



english for **NEW  
BOSTONIANS**

## ESOL for Parents and Caregivers Curriculum

# Navigating BPS:

## *Unit 5 Looking Beyond to Other Choices— Exam Schools, Pilot Schools, Charter Schools, Independent Schools, Advanced Work Classes*

### Activities:

#1: Learning the Facts Together

#2: Comparing Alternatives

#3: Reinforcing Content- Telephone and Paired Dictations

#4: Pilot Schools

#5: What is Advanced Work?

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### **About English for New Bostonians**

English for New Bostonians (ENB) invests in the future of our region by fostering a high-quality ESOL system that prepares immigrants to pursue their educational, economic and civic aspirations. Through grant making, training teachers, and building public awareness, ENB expands the number of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) seats, improves program quality across agencies, customizes curricula to diverse subpopulations, and leverages private and public resources. Founded in 2001 by the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA), immigrant leaders, and local foundations, ENB now involves several city departments, approximately 20 public and private funders, and numerous community organizations.

### **About the ESOL for Parents and Caregivers Initiative**

Through ESOL for Parents and Caregivers, ENB guides ESOL providers and immigrant-rich schools in building partnerships to facilitate parent engagement in schools, enabling parents/caregivers to improve their English and digital literacy skills, navigate school systems, and understand expectations and opportunities for school involvement and ways to optimize children's learning. At the same time, ESOL for Parents helps adults prepare to pursue their own educational and employment goals, *while supporting children's learning – aiming to eliminate multigenerational poverty.*

### **About Susan Klaw**

Susan Klaw has directed, taught in, and developed original curriculum materials for Boston-based parent ESOL programs since 1991. She has delivered extensive training locally and nationally on various aspects of Family Literacy and been named a "Literacy Champion" by the Massachusetts Literacy Foundation, Parent Educator of the Year by the Children's Trust Fund, and Adult Educator of the Year by the Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education.

### **About the ESOL for Parents and Caregivers Curriculum**

The Curriculum (on ENB website and available free of charge) gives ESOL teachers background materials, lessons and activities designed to help immigrant parents learn English and become more effectively involved in their children's education. Selecting curriculum units and lessons relevant to their classes, ESOL teachers can orient immigrant parents to the U.S. school system and provide practical skills such as interpreting report cards, participating in teacher conferences, advocating for children, and supporting children's learning at home. While some information is Boston specific, much can be used in any locale. ENB can assist in adapting materials for school districts. Additionally, ENB offers a Companion Middle/High School Guide, as well as a Digital Learning Guide to support online instruction.

### **Using the ESOL for Parents and Caregivers Curriculum**

All materials are intended to be downloaded and widely used. Please cite English for New Bostonians and credit English for New Bostonians on all reproductions. We welcome feedback and stories on how you and your students are using the ESOL for Parents and Caregivers Curriculum!

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## ACTIVITY #1: LEARNING THE FACTS TOGETHER

### **Rationale:**

Seeking out alternatives to regular BPS schools is something many immigrant students don't do because they don't know that such choices even exist, much less how to find out more about them. This collaborative reading exercise for intermediate level students helps them learn and retain basic information about different kinds of schools.

### **Student Objectives:**

- Students will learn basics about Exam Schools, Pilot Schools, Charter Schools and Independent Schools.
- Students will be able to answer questions and explain orally what they have read.

### **Materials:**

- Handout: Fact Sheet on Exam Schools, Pilot Schools, Charter Schools and Independent Schools.
- Handout: Fact Sheet Worksheet

### **Activity Outline:**

1. Explain objectives.
2. Write across the board: Exam schools, Pilot schools, Charter schools, Independent schools. Elicit prior knowledge by asking for a show of hands: *Does anyone in the class have a child who goes to one of these kinds of schools?* Get students to share what they know about any of these schools.
3. Distribute handout: Fact Sheet on Exam Schools, Pilot Schools, Charter Schools and Independent Schools and the accompanying Fact Sheet Worksheet. Divide students into four groups and assign each group one type of school to read about and an accompanying worksheet to fill out together as a group. Explain that each group will read one section, and then teach the rest of class what they have learned.
  - Ask each group to choose one person in the group to report back, using the worksheet questions as a guide for what information to include.
  - Invite the designated student from each group to come up in front of the class and explain what they learned about their assigned type of school. Then ask other group members whether they want to add any additional information.
  - Make notes on an easel pad (one page per type of school) as students share information. These notes can then be saved and referred back to for Activity #2 which follows.
4. For homework, have students read independently the other sections of the Fact Sheet. For extra credit, students can fill out a fact sheet worksheet for each section.

