

Promising Results and Lessons  
from the First Boston District School Converting to  
Pilot Status

Rosann Tung and Monique Ouimette  
Center for Collaborative Education  
[www.cce.org](http://www.cce.org)

Paper presented at the Symposium  
*What Do We Know About Redesigning Large High Schools?*

Annual Meeting of the American Educational Researcher Association  
Chicago, April 2007

# Promising Results and Lessons from the First Boston District School Converting to Pilot Status

## **ABSTRACT**

Boston Community Leadership Academy (BCLA) is the first traditional Boston Public School (Boston High School) to convert to being a Pilot School since the inception of the Network, gaining autonomy over budget, staffing, schedule, curriculum, and governance in exchange for increased school-level accountability<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of this study is to document the process of the school's conversion to Pilot status and the subsequent early changes in the school. The paper first sets the context of the decision to become a Pilot School and then presents five areas of change that were initiated in the first and second Pilot years. Several positive outcomes, and their concurrent challenges, are described, including increased expectations, improved school climate, and increased shared leadership. The implications for other schools and districts considering Pilot status conclude the paper. Given early positive student outcomes on indicators of student engagement and performance, the lessons of the BCLA conversion may be instructive to other schools and districts as they navigate their own transformations.

## **THE CONTEXT OF SMALL, AUTONOMOUS SCHOOLS**

Small, autonomous schools have received much attention and investment in recent years based on the prediction that their size and freedom over resource use may allow staff to be more innovative and responsive to both student and teacher needs, while being accountable to families and the public, resulting in improved student achievement. Over the last decades, schools and districts have embraced several models of increased autonomy in order to improve student learning. Some of these models include:

- Site based decision making or site based management schools
- M-form districts (Edmonton, Houston, Seattle)
- Autonomy Zone and Empowerment Schools (New York City)
- Autonomous Management and Performance Schools (AMPS) (Chicago)
- Charter schools
- Pilot Schools (Boston, Fitchburg, Los Angeles)

The models of autonomy represented in this list vary in the levels of control that individual schools have over their resources. For example, while most offer full staffing and curriculum autonomy, some models give only partial budget autonomy or governance autonomy. There are also different criteria for adopting one of these models, from district-wide autonomy to selecting high performing schools to requiring schools to apply with a school design. Of the autonomous school types listed above, there is very little published data linking the level of autonomy to student outcomes, in some cases because the efforts are still quite recent. Edmonton, Houston, and Seattle are districts in which central offices provide economies of scale for functions that make sense, such as payroll, technology, and transportation, while providing school autonomy over most other decisions, including staffing and professional development. These districts

---

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for a description of Pilot Schools and the areas of autonomy.

outperformed comparable districts on the Stanford 9 that were more centralized in organization.<sup>2</sup> Newer initiatives include Autonomous Management and Performance Schools (AMPS) in Chicago and Empowerment Schools in New York City. In both of these districts, higher performing schools have been granted increased autonomy. The most autonomous public schools are charter schools, which operate outside of districts but with public money. Charter school outcomes are mixed at best.<sup>3</sup>

Pilot Schools provide a unique set of schools for which to address the relationship between school autonomy and student outcomes. Created through an agreement among the district, school committee, and teachers union in 1994 in response to charter legislation, Pilot Schools are a model for urban school reform, in which schools are given maximum autonomy in exchange for increased school-level accountability. Because they remain members of the district, they have a greater chance of encouraging change from within the system through sharing emerging practices and professional development. This model of autonomous schools is the only one in which the union is a partner; teachers remain members of the union while receiving union salary and benefits, but are freed from work conditions. Previous studies have shown that, while representative of BPS students by race, socioeconomic status, and mainstream special education status, Pilot Schools' students on the whole fare better than non-Pilot BPS students on a variety of indicators of student engagement and performance.<sup>4</sup>

Given the intense national interest in the Pilot model and its success, this paper offers an in-depth case study, documenting the first Boston Public School to convert to Pilot status and gain autonomy while intentionally downsizing. This case study of Boston Community Leadership Academy provides historical context, analysis of multiple outcomes indicators, and a detailed process which may inform other districts as they seek to convert large schools to small, autonomous schools.

## **RESEARCH METHODS AND ANALYSIS**

### INTERVIEWS

Four administrators, fifteen staff members, and twenty-two students were interviewed. Of those interviewed, two administrators, thirteen staff members, and twenty-one students were at Boston High before the conversion to BCLA. Teachers and administrators were interviewed for 40 to 65 minutes either in small groups or individually. The school's Pilot Schools Network coach was also interviewed. Students were interviewed in focus groups for 45 minutes. In addition to the formal interviews, many informal conversations occurred among researchers and school staff and coach.

All interviews were semi-structured. While separate protocols were developed for teachers, administrators, students, and the school coach, the main focus of each interview was the conversion process and the changes that have taken place in the school community as a result (Appendix 3).

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://repositories.cdlib.org/uclasp/cpo/927/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/conference/papers/Berendsetal\\_2006-DRAFT.pdf](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/conference/papers/Berendsetal_2006-DRAFT.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ccebos.org/pubslinks.html>.

Interview analysis was conducted in steps:

- Interviews were transcribed
- Researchers read interviews and noted general themes
- Interviews were coded using HyperRESEARCH
- Codes were edited for consistency
- Researchers discussed and organized the coding results

## DOCUMENTATION

In addition to interviews, researchers observed school events and meetings including: leadership team meetings, governing board meetings, curriculum leadership team, and the youth leadership conference. Agendas and minutes were collected from each and used as data. Researchers also analyzed documentation such as coaching logs, teacher and student schedules, course lists, course rosters, and school policy manuals.

