punish a distinguished employee of color who spoke up,” said Attorney Rebecca Pontikes, founding partner of Pontikes Law, LLC.

Ms. Kapur brought so much value to BPS as an educator and administrator. It is extremely disappointing that BPS punished her, rather than applauded her, for ensuring the district was compliant with the law,” said Attorney Bryn Sfetsios, an attorney for Ms. Kapur. “Fortunately, we have strong legal protections in Massachusetts for whistleblowers.”

[Click here to download the full complaint.](#)

Case Example 4: City Council Letter: Seven Central Office Managers

Dear City Council,

Boston Public Schools' statement that there was no disproportionately in investigations is false. The recent BPS School Committee presentation proves that disproportionality does exist, although leadership made statements to the contrary.

The Office of Labor Relation (OLR) chart (Page 8, Table E) shows this disproportionality:

1. **For every (1) white investigated, there were almost 2x (1.7) the number of people of color *investigated*.**
2. **For every 2 whites placed on leave, there were more than 3 people of color *placed on leave*.**
3. **Blacks were 63% more likely to be targeted for investigation.** Here is the math: The BPS percentage of staff by race was 31% Black vs. 46% white (on average) during the period under investigation. OLR investigated 27 people. That was 10 whites vs. 13 Blacks (17 people of color in total). If there was equal treatment for blacks, 8 blacks would have been targeted, not 13. Blacks represent 31% of the total 27 investigations. 31% of 17 is 8, as opposed to the 13 investigated. 13 were targeted, 5 more than the proportional 8. In short the disproportionately for Blacks is 63%.
4. **Whites were 25% less likely to be investigated.** If there was equal treatment for whites, whites would represent 46% of the total 27 investigations (12.5). Yet only 10 were. That's 25% fewer whites (12.5-10=2.5) that would've been investigated if there was no disproportionality. In other words, whites were 25% less likely to be investigated.

Not only would the BPS report suggest that the public cannot do the math, but it would also suggest that the public does not understand the purpose of an investigation by an attorney. The attorney is not a statistician—and thus was not needed to do a (failed) statistical analysis.

An attorney asks questions to interviewees and looks at supporting documents. BPS knows this because that is exactly what all the investigations of people of color have consisted of—months and months of interviewees and document requests to target countless people of color. But yet for BPS, none of this scrutiny occurred.

Had the attorney been allowed to interview ANY of the people of color targeted for investigation or leave, and looked at ANY supporting documents, here are some of the findings they would have uncovered.

1. **BPS targeted people of color working to make BPS accountable for low-income students, special education, English language learners, and teacher diversity.** If you look at the titles of all the central office people, you will see clearly that this was a targeted attack to cover up its failings to direct funds to best educate the children who need it the most.
2. **BPS targeted people of color who were the most experienced, educated, and thus more knowledgeable about the problems that needed fixing.** If you look at years of service and education, you will see most have 20+ years of excellent service with a stellar track record, and advanced degrees, many with doctorates, and those without were mostly in the process of completing their dissertations.
3. **BPS targeted people of color who were closest to Boston communities.** If you look at the names and the task forces they were involved with, you can see that they possessed much well-earned community credibility.
4. **BPS targeted people for investigations right after they wrote or discussed in a task force their concerns of equity, mismanagement, or failure to serve students.** The retaliation was clear.
5. **This attack on leaders of color cost the district over \$5M more over the past 3 years than in prior years,** taking into account the costs of leaves, settlements to those who were attacked increased staff to target people for investigations, and attorney fees, and loss of work that should have been spent on students, not frivolous claims.
6. **BPS inappropriately and unethically used legal harassment as a way to keep these targeted leaders silent.** Mounting legal fees paid by the innocent to defend themselves against 6 months + investigations forced most to resign and agree on settlements to pay their attorneys. These settlements resulted in non-disclosure agreements preventing former staff from testifying. Current staff were threatened into silence, both those who were targeted and those who knew lies told to others. These staff are depending on jobs to feed their families, and pensions they are working to secure. Some staff were rewarded with increased pay and new job titles for their capitulation. They acknowledge this privately saying, "I need this job, my kids are in college, I feel bad but there is nothing I can do," etc. Everyone has been informed that BPS will ensure that all those who capitulate are protected, and there is no recourse within BPS. Everyone is also well aware the MCAD lacks the bandwidth to follow up on claims for these kinds of cases within a reasonable period. Thus there are no consequences.
7. **BPS investigated itself inappropriately and unethically.** The very leaders who ran the attack were exactly the ones charged with leading the investigation of BPS and assisting the attorneys. This was a deliberately crafted conflict of interest.
8. **BPS has run a two-tier system of investigations, one for whites (OLR) and another for people of color (Equity).** Whites who go to the Equity office are verbally routed to the Office of Labor Relations to allege a labor complaint of a "hostile work environment."

People of color go to the Equity office and are told that there is nothing that can be done with their allegations unless they rise to the level of “calling someone the N-word.” People of color experiencing a hostile work environment do not get referred to OLR and are not given that option—unless targeting a person of color.

9. **Even given all this disproportionality, most of the disproportionality is not even apparent with the limited data provided.** It exists in the number of complaints made versus those followed up on by OLR or equity. The report does not show the percentage of complaints followed up on by race. The attorney did not look at source files or interview people to see if some were not included in the numbers.
10. **BPS Staff of Color have significantly documented this growing problem, including a troubling survey of all, a letter to the superintendent from ALL the C-suite leaders of color at the time, a letter from Bolling staff, and a letter from principals of color.** Those have all been ignored and remain unresolved to date.
11. **There are other forms of attacks on people of color that this investigation does not cover.** This research should have covered trends over more years to increase the sample size, and many more issues would have been made apparent—such as the number of MCAD complaints upheld against current white administrators that are involved presently in orchestrating this attack. This research could have covered other forms of well-known human resource biases, such as the pattern of supporting and training novice and underperforming whites to succeed in positions while undermining support for black staff (e.g. withholding information, funding, staff, permission to access records that they need to do their job, undermining them by having staff reporting to them instead of their supervisors, disparaging them in and out of the district), While lacking support, they are held to a higher standard, and given more responsibilities only to receive any blame that may be falsely attributed and no credit for accomplishments. Rather, they are being pressured to resign to replace them with those who support those who should have been investigated for the harm they have caused, as described above.

If the City Council takes this matter seriously, authorize a full investigation outside of BPS, to look at the matters described above.