5. To review content, create cloze exercises out of any or all of the paragraphs about different types of schools. Choose the number and difficulty of words to omit based on the level of your class. Read the paragraph aloud repeatedly as students fill in the blanks.

### **Follow-Up:**

- Invite parents to the class whose children attend any of these types of schools to share their experiences and answer questions, or set up a parent panel of students in your current class.
- Invite a Stepping Stone representative to come present to the class or get information from Stepping Stone to go over as a group.
- Have students explore the websites mentioned under the description of each different type of school if they are interested in more information.

## **Fact Sheet on Exam Schools, Pilot Schools, Charter Schools, Independent Schools**

**You are lucky to live in the Boston area because there are many different kinds of schools parents can consider for their children in addition to the traditional Boston Public Schools. Here are some of your different kinds of choices.**

### **Exam Schools:**

Boston has three exam schools: Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy and John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science. All three serve students in grades 7-12. Most students start in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, but they can also start in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The exam schools have harder courses and more homework than most BPS high schools. They focus on preparing students for college. They are called exam schools because to be accepted, Students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade have to take a special exam called MAP. They take the exam in December. Based on test scores and grades, your child may be eligible to attend one of the exam schools. You must live in Boston for your child to attend an exam school.

- For more information, search under [Exam Schools](#) on the BPS website. Remember if you go to the upper right hand corner, you can change the language and read the information in your first language.

### **Pilot Schools:**

There are more than 20 Pilot Schools within BPS. They are elementary, middle and high schools. Pilot schools are public schools, which means they are free. They are different from the other BPS schools because they have more independence. Each school can make its own decisions about teachers, budget, curriculum, school hours. Pilot Schools are usually smaller than other BPS schools. For example, Another Course to College is a pilot high school which has only 250 students. Pilot schools may have a particular focus, like science or art. For example, the Boston Arts Academy is a pilot high school that focuses on music, dance and theatre. Some pilot schools have a special application form that students have to fill out to be admitted. However, parents can choose most pilot schools

as part of the regular school choice process. You must live in Boston for your child to go to a Boston Pilot School.

For more information on different types of schools within BPS, go to look at <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/page/941>

### **Charter Schools:**

There are approximately 35 charter schools in the greater Boston area. They are elementary, middle and high schools. Charter schools are like independent schools, but they are free. They are run by the state, not by the local cities. Charter schools can have their own special theme or different approach to learning. Each school will have its own schedule and use its own curriculum. In general, charter schools are small and many in the Boston area get excellent results on the MCAS tests. Most charter schools have a longer school day and longer school year than BPS schools. BPS runs its own charter schools which are called **in-district charter schools**. Up Academy is an example of a Boston in-district charter school.

Charter school accepts students through a lottery system. What that means is when a school accepts Jorge, for example, it is because the school has selected his name from a group of names. It is not because Jorge is good in science or loves to play football. It is like winning a raffle. Parents should contact individual schools to find out when applications for the lottery are due. Usually the lottery is in February or March. The application forms are quick and easy to fill out. You do not have to live in the city where the charter school is located for your child to attend the school. Parents can apply for both charter schools and BPS schools at the same time and then make their decisions later.

For more information go to the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association: <http://www.masscharterschools.org>. There you can click on a map and find a listing and description of all the charter schools in Boston. You can call to arrange a visit or look at the school website for more information.

## **Independent Schools:**

Independent Schools are also called private schools. There are more than 60 independent schools in the Boston area. They are elementary, middle or high schools. Some are day schools. Some are boarding schools where students live at the school. Students have to pay to go to independent schools. They are very expensive. However, students often get financial aid to help them pay for the school. Independent schools choose students very carefully. The work is very hard and students get a lot of homework. Independent schools want to choose students they think will be successful at their school. When you go to an independent school, it doesn't matter what city you live in.