## QUANTITATIVE DATA

Quantitative data on the school's student demographics, engagement, and performance was calculated from multiple data sources. The Boston Public Schools provided CCE with four years of data in 52 categories for every student who was enrolled during each school year. Data was received at the individual student level, with randomly generated unique student identifiers to protect student confidentiality. The demographic and engagement data was also reported to the Massachusetts Department of Education through its Student Information Management System (SIMS).<sup>5</sup> In addition to SIMS indicators, the database also includes results of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams in English Language Arts and/or math for students in grades 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10. CCE created a four year student level database of all BPS, from which the BCLA data was analyzed for this paper.

A second source of data was the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC), who provided data on post-secondary participation of Boston high school graduates.

All quantitative analysis was done with Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL'S TRANSFORMATION**

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) superintendent appointed a new principal to take over Boston High School in June 2000. The school facility was overcrowded and among the lowest performing high schools in the district. In order to improve student performance, this new principal changed the focus of the school from a work-study school with two shifts of students daily to a college preparatory high school.

However, after only a year of the new leadership, the school department announced that it would phase-out Boston High School rather than upgrade the inadequate facilities in which it was housed. Upon receiving this news, the principal led the school community through a process that would keep the school open. Faculty, students, and parents mobilized to protest against the

---

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the Massachusetts Department of Education's SIMS, including indicators and their codes, see <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/data/sims/>.

school closure. Their actions included a march to the superintendent's office to demand a meeting with him and speaking out at a public school committee hearing in November 2001.

The superintendent allowed the school to propose conversion to Pilot status and ask the faculty for a vote of approval. The flexibility granted through Pilot status would enable the staff to work together to improve student achievement. It would also allow the school to re-apply for New England Association for School Accreditation (NEASC) certification. Despite reported tensions among faculty members that arose out of the new principal's placement at the school a year earlier, 85% of the faculty voted to convert to Pilot status in order to remain open. In January 2002, the school committee accepted the vote and initial proposal and asked the school to submit a full proposal for Pilot status. This paper focuses on the changes that took place after this vote to become a Pilot School.

The final full proposal was submitted to the Joint Boston Public Schools/Boston Teachers Union Steering Committee in April 2002. In June 2002, the Boston School Committee approved the plan for the new Pilot School, Boston Community Leadership Academy, to open in September 2002.

## **PILOT SCHOOL PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

Financial support for the planning period was provided by a grant from the Boston Foundation. A 21-member school-based design team consisting of staff, parents, administrators, community representatives, and students, developed the full proposal, with coaching and technical assistance from the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE).

CCE coaches supported the collaborative process through facilitating design team meetings and guiding them through the work that led to the completed proposal. The school-based design team met weekly from the beginning of February through May 2002. Meetings ranged from 2.5 to 7 hours in length and were facilitated by a coach from the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE). During the meetings, the team worked out the details of the proposal that would become the framework for the new Pilot School, a framework that would be built upon during the 2002-03 school year, when staff continued to plan and transition into full Pilot status and thus full autonomy.

Design team planning began with several foundational concepts for the new Pilot School: solidifying the mission and vision for the school, developing preliminary Habits of Mind (ways of thinking expected of all graduates), integrating the concept of leadership into the daily life of the school, and talking broadly about what team members would want BCLA graduates to know and be able to do. Discussion and planning then moved to the more concrete tasks of developing curriculum maps for each grade level, establishing a plan for recruitment and admission of students, designing an initial schedule, and creating governance structures. Throughout the planning, participants utilized resources that were given to them by their coach. Existing Pilot Schools provided practical examples of curriculum, schedule, and governance structures. Given the tight timeline, design team members often had 'homework' between meetings that included reading, drafting sections of the proposal, and talking to other staff at the school to build support and get input on the planning.

The design team members kept BCLA staff members informed about the status of the proposal and asked them for feedback during the planning phase, formally through full-staff and department meetings, and informally through individual conversations. During design team meetings, team members discussed and incorporated staff feedback into the proposal. The design team needed a second staff vote of approval in order to present the full proposal to the school district steering committee and the school committee.

At times over the course of developing the proposal, the design team needed clarification from the district. The principal worked with the district to clarify policies and procedures and to keep district staff informed about the progress of the proposal development. With support from CCE coaches, she negotiated with the district on critical areas including staffing, budget, and student assignment.

## **BCLA STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

At the time of the new principal's appointment, Boston High enrolled 650 students, with half attending school in the morning and half in the afternoon. Because the newly designed school had changed to a single full-day schedule, the enrollment needed to reduce to prevent overcrowding. Through discussions with the district, CCE, and the Gates Foundation, the design team chose to intentionally decrease the overall student enrollment to 400 students and to further personalize the school through creating two small learning communities of 200 students each. The student population would gradually decrease through graduation, attrition, and smaller incoming classes.

BCLA requires prospective students to complete an application, which includes a questionnaire, writing short essays, obtaining two letters of recommendation, and submitting examples of work and standardized test scores. Students are chosen to enter the school based on the fit between what they would like in a high school and BCLA's mission. Prior academic achievement is not a factor in admissions.

The student population at BCLA is racially and ethnically diverse. During the 2004-05 school year, 61% of students were African American, 24% were Hispanic, 12% were White, and 3% were Asian<sup>6</sup>. Sixty-six percent of students qualified for free or reduced lunch<sup>7</sup>. As shown in Table 1, these percentages are similar to the demographics of the school in the year prior to the conversion, with an increase in the percentage of African American students and students eligible for free or reduced lunch, and a decrease in the percentage of White students. Percentages in parentheses show the average of non-Pilot, non-exam schools for the most recent year.

---

<sup>6</sup> We use Boston Public Schools racial categories for simplicity

<sup>7</sup> This is most likely an underestimate of the actual percentage of students who are eligible for free/reduced lunch. Students at the high school level are less likely to apply for free/reduced lunch than students at the elementary and middle levels.