Thank you for listening,

Seven (7) recent BPS central office leaders who wish to remain anonymous at this time.

P.S. Note: 5 of the 7 of us are willing to come forward by name, to an objective investigating attorney, with assurances of confidentiality so as not to be attacked. Those who have remained in BPS have been under constant attack, and those who left have been smeared to potential employers by those who led this targeted attack on leaders of color.

Case Example 5: Principal

Decades of dedication, hard work and yearly positive performance evaluations were not enough to protect me from becoming a target of BPS's predatory employee discipline process. Being blindsided by immediate removal from my school community and by manufactured allegations was painful, confusing and unwarranted. With my professional reputation publicly maligned and my family's financial stability at risk, the years-long discipline process took an enormous emotional and physical toll on me. I am working closely with my medical team to recover from the trauma and find a way forward.

Someday I will have the resources to share my story publicly. Until then, I will have to remain Anonymous.

A word of caution to all current and future BPS district leaders, principals and heads of school who are women and people of color: Be warned, they will come for you. If they set their eyes on you, they will find a way to target you, manufacture a case against you, and push you out. Your positive evaluations and community support will not matter. Your professional reputation and futures are at risk everyday you stay with BPS.

Case Example 6: BTU Member

An email letter was sent to staff in the central office outlining our questions and concerns regarding a bullying investigation report that had been shared with the school leader. The email letter was sent asking for clarification around why a second bullying investigation had been issued after one had already been completed by Succeed Boston, which concluded that bullying was not substantiated.

Hours after the above referred email was sent, our school's Coordinator of Special Education (COSE), received a directive from a senior staff in Central Office (not in the special education department) to reconvene an IEP meeting for the child for whom the bullying investigation had been issued and had been identified as the victim. The typical protocol for an IEP reconvene meeting was not followed and our attempts to question the process were ignored. The facilitator of the meeting, who should not have been leading an IEP meeting, questioned our character and professionalism as educators. There was no attempt to redirect the conversation or establish ground rules at any point during the meeting.

From the outset, it felt clear that the meeting scheduled was in retaliation to the letter sent to the central office. Our school team never received a response to our questions outlined in our letter, instead an unplanned IEP reconvene meeting was called by someone who is not a direct member of the student's IEP team. The fact that our repeated requests for agendas yielded minimal responses, the fact that no structure, ground rules, or guidelines were set for the meeting felt intentional and did not allow the school team opportunity to prepare properly for the meeting. The meeting felt hostile and one-sided from the start. Our characters and professionalism were called into question repeatedly and numerous unfounded accusations were made without any opportunity or structure in place for the school team to respond effectively. When the school team attempted to respond, we received a demeaning response saying that we were engaging in "tit for tat" or not taking accountability. We were directed by a superior to be at a meeting and we attended the meeting in good faith. The refusal to provide us with the necessary information to prepare properly for the meeting and the decision to not establish meeting norms or structure was an abuse of power and functioned as a set up for our team. The actions of BPS have caused me great distress and I am no longer employed by the district.

Case Example 7: Central Office Managerial Employee

I'm here today to speak on behalf of myself as a disabled gay black cisman and a former Boston Public Schools teacher with over 5 years of experience.

I was terminated from a role that I loved as an equity and accountability program manager in the office of multilingual, multicultural education. I was a city of Boston employee diagnosed with PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder due to chronic childhood trauma and generational poverty. I felt compelled to share my story. I rely on a trained service dog, which provides tactile stimulation when major life functions such as sleep are affected by my disability.

I have personally experienced bias and promotional opportunities and was retaliated against for seeking reasonable accommodations. Respectfully, I disagree with Superintendent Skipper on the climate of BPS. As a black man, I cannot believe what you say because I see what you do or rather don't do. I can attest to the hostile and toxic climate within Boston Public Schools. Despite informing several deputy chiefs, including Chief Canty who was here and Superintendent Skipper about the consequences of disparate treatment. My mental health suffered. I experience recurring nightmares where I am a slave on the BPS plantation. My director retaliated against me by placing me on forced administrative leave. Sounds like a pattern.

When I intended to return, Chief Canty's Office of Human Capital denied my mental health practitioner as a treating physician. But has yet to produce any document defining a treating physician. Despite the Office of Equity designating that same individual as a treating physician for their office. I've yet to receive any written policy, indicating the disparate treatment of me.

The lack of clear policies across departments exemplifies the system is not designed to be inclusive for intersecting marginalized identities. I was illegally terminated in the midst of an ADA interactive process that lasted over 44 days, during which BPS did not act in good faith. I was denied access to reasonable workplace accommodations, including the relocation of my seat by my director. Moreover, the lack of policies for employees with service animals resulted in dangerous allegations. They alleged my service dog was growling and barking at a colleague, which then this bias further triggered my disability. This led to my immediate removal and denial of workplace access without even an investigation.

As a result, I was forced to knowingly violate the ADA law and provide personal medical information at their request. The absence of policies led to this unfair and potentially illegal treatment, making me believe that there were no measures to address my concerns. I'll just end with the office of equity, which literally said that restorative justice was not an option because I was not allowed to know who made the claim against me. They were unable to see how this could affect my ability to show up physically in the office and that's why I was fired.

I'm just very grateful for today. I do believe that we can, and should be doing better for our students. I will seek legal counsel or legal action not because I want money but because I want to be made whole again. I believe that my story can be a lesson for others and ultimately benefit the students, which is why we do the work we do. So thank you again so much for the space. And I do hope that I look forward to you holding the next hearing and I will be there to listen in and play my part.

Case Example 8: School Based Managerial Employee

I am a managerial employee in a school for the last 8 years and ironically also a former parent of Tech Boston under Superintendent Skipper. It was painful to listen to Superintendent Skipper tell the City Councillors last week that the district does not retaliate against their employees. Within less than 24 hours after notifying the district I would be returning from medical leave in May, I received a layoff notice, without so much as even a phone call to notify me of this decision. The staff have been told the decision was due to my position being on ESSER funds, but there is documentation that clearly shows this is not accurate. Again, this administration has not been truthful to the community. It is my belief that my advocacy for our families, children, and the school's leadership team has led to my impending termination as of June 30th.

The actions of this administration speaks volumes, demonstrating that families in BPS are devalued and disregarded.

