

National and Neighborhood Communities

Build **BPS**

National and Neighboring Community Examples

During the course of educational visioning, the BuildBPS team studied examples of regional and national district structures, to learn from various approaches and practices.

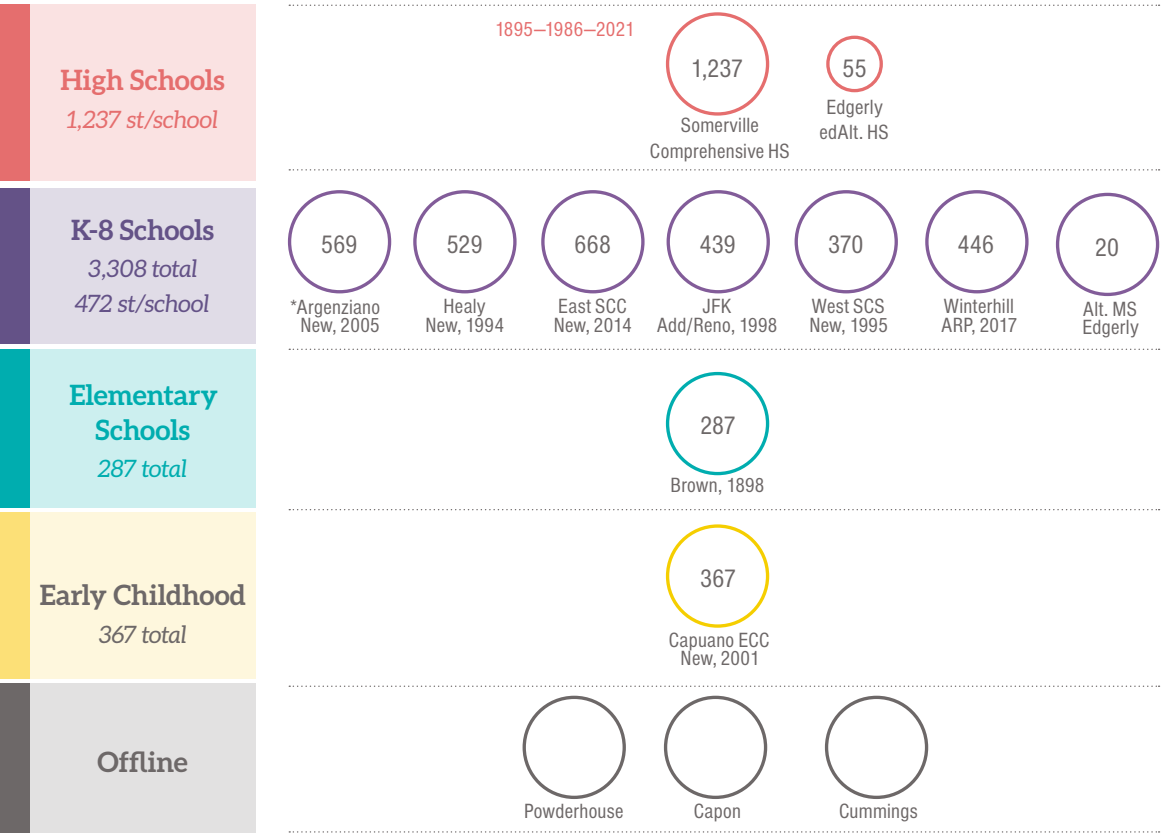
What Are the Neighbors Up To?

Boston is the largest school district not only in Massachusetts, but also New England. There are unique demographic characteristics within the City, but also numerous attributes common to neighboring communities. Boston's geography also creates a number of isolated neighborhoods that reflect the characteristics of adjacent cities. With its healthy economy and robust higher education ecosystem, Boston attracts many young families, but like many cities, it struggles to maintain them for a variety of reasons, not simply perception of school quality. The BuildBPS team illustrated three (of many) neighboring districts—Somerville, Brookline, and Quincy—that Boston competes with on family migration, to see what, if any, patterns could provide insight when considering shaping the district.