**TABLE 1: TOTAL STUDENTS, RACE, AND ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE LUNCH**

Year	School	Total students	% African-American	% Hispanic	% White	% Asian	% Free/Reduced Lunch
2004-05	BCLA	442	61.1 (47.2)	23.8 (34.1)	11.8 (11.3)	3.2 (7.1)	66.1 (79.9)
2003-04	BCLA	428	57.9	23.1	14.7	4	71
2002-03	BCLA	597	57.1	20.4	17.3	4.7	64.3
2001-02	Boston High School	798	52.5	22.2	19.4	5.4	51.3

BCLA serves a reduced population of students who have limited English proficiency, and similar proportions of students who receive both mainstream and substantially separate special education services. Table 2 lists these percentages over the past four years.

**TABLE 2: BILINGUAL, LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, AND STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (RATES)**

Year	School	Bilingual Program	Limited English Proficiency	Special Education Mainstream	Special Education Substantially Separate
2004-05	BCLA	9.7 (10.7)	12.4 (16.2)	9.3 (11.2)	9.5 (10.1)
2003-04	BCLA	0	18.2	10.3	10
2002-03	BCLA	7.9	22.8	9.9	9
2001-02	Boston High School	10	21.4	10	8.6

## **EARLY INDICATORS OF BCLA STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

This study examined indicators of student engagement and achievement at the school before and after its conversion. Rates of attendance and discipline indicate students' level of engagement on a daily basis, whereas transfers are an indication of a school's holding power over time. From 2000 to 2003 (the last year for which there is available data), attendance increased, suspensions were stable, and transfers out decreased (Table 3). Transfers into the school decreased as well, because the school was intentionally decreasing in size.

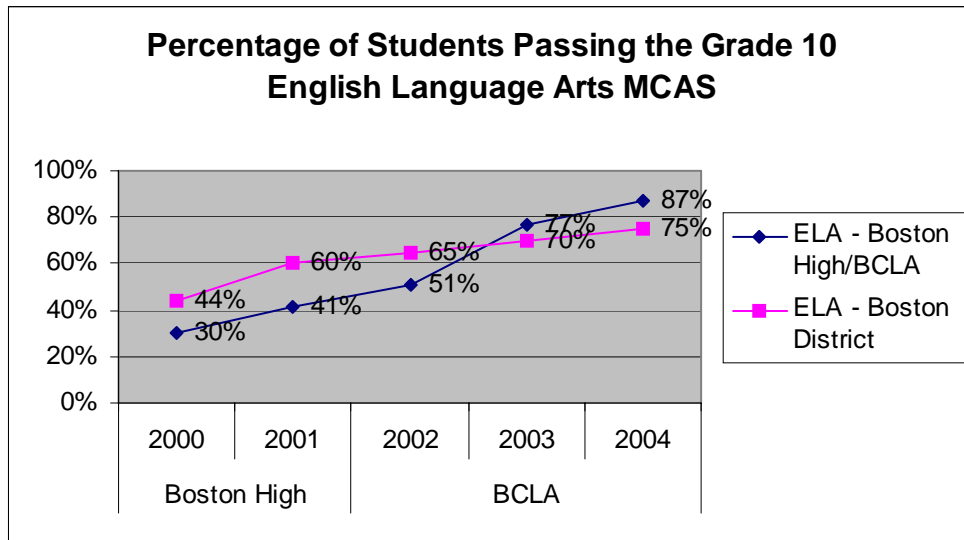
TABLE 3: STUDENT ATTENDANCE, SUSPENSION, AND TRANSFER RATES

<b>Year</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Attendance (%)</b>	<b>Students Suspended (%)</b>	<b>Transfers out of BCLA (%)</b>	<b>Transfer no school* (%)</b>
2003-04	BCLA	94	18	6	14
2002-03	BCLA	88	21	10	9
2001-02	Boston High	86	25	17	25
2000-01	Boston High	85	19	19	19

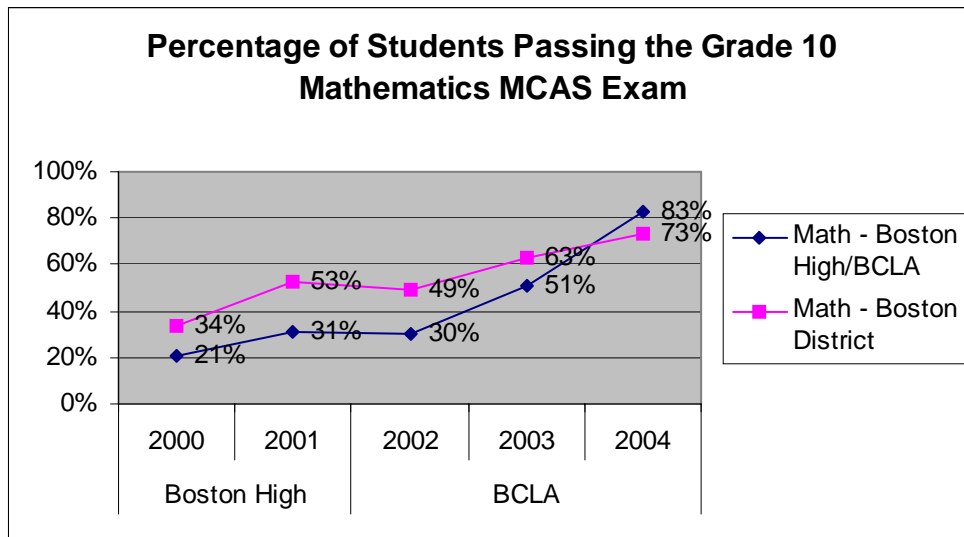
\*Students who either dropped out or transferred to a school in another district.