To make matters even worse, rumors have been created about some of our dedicated family members making them fearful of speaking and even coming to the school. Families who spoke out are now being targeted with accusations. It is shameful to see adults behaving in such hurtful and harmful ways towards the families that we are supposed to be serving. Families are reporting they are feeling desperate and hopeless and many are exploring ways to get out of the Boston Public Schools.

While the superintendent publicly stated, our school is not closing, there is zero trust with the community that this will be honored. The families at the Jackson Mann were told this same thing repeatedly, and now the school is closed.

To the members of the Boston School Committee, your role is to ensure transparency, honesty, and to represent the voices of our children and families. Your silence and failure to respond condones the actions of this administration. The students and families of Boston depend on you to take your responsibility seriously and to do your job with integrity.

Case Example 9: School Based Managerial Employee Lawsuit

A former Black administrator at the Condon K-8 School in South Boston filed a wrongful termination and racial discrimination lawsuit against Boston Public Schools, the latest move by a growing number of educators of color concerned about racial discrimination in the workplace.

The suit claims BPS didn't support him through multiple investigations, incidents, and the demonstration outside the school. BPS Chief of Schools and Accountability Drew Echelson and Deputy Superintendent of Operations Samuel DePina are named in the suits as defendants.

Lambert was fired in 2022 after he gave a speech at a graduation ceremony where he referenced racism he faced for years since his 2016 promotion, the complaint said. Lambert was on leave at the time and was asked to speak the day of the ceremony, the suit claimed.

Over the course of his employment, Lambert notified BPS about multiple incidents, including when custodial staff exhibited a photo of a monkey with the name of a Black facilities manager, the complaint said. After Lambert reprimanded them, the complaint alleges, the custodial staff retaliated.

The lawsuit also alleges BPS violated the whistle-blower statute by terminating Lambert in retaliation for raising concerns about racial discrimination.

"BPS has a longstanding history of failing to protect Black educators and administrators," Stephanie Rodriguez-Ruiz, a Boston attorney representing Lambert, said in a statement. "We see this in the District's inability to retain Black men and women, a problem many groups have openly criticized BPS for."

"BPS intimidates us by silencing and separating us from our communities. They treat Black bodies with complete disregard," Lambert said in a statement through his lawyer. "Being unsupported by an organization you have been so committed to is extremely damaging and silencing, especially when your attack is motivated with racial hate and you are working to defend Black and Brown students, faculty and families," Lambert said in a statement.

[Source/Source](#)

The full complaint is available [here](#).

Appendix: Mary Skipper's Communication about Employee Discipline

Superintendent Mary Skipper <mskipper@bostonpublicschools.org>
To: All BPS Staff <all-bpsstaff@bostonpublicschools.org>

Mon, Nov 21, 2022 at 1:11 PM

Dear Colleagues,

As you may have seen reported in the press, the District has retained Attorney Natasha Tidwell, of Saul Ewing Arnstein & Lehr, to investigate whether school leaders and central office managerial employees of color are placed on administrative leave and/or investigated and disciplined at a disparate rate and if so, whether there is evidence that the disparity is the result of racial bias. It's important to me to communicate with you directly about significant developments related to managerial employees and any challenges – transparency and honesty are essential to our success as an organization.

Before I officially started as Superintendent, I received a letter from a number of retired BPS leaders who expressed concerns about the current treatment of employees of color, specifically their experiences with investigatory meetings.

For those who may be unfamiliar, investigatory meetings are held after allegations of misconduct have been made against an employee. These meetings provide employees notice of the allegations against them and an opportunity to present their version of events to the investigator. Investigatory meetings help ensure that the District's investigation is thorough and comprehensive and to afford employees with due process. To that end, the District requires that all employees alleged to have engaged in misconduct are provided with: 1) an opportunity to attend an investigatory meeting; 2) advance written notification of the date and time of the meeting; and 3) a summary of the allegations against them and the BPS [policy](#). Employees may bring a union representative, witness, or attorney to investigatory meetings.

All employees alleged to have engaged in misconduct are afforded the right to attend an investigatory meeting. In a small number of instances, the employee is placed on administrative leave for the duration of the investigation due to the seriousness of the allegations and/or to preserve the integrity of the process.

While the District does not track each and every time investigative meetings are offered or held, the District does track when employees are placed on administrative leave and when employees are disciplined. The District also tracks investigations that are conducted by external or central office investigators that do not result in discipline and do not involve administrative leave.

Attorney Tidwell's investigation will help ensure that the District applies investigatory and disciplinary procedures consistently and without bias. While we await the results of her investigation, I want to be clear: BPS does not tolerate bias or discrimination of any kind. If her investigation finds evidence of bias, the District will take swift and appropriate action.

As public employees, we must be held to the highest possible standard. To that end, the BPS is required to promptly and thoroughly investigate allegations of employee misconduct while ensuring due process under collective bargaining agreements, BPS policies, and the law. Any employee, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other identities, must be held accountable if a policy violation is substantiated.

As Superintendent, I am unwavering in my commitment to eradicate explicit and implicit bias from our organization. We will do this by consistently scrutinizing any inequities in our policies and practices, and by prioritizing the necessary training and tools to educate, inform, and empower all of us to identify and report instances of bias-based conduct. I encourage all of us to routinely reflect on how we interact with our colleagues, families, and students, particularly those who are members of traditionally marginalized groups based on their language, race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or other factors.

If you have questions or concerns about your own experiences or those of a colleague, please seek the support and guidance of our Office of Equity at BPSEquity@bostonpublicschools.org or 617-635-9650. All queries will be treated confidentially, and you can reach out to them without fear of retaliation.

I intend to continue to be open about our efforts to ensure BPS is a place free of discrimination in all its forms. I am proud to lead this district and to call each of you my colleagues. I know news like this can be unsettling, but I am optimistic that by thoroughly investigating concerns of bias and making any necessary changes, we will emerge stronger, further united, and more focused on our work of serving the students and families of Boston.