Applying to an independent school is similar to applying to college. Students have to take special tests, send in their grades, fill out an application, write an essay and have an interview. Usually students have to submit their applications before Christmas. They will hear from the school whether they have been accepted in the spring.

**Stepping Stone** is a Boston area program which helps children from public schools get accepted into and succeed in independent schools or Boston exam schools. Students in the Stepping Stone Academy get 14 to 26 months of extra academic help after school, on weekends and in the summer. Stepping Stone helps parents to learn about different independent schools and helps them visit and apply to those schools.

For more information go to: Stepping Stone: <https://www.tsf.org/>. For a listing of independent schools, go to Independent Schools of New England: <http://www.aisne.org>

## Handout: The Fact Sheet Work Sheet

**Directions:** Fill this out as a group after you have finished reading your section together. Choose one person in your group to write down the answers as you discuss them.

Type of School: \_\_\_\_\_

How many are there? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have to live in Boston to go to this type of school? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some ways these schools are different from regular BPS schools: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are some ways these schools are the same as regular BPS schools:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have to apply separately to these schools or do you just choose them? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you have to do to apply to this type of school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY #2: COMPARING ALTERNATIVES

### **Rationale:**

This activity follows the previous one, “Learning the Facts Together.” Together they comprise a two or three part lesson. When information is presented in an ESOL context, students need opportunities to process that content in a variety of ways.

### **Student Objectives:**

- Students will review information about Exam Schools, charter schools and independent Schools.
- Students will be able to name one similarity and one difference between charter schools and independent schools.
- Students will be able to name one similarity and one difference between Exam Schools and regular BPS high schools.

### **Materials:**

- Handout: Fact Sheet on Exam Schools, Pilot Schools, Charter Schools and Independent Schools (used in previous activity)
- Handout: Compare Charter Schools and Independent Schools:
- Handout: Compare Exam Schools and Regular Boston High Schools:

### **Activity Outline:**

1. Explain objectives.
2. Do a quick “What Do You Remember?” exercise. Write Charter Schools, Independent Schools, Exam Schools in three columns on board. Have students generate any facts they can remember from the previous lesson.
3. Make sure students understand the concepts of similarities and differences. If it is a new concept for them, practice on something easier than the text on different types of schools. If the program uses the Best-Plus test, remind students that in the Best Plus test they are asked to describe differences and similarities between various aspects of their home country and the U.S., such as weather, food, and neighborhoods.
4. Distribute the first handout Compare Charter Schools and Independent Schools and divide students into pairs to work together on listing similarities and differences.
5. Reconvene the whole group and compile a group list on easel paper of the similarities and differences the student pairs have generated. Make sure that two key differences get listed:
  - Charter schools are free; independent schools are very expensive.
  - Charter schools accept by lottery; independent schools accept on the basis of individual test scores, grades, student interviews and essays.Make sure that certain key similarities are listed:

- Not part of BPS
- The school chooses its own curriculum and hires its own teachers
- To apply you have to contact the individual school
- They are both very hard to get into: charters because there are long waiting lists; independent schools because they are so selective.
- You don't have to live in the city where the school is located to attend.

6. To help clarify how students get accepted into charter and independent schools, do some brief role plays:

- For the concept of “application by lottery”, give each student an index card. Have them write their child's name, age, home address and telephone number on the card. Collect the cards and put them into a basket. Say that you have two places for 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the Onward to College charter school. Draw two names. Explain that those two students will be accepted. The other names will be on a waiting list. Remind them that each charter school does its lottery at a different time. Parents have to find out when that lottery is and make sure to put their child's name in the first lottery period. Demonstrate how to go to a charter school website to find out when the lottery is. For example, go to the [Excel Academy](#) website and click on Enroll Your Child.
- For the concept of a selective admissions process, which students may have no experience with, role play an imaginary independent school interview. Select a student to be the parent and another to be the child. The teacher is the admissions person from the independent school. In the role play, make sure to reference test scores, the child's grades, the application essay. Ask why the student wants to attend the school. Explain at the end of the mock interview that the school has many applicants. The family will hear in April whether or not the child has been accepted.