The graphs below show the percentage of students at Boston High and BCLA passing the English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics portions of the MCAS. It also shows the corresponding pass rates for all high school students in the Boston district. Boston High School students performed below the district average in both ELA and Math pass rates. Fewer than half of Boston High's students passed either test. Within two years after conversion to Pilot status, BCLA surpassed the district average in both subjects. In 2004, more than 80% of students passed the ELA and Math tests.

GRAPH 1: PASSING RATES ON THE MCAS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

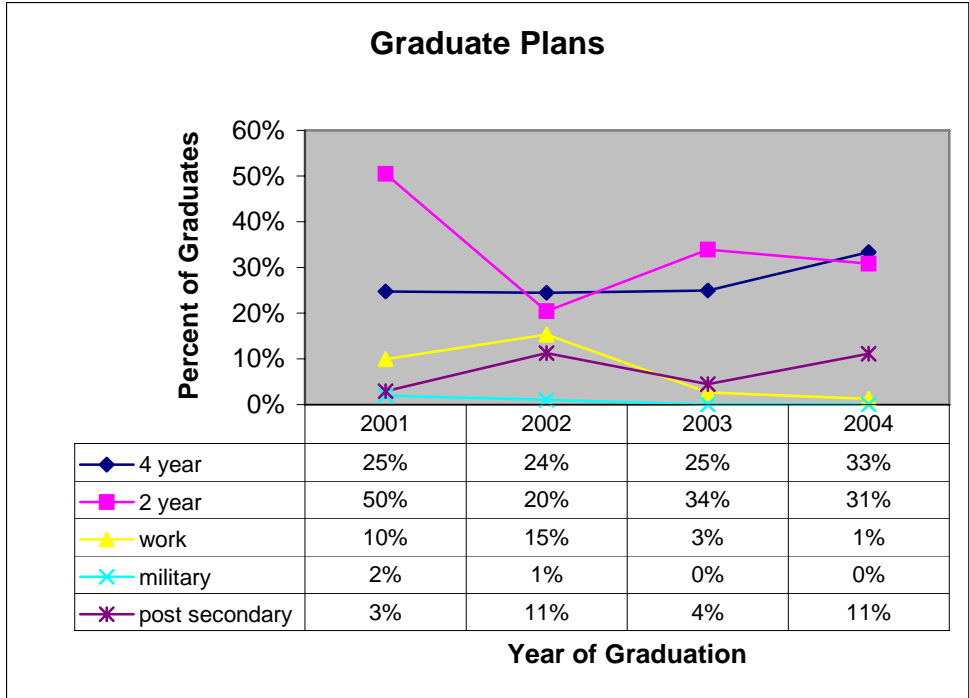


GRAPH 2: PASSING RATES ON THE MCAS IN MATHEMATICS



GRAPH 3: GRADUATE PLANS

Finally, we present data on the plans of Boston High/BCLA graduates over the past four years. The data shows that since Pilot status, the percentages of students pursuing postsecondary education of some kind has increased, to 63% in 2003 and 74% in 2004. The proportion of graduates pursuing work and military has decreased in the same years.



## **FIVE AREAS OF CHANGE AS A RESULT OF TRANSFORMATION TO PILOT STATUS**

In this section, we describe five areas of change in BCLA as a result of the transformation to Pilot status. The first change regards the school’s mission and vision. We discuss that change first because all other changes were guided by the school’s transformed mission and vision. The other four changes parallel four of the five autonomies from BPS: staffing, governance, curriculum/instruction/assessment, and scheduling. After outlining these fundamental changes, we discuss several positive outcomes and their associated challenges, and end with implications for schools and districts.

### CHANGE IN SCHOOL’S MISSION AND VISION

For many years, Boston High was a work-study school, where students spent half of the day in academic classes and the other half in a job. The goal was to prepare students to enter the workforce immediately after graduation. According to veteran Boston High teachers, academic standards and expectations at the school were low. From the beginning of her tenure in 2000, before the decision to gain Pilot status, the newly appointed principal decided to change the focus of the school from work-study to college preparatory. “The first year everything changed overnight; from a work-study school it became a college prep school without any prior planning and work with the staff” (Bahnam, speech text September 12, 2002).

In winter of 2001-02, the school leadership established a design team to carry out the planning of the new school. The school received coaching and advocacy at the district level from staff at

CCE. A key aspect of the coaching was to provide resources for the design team that would give them a larger understanding of what was possible at a Pilot School.

The big push was going from a work-study kind of a school to a truly academic school, and people really had a hard time believing that with this population of kids that it could become an academic institution. They believed that “these kids” needed this work-study kind of thing...But [the new principal] was really clear that that wasn’t the kind of school she wanted to build. ...“Well, we’re not going to recreate Boston High School. We’re going to create a very different school.”...And that’s why I gave them outside articles and perspectives because I wanted them to see that there are other ways of doing school.

Coach

BCLA’s mission was created collaboratively by the design team and the staff. Conversations about the mission statement and school design took place over the course of five months:

*The Boston Community Leadership Academy’s mission is to advance leadership education through experience-based leadership training and a rigorous academic curriculum, aligned with state and district standards, that promotes teamwork, community service and citizenship. We seek to educate whole students, helping them to become independent, reflective thinkers while equipping them with the essential competencies necessary for responsible citizenship in a democracy.*

For BCLA to achieve its mission--that its students contribute actively as leaders in their communities--the school has an implicit goal of preparing students to be successful in college. In fact, many staff at BCLA describe the school’s mission as, simply, to prepare students for success in college.

Our vision is to make every student, when they leave us here, not [only go] to college, [but] to get them *through* college.

Principal

I like the [idea] of this school being a college prep [school]...We have a lot more discussions in the classroom, and the teachers are involving every student. So, it’s just growing every year, I think, into something good.

Student<sup>8</sup>

By focusing on the theme of leadership, the school hopes to enable its students to develop the skills and the individual fortitude necessary to live well and contribute to the world around them. The goal is to incorporate leadership, broadly defined, into all aspects of students’ school experience through curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and participation on school-level decision making bodies.