In service,

Mary Skipper
Superintendent

Appendix: Overview of BPS Offices

Office of Human Capital	We are committed to recruiting, hiring, developing, and retaining a racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse group of highly effective staff members every year. OUR MISSION As the Office of Human Capital (OHC) serving the Boston Public Schools (BPS), it is our mission to contribute to the innovation and transformation of teaching and learning by supporting BPS employees at every stage of their career, from recruitment to hiring to professional growth and leadership development to retirement. WHO WE ARE The Office of Human Capital (OHC) in the Boston Public Schools was established in June 2011 in order to lead the district's work in defining and supporting effective teaching. We are a group of dedicated, diverse, and dynamic individuals who support our employees in every aspect of their work, both from central office and out in schools with leaders, teachers, and students. Our office is divided into the following teams: WHAT WE DO We continue to focus our efforts around three key human capital “levers”: Cultivate & Recruit, Hire & Deploy, and Develop & Retain. These levers are the center of our strategy for accelerating student learning as we believe it is our people who are driving the positive changes our district is making toward greater equity, coherence, and innovation. The Office of Human Capital is committed to recruiting, hiring, developing, and retaining a racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse group of highly effective and culturally proficient teachers and principals every year.
Office of Labor Relations	We create and promote a work environment that fosters a positive and effective relationship between labor and management Who We Are We represent the Boston School Committee and the Superintendent in all labor matters. This includes matters before state courts and agencies, and other forums. What We Do Labor Relations also negotiates and administers the District's collective bargaining agreements with the Unions that represent District employees. There are 12 bargaining units covering over 9000 employees.
Office of	The Office of Legal Advisor to the Boston Public School Department, a division of

Legal Advisor	the City of Boston Law Department, advises, counsels, and represents the Boston Public Schools Department and the Boston School Committee in all legal aspects of its operations. Who We Are The office is comprised of six attorneys who perform a variety of litigation and transactional functions. The primary areas of law the office specializes in are: special education law, education law, employment law, general civil litigation, constitutional law, and contract law. The office is located on the 4th floor of the Bolling Building and the attorneys are available on a daily on-call basis (known as the Attorney of the Day) and by appointment. What We Do The Office of Legal Advisor advises, counsels, and represents the Boston Public Schools Department and the Boston School Committee in all legal aspects of their operations. The six attorneys perform a variety of litigation and transactional functions, including but not limited to: contract review and approval; the editing and negotiation of agreements between internal departments and with external parties; advising on short-term and long-term BPS policy matters and issues; assisting with responses to public record and student record requests; attending monthly Boston School Committee meetings; attending school-based special education team meetings; and defending BPS and litigating at the Bureau of Special Education Appeals, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, and in state and federal court proceedings. The office does not handle matters related to employee discipline, grievances, or issues pertaining to collective bargaining agreements (see the Office of Labor Relations), or internal discrimination or harassment complaints or disability accommodation requests (see the Office of Equity).
Office of Equity	The Office of Equity aims to ensure that the Boston Public Schools is an educational and working environment unimpeded by bias or discrimination, where individuals of all backgrounds and experiences are welcomed, included, encouraged, and can succeed and flourish. Who We Are The Office of Equity is a small team of dedicated professionals working to support students, families, and staff in issues of harassment and bias. We aim to systematically implement best practices and boldly innovate, with the goal of becoming a national model of broad participation, full inclusion, equity, and social justice in an urban school district. With this target in mind, the Office of Equity is proud to work with students, families, staff, and administration to ensure that all Boston Public School schools and offices are welcoming and nurturing environments.

	What We Do We investigate allegations of bias or retaliation for previously reporting an allegation of bias, and offer a resolution, when appropriate. We also provide training and counseling around equity issues. We are also the primary point of contact for employees seeking an accommodation for a disability or religious reasons. Please contact us if you have any requests for an accommodation.
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Employee Discipline in BPS as outlined in the Mintz Report

- 1.) Complaints against Central Office Managers and School Leaders are usually referred to OLR or Equity, depending on the nature of the alleged misconduct. Equity handles allegations of bias-based and discriminatory conduct along with sexual harassment or similar misconduct, regardless of the subject employee's assignment. OLR typically handles all others. In general, any allegation of misconduct must be investigated.
- 2.) At the start of each investigation, the subject employee's supervisor, or the administrator receiving the complaint, typically conducts a preliminary investigation that may include witness interviews and a review of relevant documents. If the preliminary investigation suggests that the subject employee engaged in misconduct, the District issues an Investigatory Meeting notice, informing the employee of the nature of the allegations, the possibility that discipline could result, and the right to have representation (union or legal) at the meeting
- 3.) Investigatory Meetings are informal conferences, led by the subject employee's supervisor or other administrator, where the employee is given an opportunity to respond to the allegations and explain themselves. Depending on the misconduct alleged, a PAL determination may be made prior to the employee's Investigatory Meeting.
- 4.) The Office of Human Capital ("OHC") is the ultimate decision-making authority for PAL determinations regardless of whether OLR or Equity is handling the underlying investigation.
- 5.) If the complaint is referred to Equity, the administrator overseeing the investigation will determine whether the employee should be placed on PAL, pending the outcome of the investigation, based on the following factors:
 - a.) Whether the employee's continued presence raises safety concerns;
 - b.) Whether the alleged misconduct demonstrates a pattern of behavior by the subject employee;
 - c.) Whether the conduct alleged is egregious in nature, such as potentially criminal conduct.
- 6.) If, after considering these factors, the administrator determines that PAL is appropriate, they will send a recommendation to OLR. OLR typically adopts Equity's recommendations.
- 7.) Where a complaint is referred to OLR, the process is generally the same. OLR applies a similar multi-factor test for determining whether PAL pending the outcome of the investigation is appropriate:

- a.) Whether the alleged misconduct involves actual or threatened violence or raises other student or employee safety concerns;
 - b.) Whether the employee's continued presence at BPS would jeopardize the integrity of the investigation or BPS operations
 - c.) Whether the alleged conduct is so egregious that the failure to place the employee on PAL would erode the public trust.
- 8.) Neither the OLR nor Equity factors for consideration in PAL determinations are formalized into policy. The Circular does not contain any guidance on PAL.
 - 9.) If Equity and/or OLR determine that PAL is appropriate, OLR submits a memorandum detailing the relevant facts to OHC for approval and signature. In most cases, OHC adopts OLR and Equity's recommendations. OHC notifies the subject employee of the PAL determination in writing.
 - 10.) Regardless of the PAL determination, if a preliminary review of the alleged misconduct reveals a potential policy violation, the District initiates an investigation. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the District may elect to conduct the investigation internally or retain an external investigator
 - 11.) If the allegations are substantiated through the investigation, the District will determine what, if any, discipline is necessary. Discipline can range from an oral warning up to termination.
 - 12.) Where the severity of the alleged misconduct warrants a suspension or termination, a formal hearing is required. The subject employee has a right to representation at the hearing and is entitled to an opportunity to call and cross-examine witnesses and produce evidence. Where the severity of the alleged misconduct warrants termination, the District may negotiate a separation agreement with the subject employee or offer the employee an opportunity to resign in lieu of termination.