Some findings of note:

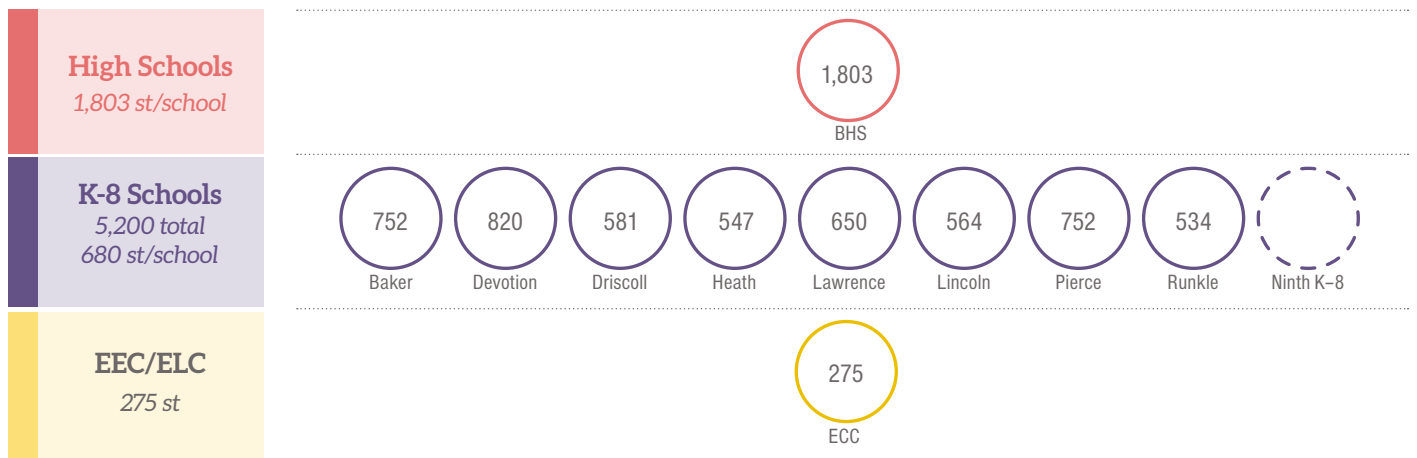
- Boston families and students leave the City to enter these districts and others, such as Everett, Chelsea and Revere.
 - The sizes of these districts, and the ways in which they developed, have resulted in more traditional pyramidal organizations and clear pathways from elementary school through high school.
 - The urban fabric of these districts is similar to Boston, such that the same challenges of small neighborhood schools, versus consolidated larger schools, have been evolving over the course of many years.
 - Each district has had active, and relatively consistent, school-building programs over the last two decades, and can provide lessons learned and models for implementation for BuildBPS.
- Choices between traditional elementary, middle, and high school structures, versus a K–8 model, are expressed in a number of these districts.