7. Go through steps (4) and (5) again, this time to compare exam schools and regular Boston high schools. Use the handout [Compare Exam Schools and Regular Boston High Schools](#). Begin by reviewing and writing on the board the names of the three exam schools and asking why they are called exam schools.

8. Alternate structure: In a large class, some of the student pairs can work on the comparisons between charter and independent schools while other pairs can simultaneously work on the comparisons between exam schools and regular BPS high schools.

**Note to teacher:** *At some point in this process, the teacher may be asked whether all the exam schools are the same, or is one the best. The answer is that Boston Latin is the hardest to get into, then Latin Academy, then the O' Bryant. In other words, those students with the highest test scores and GPA's in any given applicant pool get invited to go to Boston Latin. Those with slightly lower test scores and GPA's get invited to attend Boston Latin Academy, etc. To get into any one of the exam schools, however, a child has to be an excellent student.*

**Follow-Up:**

- See Activity #1. All follow-up ideas are applicable for this activity also.
- Help students get to the page on Exam Schools on the BPS website they can translate the text into their home language. Access the page by searching for Exam Schools

## Handout: Compare Charter Schools and Independent Schools:

**Directions:** Work with a partner. Use the **Fact Sheet** from the previous activity. List two or three ways in which charter schools are different from independent schools. List two or three ways in which charter schools are the same as independent schools. You should review your Fact Sheet to help you do this.

### Differences between charter schools and independent schools:

1.

2.

3.

### Similarities between charter schools and independent schools:

1.

2.

3.

## Handout: Compare Exam Schools and Regular Boston High Schools:

**Directions:** Work with a partner. List two or three ways in which the Exam Schools are different from regular Boston High Schools. List two or three ways in which the Exam Schools are the same as regular Boston High Schools.

### Differences between Exam Schools and traditional High Schools

1.

2.

3.

### Similarities between Exam Schools and traditional High Schools

1.

2.

3.

## ACTIVITY #3: REINFORCING CONTENT—TELEPHONE AND PAIRED DICTATIONS

### Rationale:

This activity follows the previous two. It provides two useful interactive strategies for reinforcing information about the different kinds of schools.

### Student Objectives:

- Students will review information about Exam Schools, Charter Schools and Independent Schools.
- Students will be able to repeat sentences they have heard about the different kinds of schools they have been studying.
- Students will be able to write sentences dictated to them about the different kinds of schools they have been studying.

### Materials:

### Activity Outline:

1. Explain objectives.
2. Play **Telephone** with sentences that help review the content of this activity. Note that this is a fun way to review any content and build listening comprehension skills. Divide students into teams of no more than six. Have each team line up. Make sure that the first person in each line has comparatively strong comprehension skills. Whisper the sentence to the first person in each team. They then whisper what they have heard to the next person who whispers it to the next person, etc. The last person on each team repeats aloud what they heard. Write these results on the board, and then write your original sentence. The team that has come closest to the original sentence wins. As you replay the game with additional sentences, allow team members to rearrange themselves in the line if they wish. Some sample sentences might be:
  - Charter schools are like free independent schools.
  - Charter schools accept students by lottery.
  - Charter schools accept students by lottery and most have long waiting lists. ▪ There are three exam schools in Boston.
  - Students have to do well on special exams to get into the exam schools.
  - The three exam schools are called Boston Latin, Latin Academy and John D. O'Bryant.
  - Stepping Stone is a free program which helps students get into independent schools.
3. Use **paired dictations** to help review the content of this activity and build writing skills. Note that this is a good way to review any content being presented. Divide students in pairs. Have them work together on the dictation which should be repeated several times. One way to offer correction is to have each pair raise its

hand when the partners are satisfied that they have transcribed the sentence as accurately as possible, and then give them a written version of the original to compare with their own. With a small class, you can have each pair write its transcribed sentence on the board. After you write on the board what you actually dictated, have the group decide which pair “won”, e.g. came closest to the original. Some sample dictations might be:

- Charter schools and independent schools are not part of the Boston Public Schools.
- Many parents in Boston hope their children will get into one of the three exam schools.