Recommendations from the Mintz Report

The report from Mintz resulted in the following recommendations to BPS:

- ***Establish, implement, and publish criteria for paid administrative leave determinations***
- ***Establish mechanism for consistent tracking of BPS misconduct complaint investigation processes***
- ***Establish protocol for periodic audits of BPS disciplinary processes to identify and respond to trends and potentially problematic patterns***

On August 30th, 2023 the Office of Human Capital, Francesse Canty and the Office of Labor Relations, Jeremiah Hassan presented BPS Implementation to the school committee.

BPS Action Plan

- Revising Superintendent's Circular regarding Employee Discipline to clearly define Administrative Leave.
- The Office of Labor Relations (OLR) will notify BPS unions of the changes and fulfill any bargaining obligations once the revisions are completed.
- The Office of Human Capital (OHC) will distribute the revised circular to all staff.
- The Office of Human Capital (OHC) and Office of Labor Relations (OLR) is reviewing the current tracking system to make technical improvements for analyzing and retrieving data.
- OHC will send regular updates to school leaders and department heads to ensure all employee investigations are reported and tracked.
- The Office of Human Capital (OHC) and Office of Labor Relations (OLR) will review the relevant reported data twice a year to identify trends and any areas of concern.

Appendix: Public Data Collected on BPS

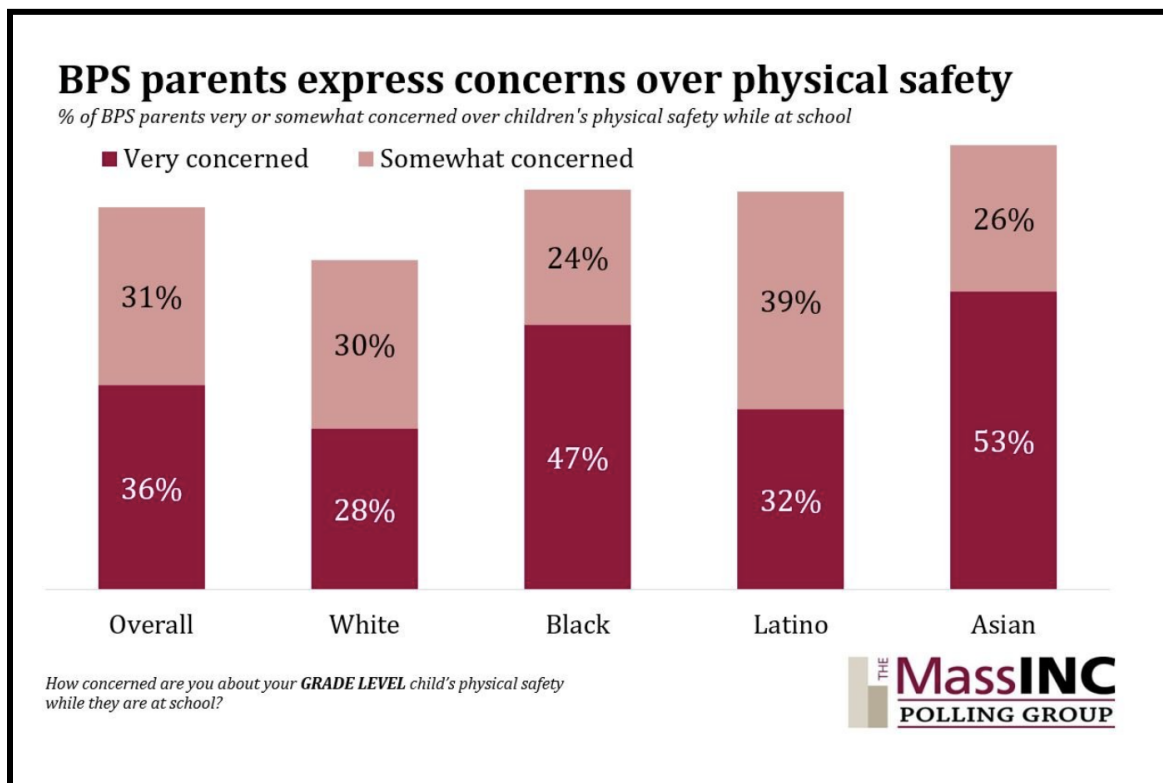
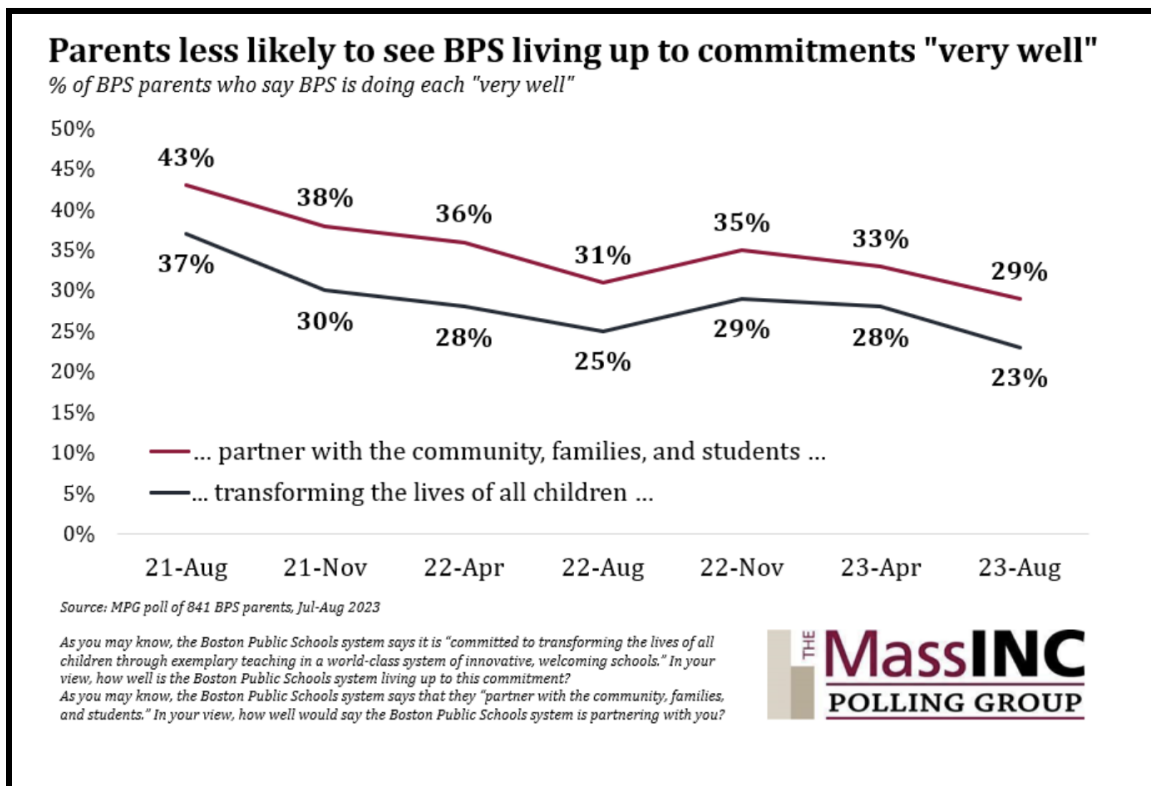
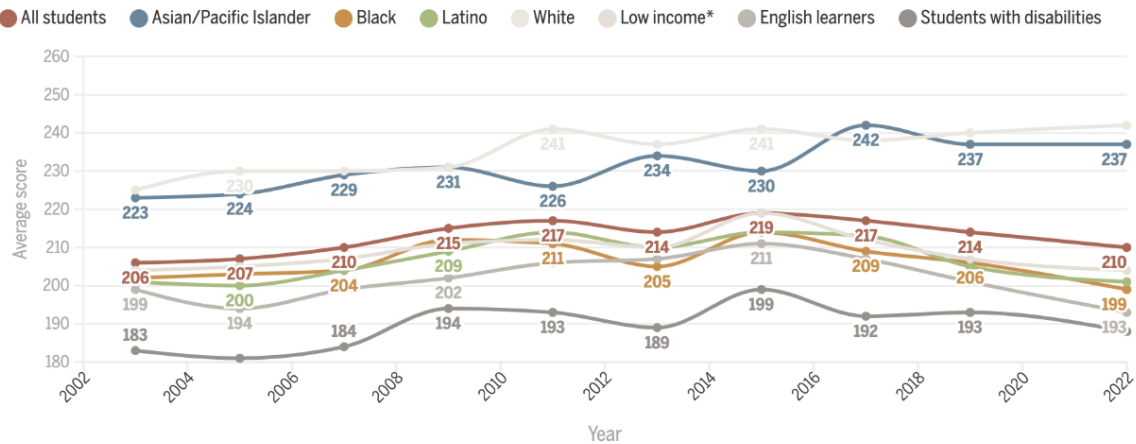