Somerville 4,987 students
1986–2016 (30 Year) 89.8% of school age population

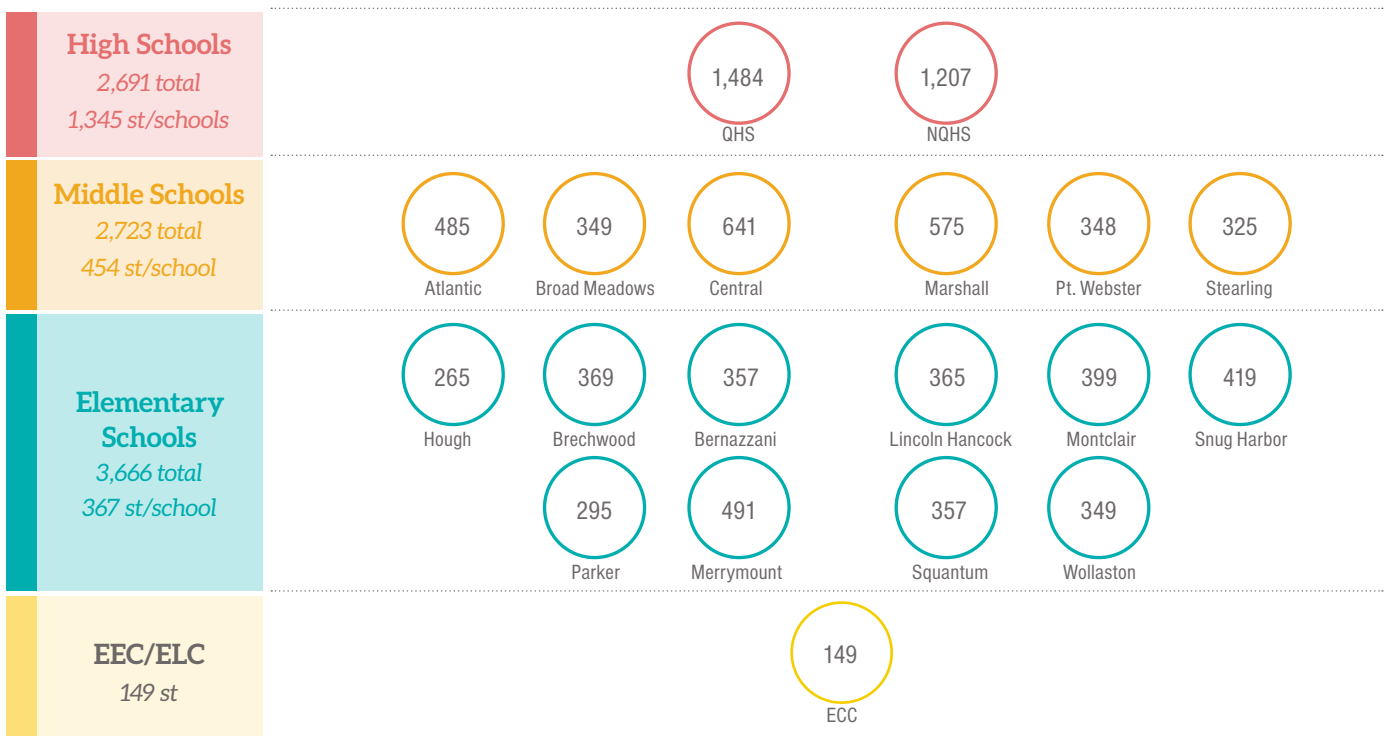


As an example Somerville is roughly the same population and geographic size as East Boston and over the last 30 years all but one of the seven K–8 schools are new; one smaller, older (1898) K–5 remains in use; and the comprehensive high school will be reconstructed over the next 5 years. In essence the district has transformed itself for 21st century education in a generation and half, an illustration of the time required to make transformative changes.

Brookline 7,112 students
86.5% of school age population



Quincy 9,229 students
.87.8% of school age population



What Are Other Comparable Cities Nationally Up To?