### CHANGE IN STAFF NUMBERS AND ROLES

With charter-like staffing autonomy, each Pilot School can define staff roles and hire staff who share its vision (Appendix 2). At the end of 2001-02, when it was clear that Boston High would become a Pilot School, some teachers who did not buy into the Pilot School concept and the new mission took that opportunity to retire, and two left the school voluntarily.

Due to this staff turnover, the principal had opportunities to hire new staff who shared the school’s vision. In its first year of operation and Pilot status (2002-03), BCLA had 24 new staff members out of 64, or 37.5% new staff. Among the new staff were a director of curriculum, a

---

<sup>8</sup> Student quotes are not numbered.

special education coordinator, and 19 new teachers. Many of the teachers were young and inexperienced, yet energetic and philosophically aligned with the school’s mission.

With the new teachers, they have created an atmosphere of better expectations. Teacher 2

Several other factors also affected staffing. BCLA had an overall reduction in its student enrollment which was intentional, to create two manageable smaller learning communities. The school day also increased to a full school day. Unfortunately, the school also faced two successive years of greater than 10% budget cuts. Thus, overall staff numbers decreased, and staffing patterns changed. Even with these changes, the average class size dropped from 28 to 22 students.

[Before Pilot status,] I had a class that had 28 and there was no way that we could deliver the instruction you wanted to when you have 28 kids in the math class. So we opened another section and asked someone else to pick up. And you can do all this when...you're small and you have that flexibility.  
Principal

The table below summarizes some of the staffing and enrollment changes during the transition. The total number of students decreased by 36%, while the total number of staff reduced by only 22%. Thus, the teacher:student ratio improved, the student support staff increased, and the percentage of teachers stayed roughly the same.

**Table 4. Enrollment and Staffing Changes Due to Pilot Status**

<b>Enrollment and Staffing</b>	<b>2000-01</b>	<b>2004-05</b>
Total student enrollment	627	400
Decrease in student enrollment	N/A	36%
Total staff in teaching, student support and administrative roles	65	51
Decrease in staffing	N/A	22%
Teacher:student ratio	13 : 1	11 : 1
Percentage of these staff who were teachers	75%	73%
Percentage of these staff who were student support	14%	20%
Percentage of these staff who were administrators	11%	8%

The composition of staff shifted mainly in the areas of administrators and student support (Appendix for staff lists by role). First, the decrease in staffing was less than the decrease in enrollment, even in budget cut years. Therefore, students had proportionally more adults supporting their learning. Second, the percentage of staff who were teachers stayed roughly the same. There was an increase in the percentage of math teachers. Teachers have taken on additional leadership roles, such as participating on curriculum teams, and serving on the leadership team and the governing board, which set policy for the school. The largest change is that a higher proportion of BCLA’s staff is engaged in student support work than was the case at

Boston High, including guidance counselors, community field representatives, a family liaison, and a student support coordinator. Not only is the support staff larger, others in the school have taken on support roles. For example, teachers and administrators have become advisors, or adult mentors, to students. Finally, there are currently fewer administrators. The current administrators have assumed the responsibilities previously assumed by the registrar and team leaders.

### CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES AND SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Prior to the Pilot conversion, administrators governed Boston High in a traditional way. The principal made most decisions; teachers were given little opportunity for input. The change in leadership and governance at the school has been gradual. Starting with the design team's work toward Pilot status in 2001-02, decision-making at the school began to involve teachers, students, and parents.

The first year of Pilot status was transitional as staff established new structures to work toward full implementation of their vision. The new structures included collaborative decision-making bodies, or teams, designed to provide opportunities for staff, students, parents, and other community members to have a voice in decisions. Volunteers representing each constituency were voted onto the governing board and the leadership team by the school staff. The school's governing board, leadership team, and curriculum team now make decisions collaboratively. The governing board is composed of teachers, parents, administrators, and community members. Governing board members serve for a term of two years. The governing board meets monthly during the school year. At first, the CCE coach facilitated governing board meetings, with the intent of modeling facilitation for members. The governing board is now co-facilitated by the board chair (currently a community member) and the principal. The school has recently hired a consultant to help the governing board refine its role.

The governing board is responsible for budget and policy decisions, as well as building community and business partnerships. During the 2003-04 school year, the governing board discussed a wide range of issues, including discipline and attendance policies, broad goals related to the school's vision, indicators for student success, and how to create a school culture where more students are held to high expectations. The governing board also evaluates the principal annually.

The leadership team includes four administrators, 12 teachers, and three students. It is organized to represent each small learning community and academic area. Six teachers are elected as at-large representatives. The leadership team initially met twice a month and has now changed to once a month. While the CCE coach facilitated the first meetings, this responsibility now rotates among the members. The leadership team focuses on teaching and learning, such as designing the student assessment system and planning the professional development calendar.

During the 2003-04 school year, due to the district's ongoing contract negotiations with the Boston Teachers' Union, the leadership team met only for the latter part of the school year. They engaged in a process of inquiry and data gathering to evaluate progress on such goals as:

academic rigor, authentic assessment, personalization, data-driven decision making, and shared leadership.

To build their capacity to work together, the team developed procedural norms to guide them through the decision-making process. They established a shared understanding of “rigor” and “effective instruction” to reference when developing portfolio rubrics, requirements, and academic expectations.

A subset of the leadership team is the curriculum team, comprised of one teacher/leader from each content area and the director of curriculum and instruction. These content area leaders, known as facilitators, work with the director of curriculum and instruction to ensure alignment of their goals, projects, and timelines across content areas. The curriculum team meets 2-3 times per month.

Because of the creation of these new governance bodies, teachers and others in the school community increased their level of input into school-wide decision-making. Simultaneously, the principal moved from the sole decision-maker to a collaborative model of shared leadership.