Figure 1. Academic Gaps in NAEP Scores for Boston's High-Needs Students



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress • Christopher Huffaker/Globe staff. *Students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

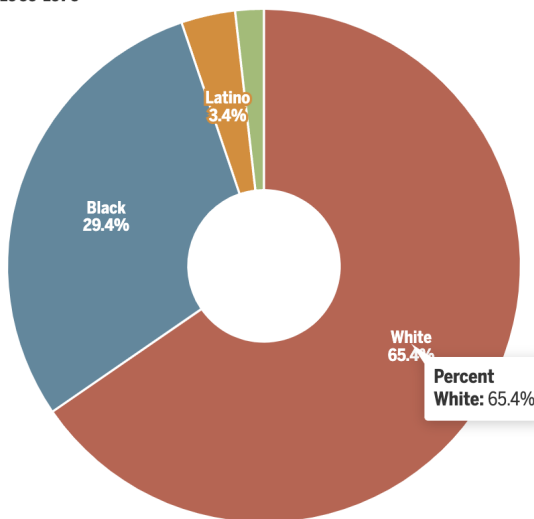
Source: Huffaker, C. & Pan, D. (2022, October 24). Massachusetts students hit 19-year low on national reading, math exams. The Boston Globe.

Boston's demographics are very different than on the eve of desegregation.

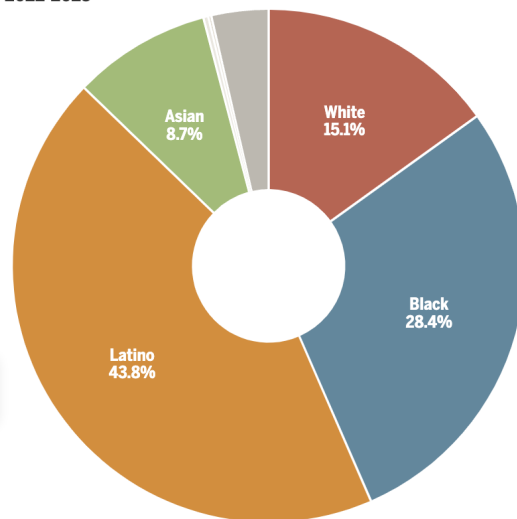
Latino students are now the biggest group in the district, while white students are just 15 percent of students.

White Black Latino Asian Native American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Multi-Race, Non-Latino

1969-1970



2022-2023



Source: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Brown University American Communities Project • Christopher Huffaker/Globe staff
Data for the 1969-1970 school year only includes 4 racial and ethnic categories.

A Flourish chart

Appendix: BPS Leadership Team (March 2023-March 2024)

BPS Leadership Team (presented in alphabetical order):