## ACTIVITY #4: PILOT SCHOOLS

### **Rationale:**

Students in the BPS pilot high schools perform better on the MCAS tests, are suspended less frequently, attend class more often, and graduate in higher percentages than students enrolled in the city's regular public high schools. Most pilot high schools have city-wide enrollment and because they are part of BPS are easier for immigrant parents to get information about than charter or independent schools. Yet many immigrant parents know nothing about these alternatives within the BPS system.

### **Student Objectives:**

- Students will be able to name two ways in which BPS pilot schools differ from regular BPS high schools.
- Students will recognize the names of some BPS pilot schools.
- Intermediate students will be able to do a web based research project.

### **Materials:**

- Handout: List of pilot schools
- Handout: Pilot High School Research Project

### **Activity Outline:**

1. Explain objectives
2. Reread the section together from Activity #1 on Pilot Schools, pausing to clarify key vocabulary.
3. Based on the text, ask students to each write down at least one way in which pilot schools differ from regular BPS high schools. Use what each student wrote to compile a group list of differences on the board. Make sure that the smaller size of most pilot schools is included on the list.
4. Zero in on the question of size. Have a class discussion: *Would you rather your children went to a big school or a small school? Why?* Write their reasons down on the board. Point out that when they choose middle schools and high schools for their children, size might be an important factor to think about. At the high school level, pilot schools are often much smaller. For example, Fenway High school had 380 students (2021-2022) and East Boston High School had 1055 (2021). It is our belief that immigrant parents whose children do not get into the exam schools should be encouraged to look at these smaller pilot high schools where their children may get more personal attention and academic support.
5. Hand out the list of pilot schools downloaded from the BPS website. Explain to students that you are giving out this list because it is hard to know which BPS school are pilot schools. In most materials from BPS, they are just listed along with

all the other schools. This list will be used in several ways:

- Do a choral reading of the names of each school so that students hear as well as read the names.
- Have students read over the list again and circle the names of any schools they have heard of. Then ask them to share anything they may know about those schools.
- Have students scan the addresses of each school. Have them circle the address of any pilot school near where they live. Then ask them to read aloud the names and addresses of those nearby schools.
- Clarify the term “Citywide.” It means that students can apply to this school from any neighborhood in Boston.

6. In advanced level classes, assign students a pilot high school to do independent research on using the BPS website. Click on the individual school and a description of the school comes up. Students can read this description in their home language. At the end of each description, they can get more information under the link “Report on Teaching and Learning.” This includes the number of students and the race/ethnicities of the students. Have them fill out the Handout: Pilot High School Research Project and report their findings back to the class.

### **Follow-Up:**

- Invite a parent or high school student speaker into your class to talk about one of the pilot high schools from first hand experience. If you cannot locate anyone through your student/school network, try calling a pilot high school itself and ask if they might be able to suggest a speaker.

## Handout: List of Pilot Schools

### Another Course to College

612 Metropolitan Ave  
Hyde Park, MA 02136  
**Grades Offered:** 9-12  
**Hours:** 8:00 am - 2:30 pm  
**School Type:** Pilot

### Baldwin Early Learning Pilot Academy

121 Corey Rd.  
Brighton, MA 02135  
**Grades Offered:** K0-1  
**Hours:** 7:30 am - 4:30 pm; 7:30-11:30 am Wed.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### Boston Arts Academy

11 Charles Street  
Dorchester, MA 02122  
**Grades Offered:** 9-12  
**Hours:** 8:00 am - 3:55 pm; 8:00 am - Noon Fri.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### Boston Community Leadership Academy/McCormack

Grades 7-9: 315 Mt Vernon St., Dorchester, MA 02125  
Grades 10-12: 655 Metropolitan Ave., Hyde Park, MA 02136  
**Grades Offered:** 7-12  
**Hours:** 7:55 am - 2:20 pm  
**School Type:** Pilot

### Boston Teachers Union K-8 School

25 Walk Hill St.  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
**Grades Offered:** K1-8  
**Hours:** 8:30 am - 3:00 pm  
**School Type:** Pilot