#### CHANGES IN USE OF TEACHER AND STUDENT TIME

In Pilot Schools, all work conditions (eg, schedule, staff assignments) are defined at the school level rather than through the district level teachers’ union contract, in the form of an annual “election-to-work agreement” that each teacher signs.

Pilot Schools include various community members in defining work conditions, such as the schedule. At BCLA, Pilot status led to significant changes in the school week and school year calendar. The change in schedule was initiated by the school staff, who wanted to create longer instructional blocks for students and to set aside time during the school day for adults to meet and plan content. Despite the challenges encountered due to union negotiations, the process for establishing the new schedule was completed in four months. This schedule increased the length of the school day, the amount of time on academics, and the amount of time for staff collaboration.

In the principal’s first year at Boston High, the average length of the school day was 374 minutes, and the time spent on core academic instruction per day was 222 minutes. Currently, the average length of the school day is 398 minutes and students spend an average of 263 minutes per day on core academic instruction. The school day starts later than was the case at Boston High. Even with the later start, BCLA students are in school and engaged in academics more than they were in Boston High. The teachers’ school year differs from the district contract by an additional 27 hours.

Another significant change is that class periods are longer than before, so that students have longer instructional blocks and spend less time transitioning between classes. In 2000, before the Pilot conversion, class periods tended to be 58 minutes. They are now typically 109 minutes, with some 53-minute classes.

Once a week, students are released after a half-day so that teachers have more time to meet and discuss their work among colleagues. Since the conversion to Pilot status, teachers have had half of each Friday, during which they meet in curriculum teams and as a whole faculty.

Teacher 6: I think what is really happening in terms of teaching is just this opening up and sharing practices. In the lower house, we have periods and a half of English and math, so I think that as a result of that we have [fewer] students. And because we do the bulk of our professional development in meeting time on Fridays, we have more time during the week.

And I wouldn't call it "free time", but I would call it dedicated planning time. And if you are organized, you can get almost all of your work done during the day...I mean, now it's much more reflective, I believe.

Teacher 7: Yes, it's a longer school day but you can really get a lot done during the school day.

Teachers 6 and 7

## CHANGES IN CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The curriculum at BCLA is driven by its mission to prepare students to succeed in college whether or not they choose to go. In becoming an autonomous college-preparatory school, BCLA has changed its curriculum in many ways. In gaining curriculum autonomy, the school has chosen to offer some courses that are not mandated by the district or found in traditional BPS schools. We discuss changes in the following curriculum offerings:

- Electives
- Leadership class
- Advisories
- AP classes
- Remedial classes

In 2000, the five electives offered were health, computers, art, music/theater, and Spanish. BCLA now offers sixteen courses of choice, all developed by teachers. Examples of course titles include: "Social Activism for Non-Profit Organizations," "Issues in Science," "Facing History and Ourselves," and "Children's Literature." While time for electives has decreased significantly since 2000 in order to create more time for core academics, the number of electives has increased and their content has attracted more interest among students. Because of the increased number of electives, there are fewer students in each course, offering more personalized learning.

In keeping with BCLA's mission, one of the electives that students can choose is a Leadership class. In this elective, students learn about leadership, broadly defined, through engaging in discussions of leaders and the characteristics of leadership. Students create and participate in activities and events that embody leadership. For example, in April 2004, students in the leadership class organized and facilitated a network-wide Pilot School Youth Conference. BCLA staff are currently working to infuse leadership themes and opportunities into other core academic courses and portfolio requirements.

BCLA staff chose to institute Advisories as one means to achieving greater personalization in the school. Each student was assigned an advisor for two years, allowing a significant length of time to build a connection. Advisories meet twice a week; their curriculum includes activities for getting to know each other, study and life skills, college preparation, and community service.

I think [the purpose of advisory] is to create a safer space for the kids, and a place where they have one adult that they see two or three times a week that is not directly teaching them a content area, but is there to help them with all their things ... I've been trying to make them all fill out the [financial aid forms] and trying to make them fill out [community college] applications even if they're bent against going to college. Just so they can see that they have a shot, and you don't have to be a genius. Teacher 1

Finally, several curriculum changes suggest increased academic expectations of BCLA students. The courses in the academic areas are sequenced to provide students with the prerequisites for college, including four years of math and some foreign language courses. Before Pilot status, the school had remedial tracks in the core subjects and did not offer physics or Advanced Placement (AP) courses. BCLA no longer offers remedial classes, while physics and five AP classes - Calculus, English Composition, US History, Chemistry and Biology – were added to the curriculum in 2002. Total 2004-05 enrollment in all AP classes is 87 students.

I like the curriculum because ... we have ... changed it to make it more rigorous. We went to the national standard of curriculum, which is better [than Boston's]. Teacher 2

Since converting to Pilot status, the school staff has experimented with performance assessments in Math and English. Exhibitions are designed to give students the opportunity to share their learning with teachers, peers, and community members. In the first year of Pilot status, exhibitions were conducted in English and math for seniors. In subsequent years, students in every grade completed exhibitions in these two subjects. Seniors must pass their exhibitions in order to graduate. Each year, staff take feedback from the evaluators and coaches to revise guidelines, requirements, and rubrics. Thus, the exhibition process has improved and expanded each year. The goal is to create performance assessments in all subjects in all grades over time.

We're going to add portfolios and exhibitions and go through some of this, this year, as much as possible. And we were very ambitious, and we got a lot done. This year we took on more of the deeper understanding of how a portfolio can be developed across all curriculum areas.

Administrator 1

As performance assessments roll out to different subjects and grades, staff will use performance assessments to 1) evaluate what students know and can do, and 2) improve teaching and learning in the school.