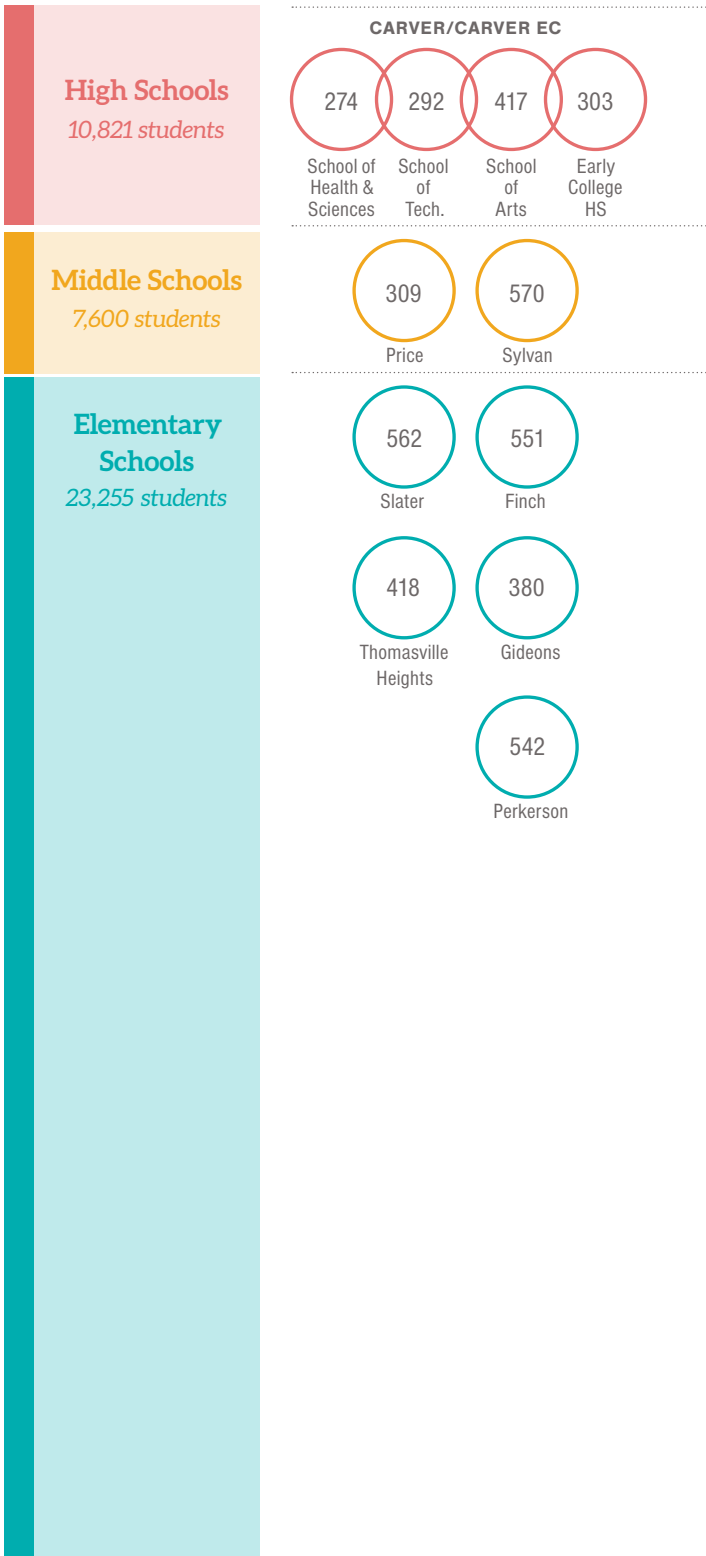
Boston is seen as a national leader in education, and BPS shares a number of characteristics with similar-sized school districts (e.g., Washington, DC; Atlanta, Georgia; Portland, Oregon). MGT has performed numerous master plans for cities across the nation, and provided insight during the BuildBPS process into how other districts are dealing with the common challenges facing educational delivery, grade structures, neighborhood versus thematic and magnet schools, and school-to-pupil ratios.

BPS has invested in partially shifting to a K–8 structure over the past two decades, primarily utilizing facilities designed as elementary schools from the last century. The district also has six remaining traditional middle schools. As an example, Portland (Oregon) Public Schools moved to a total K–8 structure in 2006, citing national research. In 2015, it reinstated the pre-K–5 and 6–8 structure in some areas.

Reviewing school structure, Portland Public Schools staff studied data on how grade configuration affects student achievement. The research presented arguments “that the number of students in a grade is more important than school size” (Offenberg, 2001), and that each school’s philosophy and practices are what is most important. Students can succeed in any grade arrangement if the curriculum, programs, and instructional delivery system are appropriate. This opinion is consistent with views held by the National Middle School Association, which claims that the implementation of “effective programs and practices, not grade configuration, determine the quality of schools.” Each scenario, regardless of grade reconfiguration, aims to provide the enrollment foundation needed to adequately resource improved student achievement outcomes, enhanced curriculum offerings, bilingual language development, and multiple avenues to expand parent and community engagement.

The recommendations discussed earlier in this section address school size, delivery methodology, and curriculum for grades 6–8, regardless of the school building in which they reside.

Atlanta, GA 41,676 Students



S. ATLANTA