### Fenway High School

67 Alleghany St.  
Roxbury, MA 02120  
**Grades Offered:** 9-12  
**Hours:** 8:45 a.m. - 3:35 p.m. Mon., Wed., Thurs; 8:45 a.m. - 2:25 p.m. Tues.; 8:45 a.m. - 1:05 p.m. Fri.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### Frederick, Lilla G. Middle

270 Columbia Rd.

Dorchester, MA 02121  
**Grades Offered:** 6-8  
**Hours:** 9:30 a.m. - 3:40 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Gardner Pilot Academy**

30 Athol St.  
Allston, MA 02134  
**Grades Offered:** K1-8  
**Hours:** 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Greater Egleston High School**

80 School St.  
Roxbury, MA 02119  
**Grades Offered:** 9-12  
**Hours:** 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Haley, Dennis K-8**

570 a.m.erican Legion Hwy.  
Roslindale, MA 02131  
**Grades Offered:** K1-8  
**Hours:** 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Lee Academy Pilot School**

25 Dunbar Ave.  
Dorchester, MA 02124  
**Grades Offered:** K0-3  
**Hours:** 9:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Lyndon, Patrick K-8**

20 Mt. Vernon St.  
West Roxbury, MA 02132  
**Grades Offered:** K1-8  
**Hours:** 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Lyon, Mary High School**

95 Beechcroft St.  
Brighton, MA 02135  
**Grades Offered:** 9-12  
**Hours:** 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.; 8:30 a.m. - Noon Wednesday  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Mason, Samuel Elementary**

150 Norfolk Ave.  
Roxbury, MA 02119  
**Grades Offered:** K0-5  
**Hours:** 8:20 a.m. - 2:20 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilo

### **Mission Hill K-8**

20 Child St.  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
**Grades Offered:** K0-8  
**Hours:** 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **New Mission High School**

655 Metropolitan Ave.  
Hyde Park, MA 02136  
**Grades Offered:** 7-12  
**Hours:** 7:45 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Orchard Gardens K-8**

906 Albany St.  
Roxbury, MA 02119  
**Grades Offered:** K1-8  
**Hours:** 7:25 am - 2:25 pm  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Quincy, Josiah Upper School**

152 Arlington St.  
Boston, MA 02116  
**Grades Offered:** 6-12  
**Hours:** 6-7: 8:40 a.m. - 3:40 p.m. M-T-Th-F; 8:40 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Wed. // 8-12: 7:50 a.m. - 2:50 p.m. M-T-Th-F; 7:50 - 11:30 a.m. Wed.  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **TechBoston Academy**

9 Peacevale Rd.  
Dorchester, MA 02124  
**Grades Offered:** 6-12  
**Hours:** 7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri.; 7:30 - 11:00 a.m. Wed  
**School Type:** Pilot

### **Young Achievers Science & Math K-8**

20 Outlook Rd.  
Mattapan, MA 02126  
**Grades Offered:** K0-8  
**Hours:** 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.  
**School Type:** Pilot



## Handout: Pilot High School Research Project

**Note:** You can get your information on the BPS website. From the website go to **Our Schools**. Then look at High Schools. You can change the language too to your home language. For information about school size and the racial composition of the school, go to the **School Report Card**.

What is the name of the pilot high school you are doing research on? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the address? \_\_\_\_\_

Does it have a special admissions process? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you have to do to apply? -- \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How many students does it have? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some special features of the high school that sound interesting to

you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are some special features of the school you think your child would like?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY #5: WHAT IS ADVANCED WORK?

### Rationale:

Children in grades 3, 4 and 5 are invited in to Advanced Work Classes for the following year based on test scores. Immigrant parents may receive these invitations from BPS and not understand what the Advanced Work program is.

### Student Objectives:

- Students will understand what the BPS Advanced Work program is.
- Students will be able to answer reading comprehension questions.