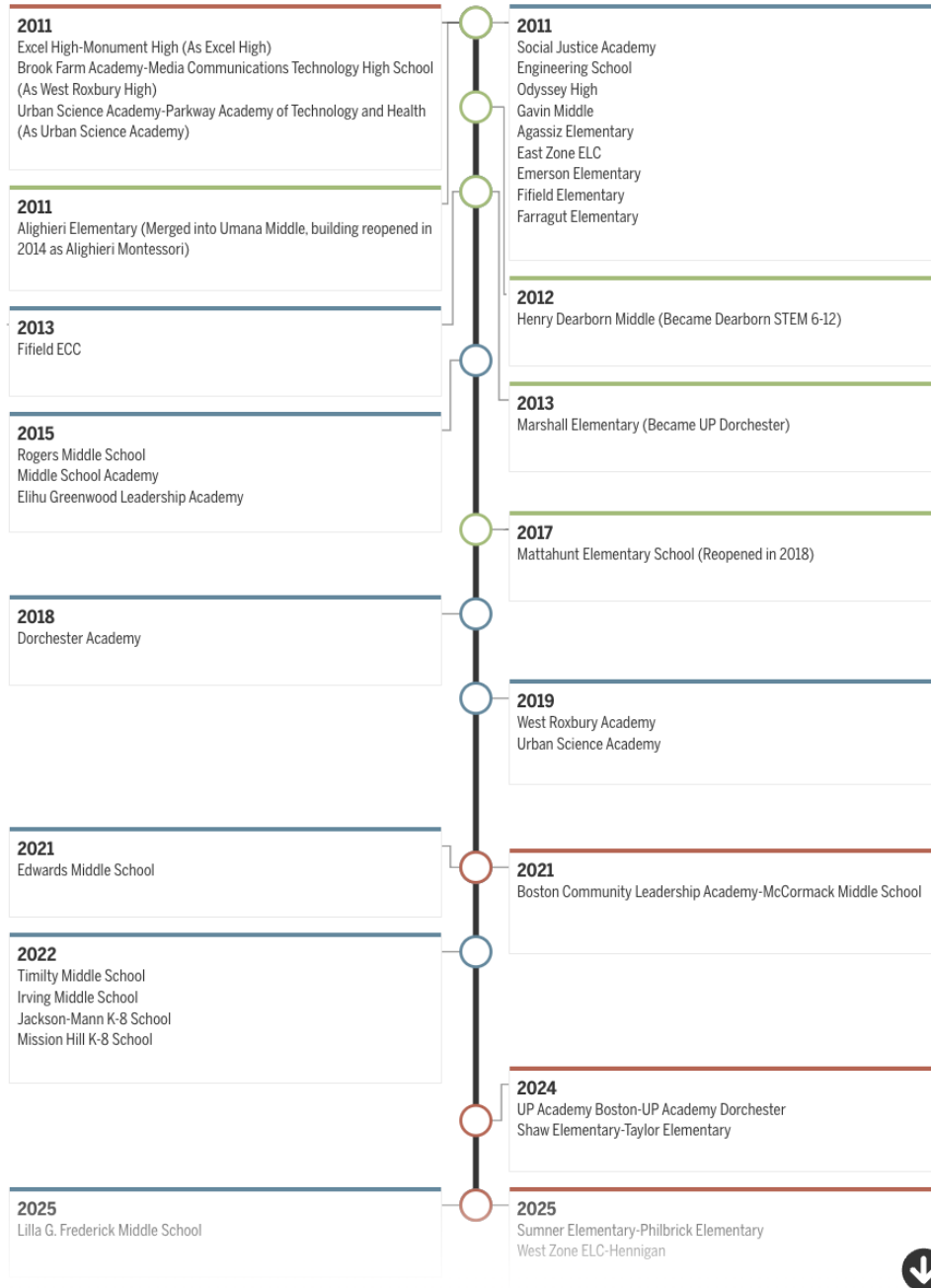
- Mary Skipper, Superintendent
- ~~Indira Alvarez, Chief of Operations~~
- ~~Raecia Catchings, Interim Chief of Human Capital~~
- Dr. Linda Chen, Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics
- Neva Coakley, Chief of Safety
- Megan Costello, Senior Advisor
- Dr. Samuel DePina, Deputy Superintendent of Operations
- Dr. Drew Echelson, Chief of Schools and Accountability
- ~~Gabrielle Farrell, Chief of Communications~~
- ~~Dr. Charles Grandson, Chief of Equity, Strategy, and Opportunity Gaps~~
- Monica Hogan, Assistant Superintendent, Data Strategy, and Implementation
- ~~Jillian Kelton, Chief of Student Support~~
- ~~Nathan Kuder, Chief of Finance~~
- ~~Lisa Maki, Legal Advisor~~
- Rochelle M. Nwosu, Chief of Staff
- Myriam Ortiz, Chief of Community Engagement
- ~~Annie Qin, Executive Director of Government Relations~~
- Lesley Ryan-Miller, Chief of Teaching and Learning
- Delavern Stanislaus, Chief of Capital Planning
- ~~Denise Snyder, Chief of Family Advancement~~
- Dr. Ana Tavares, Deputy Superintendent of Equity, Family, and Community Advancement
- Christine Trevisone, Senior Advisor of Specialized Services
- TBD, Chief of Multilingual and Multicultural Education
- TBD, Chief of Specialized Services

Appendix: School Closures

34 closures and mergers since 2010

Since a wave of closures in 2011, Boston Public Schools has continued to incrementally shrink its footprint over the last decade. Several of the closed schools reopened. Most of the closed high schools were small schools that previously had been split off from large traditional high schools. The Frederick closure and West Zone ELC-Hennigan merger require School Committee approval.

■ Merger ■ Closure ■ Reopened or converted



Source: Boston Public Schools
CHRISTOPHER HUFFAKER/GLOBE STAFF

Interactive content by Flourish

Appendix: Paid Administrative Leave: Records Request

I hope you are doing well. Thank you for your patience as we gathered the information responsive to your request. Below please find information responsive to your request dated December 19, 2024.

FinCom Question #1: *The total number of Boston Public Schools employees on administrative leave for calendar years: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022. and 2023 (from January 1, 2023 through September 1, 2023).*

Response #1.

# of Employees on Admin Leave	
SY23-24	123
SY22-23	168
SY21-22	119
SY20-21	104
SY19-20	34

FinCom Question #2: *The total of salary payments made to Boston Public Schools employees while on administrative leave for calendar years: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022. and 2023 (from January 1, 2023 through September 1, 2023)*

Response #2.

Year	Total Gross pay
2019	\$1,212,536
2020	\$1,425,590
2021	\$1,740,116
2022	\$2,733,957
2023 (Till Sep)	\$2,204,643

Lisa S. Maki
Legal Advisor
Boston Public Schools

Appendix: Panorama Survey: Central Office Effectiveness (Spring 2023)

Central Office Effectiveness

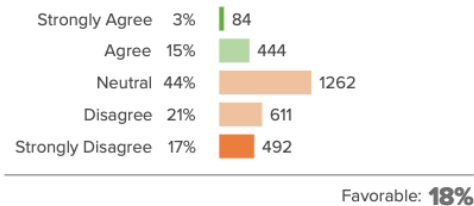
Your average

22%

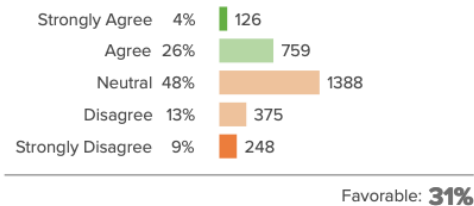
2,918 responses

How did people respond?