## **OUTCOMES OF CONVERSION TO PILOT STATUS**

This study describes changes that occurred in the school during its conversion to Pilot status. According to teachers and administrators who were interviewed, these changes formed the foundation for many improvements in students' education, including increased expectations of students, improved school climate, and more shared leadership. The changes did not occur in a linear, sequential fashion. The aggregate changes resulting from Pilot status created an environment where improvements were possible. Instituting the changes also resulted in challenges, at the administrator, teacher, and student levels. In this section, we describe both the positive outcomes and some of the concomitant challenges which arose.

### **INCREASED EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS**

After two full years of Pilot status, teachers, students, and administrators report increased academic expectations and achievement. Through interviews and surveys, BCLA community members attest to fewer disciplinary actions and higher attendance levels. The school's

standardized test scores showed marked gains in both the first and second years of Pilot status. The new principal talked about high expectations of students as her priority.

I remember very well the conversation with one teacher before we started school ...and she said, "I came to this school because it was a work-study school. And I don't think we can have high expectations for all the children." And I come from a paradigm that says all children can meet high expectations. Our job is to figure out how to get them there. It's the scaffold that counts the most. It's not giving up on the children. Principal

Both teachers and administrators discuss how staff communicate high expectations effectively in two ways, through direct talk and actions and by changing curriculum and assessment systems.

[If] you [had] high expectations [at Boston High], [the students] did not respond. Now, you've got about half of the kids responding, and the other half try[ing] to follow...You can see competition between the kids really to do better, [more than] two years ago...I think that's because the teacher is also in the classroom talking about it, telling them what they should expect when they go to college and telling them about what they need to do to go to college. Teacher 2

Every year, I think, the curriculum gets more rigorous. I think we've become better at communicating our expectations to students... Administrator 2

Students talked about their experience of increased expectations in their interviews and surveys. They said the academic environment was "harder" and "more serious," that more was "required of you," and that they were therefore more dedicated to doing well and learning more.

The classes were smaller, and there was [a better] student to teacher ratio. And as far as the teaching, it got a bit more challenging. We're covering a lot more stuff in a week than we would before. So, that's a step up in the school's requirements for every year for promotion. The promotion requirements were definitely changed. Student

They treat us like adults. Student

Basically, they're giving you responsibility; it's your education. Student

A concrete example of increased expectations is the expectation of acceptance to a two- or four-year college. During advisory class, students work on application essays, find out how to register for taking the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs), and select schools to apply to. Students are also expected and supported to take the SATs in junior year and to visit three or four college campuses.

## Challenges to increasing expectations

Increased academic expectations bring concurrent challenges. For example, the new principal was an outsider to a school with many veteran staff. Before the decision to convert to Pilot status, the principal made many changes without obtaining faculty input when she first arrived. She felt that expectations at the school were not high enough and that by making those changes directly, she could encourage teachers to increase their expectations of students and change their practices accordingly.

At opening day my first year, I gave my staff a fat notebook...Do, do, do, do, do. Procedure, procedure, procedure. And I put [it] on the stage, I put every single book I wanted to see used in their classroom...And there was a good reason for it. To make sure that ... teachers start thinking more about standards, more about higher expectations. I did it for a reason. And it was like [a] kind of a dictatorship running [the] school. Principal

The mandated changes imposed by a newcomer created tensions, because they were abrupt, imposed upon staff, and required significant changes in how people were used to doing things.

According to interview data, the threat of closure and the work towards Pilot status lessened some of the tensions within the school.

So even though there were problems and there were still a lot of tensions from [the principal] coming in--although I'd never been with the old principal--I think it was really good for our school. It's like one obstacle to face together, versus fighting with each other. Teacher 1

Many of Boston High's students faced being part of a school that was not like the high school they had chosen to attend. Students expressed dissatisfaction with the longer school day, although they currently report their classes are more interesting. Some students knew about the proposed changes and their rationale, while others heard about the changes through rumors. This inconsistency in knowledge about the transformation created tensions in the school.

At first, we weren't really aware of all the changes...we thought the school's title was just going to change, but we didn't realize that it was going to get a lot more academically rigorous...I think, looking back, I think it was a great change. I think in the beginning, I was a little apprehensive.... I thought the school was going to be different. But it got better... a lot better. Student

A final challenge that the school faces with its increased expectations is a discussion about access and equity. Because the school has added more advanced classes, particularly in math, the community must decide which students have access to the advanced classes and how students are assigned to them. Some staff believe students should choose to enroll in these courses and other staff believe students must test into them. A second challenge is creating a schedule where enrollment in advanced classes does not create a de facto track of advanced students.

### IMPROVED SCHOOL CLIMATE

The school climate, both for teachers and students, has improved due to Pilot status and all of the subsequent changes. According to teachers, collaboration has improved, and staff members feel more empowered and satisfied with their jobs.

I think it is a safer place... not [in terms of] physical violence but respect between each other... Slowly the environment is opening up more and you can say your opinion without being accused of refusing to follow the District's orders...And I think that goes down to the students too, and wanting them to participate more. Teacher 1

I think [professional development] is much more structured. And we have an agenda the day before, on what's going to happen during professional development. Now I'm in an inquiry group... Teacher 7

Many students also expressed feeling more empowered. For example, through advisories and leadership class, they were able to voice concerns about certain issues, like the quality of the cafeteria food and having off-campus privileges for lunch. They were able to organize themselves, research what other schools were doing, and present a proposal to staff, which was accepted and implemented. BCLA's students have built a community that has stronger bonds and where there is more concern about academics. Students serve on the governance board and leadership team, so they are participating in the important policy decisions of the school.