### Materials:

- Current Guide to Boston Public Schools for Families and Students, Advanced Work Class. If you do not have a hard copy of the Guide, download the page from the BPS website, <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org>. Search for Advanced Work Class.
- Handout: Reading Comprehension Worksheet : Advanced Work Class
- Handout: Susana's Hard Decision

### Activity Outline:

1. Explain objectives
2. Write Advanced Work Class on board along with its acronym AWC. Explain that teachers usually refer to it just as Advanced Work. Ask students whether anyone has heard of Advanced Work or knows a child who has been in Advanced Work classes. Discuss any experiences students have had with the AWC program.
3. Distribute Guides or the downloaded page from the Guide which describes Advanced Work program. Read it aloud together slowly, clarifying vocabulary and concepts as necessary.
4. Give students the reading comprehension worksheet to work on individually, rereading the text on their own. This could also be a homework assignment.
5. Go over answers as a group:
  - List on the board the differences students have noted on Question 2.
  - Ask for a show of hands on the True/False questions
  - For Question 7, ask all who wrote Yes to go stand on one side of the room and all who wrote No to go stand on the other. Ask for volunteers to explain their Yes or No stance. **Note to teachers:** Make sure to stress that this is often a hard choice for parents at the elementary level. Their child may have been at the same school since kindergarten and now would have to leave for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. The handout Susana's Hard Decision helps frame the issue for parents to discuss.
  - For Question 8, repeat same procedure as above. **Note to teachers:** Because children and parents generally choose new schools for middle school

anyway, accepting an AWC invitation for 6<sup>th</sup> grade is usually not a hard choice for parents. We would recommend parents take advantage of AWC if they can, especially for 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The AWC classes will have far fewer discipline problems, children will learn more, and they help prepare students for the Exam Schools.

6. Distribute Handout: Susana's Hard Decision and read it aloud as a group. Then divide students into small groups to discuss what Susana should decide. Each group should do the sentence completion on the handout and report back to the whole group what they decided.

### **Follow-Up:**

- Invite a parent whose child is in an Advanced Work class to come and speak about her experiences.
- Get and distribute copies of the BPS brochure about the Advanced Work classes. These are available at the Welcome Centers (formerly called Parent Resource Centers) and also on-line.

## Handout: Reading Comprehension: Advanced Work Class

1. In what grades are advanced work classes? \_\_\_\_\_
2. List two ways in which advanced work classes are different from regular classes:

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### Mark True (T) or False (F) for questions 3-6.

3. All BPS students in grades 3, 4 and 5 are given tests in the fall to see if they qualify for AWC. \_\_\_\_
4. Students are invited into the AWC program based on their test scores. \_\_\_\_
5. All elementary and middle schools have advanced work classes. \_\_\_\_
6. If I want my child to go to AWC, I need to choose as many AWC schools as I see listed on the school choice application. \_\_\_\_
7. If your 3<sup>rd</sup> grade child was invited to Advanced Work for 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but it meant changing elementary schools, would you decide **Yes** or **No**? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. If your 5<sup>th</sup> grade child was invited to Advanced Work for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, but the middle schools with AWC were not close to your home, would you decide **Yes** or **No**? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Handout: Susana's Hard Decision

**Note:** AWC = Advanced Work Class

### Susana's Hard Decision

Susana's daughter Lisa was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She had been at the Otis Elementary School in East Boston since Kindergarten. Lisa liked the Otis and was a good student. She always got all 3's and 4's on her report card. Susana thought sometimes Lisa didn't get enough homework. But Lisa loved to read and she always read a lot at home. Lisa liked the school too. It offered many workshops for parents. It had ESOL classes for parents. Many of the teachers spoke different languages. Also, it was only two blocks from their house.

In January, Susana got an invitation from BPS inviting Lisa to AWC for 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Susana was surprised that the Otis did not have an AWC. There was only one other elementary school in East Boston with an AWC. Lisa would have to change schools. Lisa said she didn't want to leave her friends. She loved the Otis school. Susana knew that AWC was supposed to be better and she knew Lisa was a very good student.

**What should Susana do? Should she transfer Lisa to AWC? Should she leave her at the Otis? What can she do to make this decision?**

**Directions:** After discussing the questions above, come to a group decision and complete the following sentence:

Susana should decide \_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_