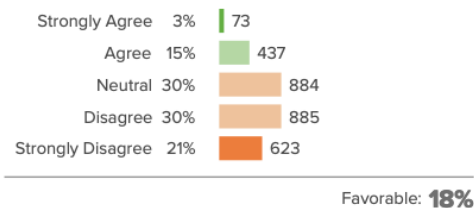
Q.1: BPS Central Office takes responsibility for improving schools.



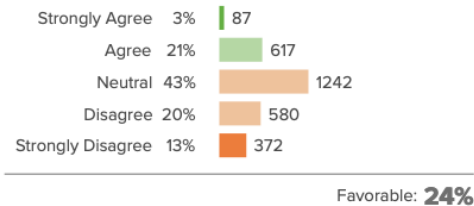
Q.2: People at BPS Central Office treat school staff with dignity and respect.



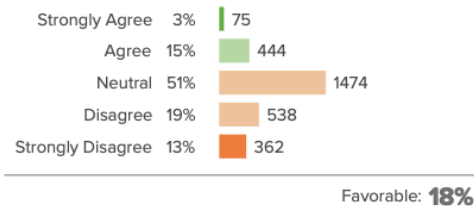
Q.3: I fully comprehend the organizational structure of the BPS Central Office and know whom to contact for support.



Q.4: BPS Central Office communicates a clear vision of teaching and learning.



Q.5: At BPS Central Office, they record and institutionalize best practices.



Appendix C

Custom Questions for School Leaders on a BPS-administered Gallup Survey in January 2022, Mean Likert Scale (1-5)

Custom Questions					Mean Percentile Rank - Gallup Overall	Company Overall Current Mean
Questions	Total N	Current Mean	Last Mean	Change		
My workplace has systems in place to encourage collaboration.	103	3.24	3.35	-0.11	25 	3.22
My team takes time to reflect on and discuss how we can make things better.	101	3.59	3.59	+0.00	22 	3.57
There is cooperation between my department and other departments with whom I work.	98	2.93	2.68	▲+0.25	6 	3.20
At work, I have a lot of strong personal partnerships.	103	3.55	3.59	-0.04	29 	3.54
BPS is clear on what it is to be an anti-racist organization.	103	2.83	2.84	-0.01	*	3.10
BPS is structured and organized to be an anti-racist organization.	103	2.34	2.10	▲+0.24	*	2.74
I understand specifically what I can do to be an anti-racist leader in my area.	101	3.65	3.65	+0.00	*	3.67
I have the support and am empowered to enact anti-racist leadership in my area.	103	3.17	3.09	+0.08	*	3.34
I am satisfied with the responsiveness provided by the District Office personnel.	103	2.66	2.66	+0.00	*	2.66
I am satisfied with the effectiveness of the District Office personnel in supporting the needs of my school.	103	2.65	2.65	+0.00	*	2.65
The District Office is held accountable for providing the highest quality of services to school communities and families.	102	2.23	2.13	+0.10	*	2.23

Obtained from <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/37375385>

Appendix: Links to Resources Included in the Report

Workplace Culture

- [City Council Hearing](#)
- [The Center for Institutional Courage](#)
- [Impact of workplace abuse](#)
- [Suicide](#) (Lincoln University)
- [Dark Side](#)
- [Globe \(Article, Article, Article, Article, Article\)](#)
- BPS History of Discrimination
 - [Boston Article](#)
 - [BayState Banner](#)
- American Association of School Administrators. (n.d.). [Code of ethics](#).
- Rogers, M.L. (2014). Introduction: Disposable Lives. *Theory & Event* 17(3), <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/559375>.
- Linstead, S., Maréchal, G., & Griffin, R. W. (2014). Theorizing and Researching the Dark Side of Organization. [Organization Studies](#), 35(2), 165-188.
- [WBUR Article](#)
- [Globe Article](#)
- [Ruby Reyes](#)
- [Kymani Jones](#)
- [Baystate Banner](#) and [Bay State Banner](#)
- [Implicit Bias](#)
- [Institutional Courage](#)
- [Office of Civil Rights](#) and [Lawsuit](#) and [Settlement Agreement](#) (Suspensions)
- [Office of Equity: 21/2022, 22/2023](#)
- [School Yard News: Mystery Memo](#)

Paid Administrative Leave

- [Employee Discipline Procedures Circular-BPS](#) (2022-2023)
- [Purpose of Paid Administrative Leave](#) (BLOG)
- [Federal FAQ on PAL](#) ~([Federal Law Never Implemented](#))
- [Legal Blog](#) (Origins of PAL)
- [March 2023](#) Rectifying an Empty Gesture
- [NBC](#)
- [WBZ](#)
- [PAL \(Linked IN\)](#)
- [Herald](#)

Court Cases:

- [Charles Sherman Neal Vs. Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#)
- [Edwards Vs. City of Boston](#)

Mismanagement of Funds

- [Analyze Boston](#)

- [Herald](#)
- [Globe](#)
- [City Council Presentations](#) (FY24)
- [City Council Presentation](#) (FY23)
- **[BPS Budget Information](#) and [Hiring](#),**

Staff Turnover

- [DESE](#)
- [OELL](#)
- [Special Education](#)
- [The 74](#)
- [Globe](#)
- [Globe](#)
- [EL Task Force Resigns](#)
- **BPS Presentation: [2013](#)**

Reports on BPS

- DESE [March 2022 Report](#)
- [Mintz Report](#)
 - [Boston School Committee Meeting](#) Notes-August 30th, 2023
 - [Tidwell Powerpoint to BSC](#)
 - [BPS Implementation Presentation to BSC](#)
- **[BTU Report on Inclusion and Racial Equity in BPS](#)**
- **[Council of Great City Schools](#) (2009)**
- **[Council of Great City Schools](#) (SST Final Report)**
- **[Hinckley Allen Phase III Report](#)**
- **[Human Resources in BPS](#)**
- **[Task Force Presentation](#)**
- **[Tidwell Report](#)**