They have built a community between each grade, and they're very supportive of each other, extremely supportive of each other. They don't feel they're a number, being here. Teacher 1

I think we're able to maintain a tone in the building that has just a lower less sense of violence as part of the culture, and I think that's verbal violence as well as physical, and that has to do with the size, with the mission, who the teachers are and who the students are. Teacher 6

I don't know if it's because I'm a junior now, but I feel like I'm closer to the guidance counselors. And as a community, we became a whole;...we used to be individually separated into classes. Nobody even knew each other...I guess it developed a core community. Student

### **Challenge to improved school climate**

Changing the school schedule and developing an acceptable work election agreement was a challenge because it meant significant changes to how teachers structured their time. Staff differed in their opinions about the length of the school day, especially because it was such a change from the work-study school model. However, the process gave teachers a chance to have important conversations and build community.

Our work election agreement is a major step forward that has empowered us to really define what the schedule will look like, ... and also [to know] what...we believe as a community [and] how we're building our own sense of trust. Administrator 1

### **INCREASE IN TEACHER VOICE AND SHARED LEADERSHIP**

One outcome of the change to Pilot status was that the leadership team encouraged the principal to "loosen her grip," communicate more with staff, and cultivate teacher leadership. Teachers and administrators appreciated the time to collaborate on the team's tasks, and began to share leadership responsibilities.

I thought we had really productive discussions, and [had] very collaborative and very collegial discussions...And the leadership team has since, I think, done a really wonderful job of putting that data together ... and really identifying the major issues that people want to deal with.

Teacher 3

We monitor the agenda and we set expectations for what's on that agenda in a lot of circumstances, with guidance, with discipline, with student support. But we would like to see people stand up and actually share the leadership, and actually take on the leadership roles, because it makes a stronger school when we're all participating in some aspect of the leadership.

Administrator 1

This way, people can fight a little bit...You may not win...But people can say, "I don't like this." It's happening right now. We look at the promotion requirements, the teachers say one thing, [the principal has] a whole different idea. But they're still saying, "this is how we're going to do it and this is how we like it, and let's see what happens."

Teacher 4

The school's coach helped the principal to increase shared governance. Two major cultural changes that the coach guided were: 1) the development of processes for effectively organizing, communicating, and making decisions as a group, and 2) working with the principal to help change her leadership style to a more collaborative approach that encourages and supports teacher input into the decision-making process at the school. The coach also provided support to teachers and other administrators to help them to understand their roles as shared decision makers.

When we couldn't take the leadership role, [the coach] often took it...We have to be participating in the change process because we're changing ourselves. We can't lead the change and change at the same time. So that's where [the coach] was really modeling for us so that when we got to a point where we felt we were really connecting to what the vision and mission is, then she knows when to let go.

Administrator 1

[Our coach] doesn't feel like the consultant,...the never ending consultant that must be always on top of everybody. No. She knows when to let go and let us take on when we are obviously on our

way. That's really the wisdom that many, many consultants that I've worked with don't seem to appear to have. [Our coach] has that above all. Administrator 1

## **Challenges to increasing shared leadership**

Simply creating new governing bodies does not ensure that leadership will be shared. It takes time to change the way decisions have historically been made and communicated. Several of the challenges to increasing shared leadership included creating meeting time for the new teams, developing an understanding of what each team's responsibilities would be, and having multiple immediate goals to accomplish. As a result, the new structures did not always facilitate smooth implementation of shared leadership. In addition, some staff reported that while they may have more voice in decisions, ultimately they still felt the decisions were made by administrators.

The shift to shared leadership could not be made without some structural changes in the school, particularly in terms of the schedule. The teams struggled at first with the logistics of when to meet. The schedule change that created a half-day each week without students allowed more time for teams to engage in shared decision making.

Increased shared leadership takes time for a team to learn how to function well. Meanwhile, important decisions needed to be made immediately and quickly by the governing board and the leadership team. The school struggled with figuring out which team was responsible for what functions. For example in developing performance assessments, staff on different teams were talking about the same topics because their roles were unclear: setting the standards, designing the process, and figuring out logistics.

Struggles around how to implement shared leadership, where more staff feel they have a voice in decision making and responsibility, are common and to be expected. Making such cultural shifts in a school takes time and effort. Having a shared commitment and external facilitator to guide the school through some of these challenges allowed the school to experience the outcomes that it did in a short amount of time.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF PILOT STATUS FOR SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS**

### THE USE OF AUTONOMY

*Autonomy when used well can lead to improved practices and student outcomes.*

Autonomy in exchange for increased school-level accountability is the defining trait of Pilot Schools as well as CCE's model of urban school reform. Pilot Schools are largely exempt from district regulations and policies, but at the same time remain members of the district, unlike charter schools. This unique arrangement allows the district to retain both its students and resources, and allows the schools to be more innovative. But it also creates tensions and challenges at the district, school, and student levels, as would be true of any major change in a large bureaucracy.

Many new policies were initiated during the principal's first year (before Pilot status), such as the change to a college preparatory curriculum and to a longer student day. However, the impact

of these moves was limited until the school gained its Pilot status. Only after autonomy was granted to BCLA did a new and sustainable school culture begin to emerge.

Administrators and teachers understood and experienced autonomies differently. Because administrators are more directly involved in financial and staffing policies of a school, they have more immediate experience with the budget and staffing autonomies. According to our data, administrators credit their budget and staffing autonomies with allowing them to shape the new culture of the school.

We align our resources with our student needs. [We put] more focus on teaching and learning and less focus on “administrivia.” Also with the fact that our school climate is becoming healthier, we are spending less money on discipline people and more on money to do prevention instead of intervention. Principal

In contrast, teachers tended to cite curriculum autonomy as a crucial component of Pilot status. They appreciated the release from district curriculum mandates like textbooks and pacing guides, and the ability to choose their own books and curriculum.

Implementing autonomy in existing district schools is more complicated than in start-up schools, mainly because of staffing. Pilot staff must be committed to working with the autonomies in scheduling, governance, and curriculum/instruction/assessment which affect how and what they have been used to teaching. In the case of BCLA, half of the staff were new to the school in the first year of Pilot status, so they most likely accepted the mission and practices of BCLA. They did not have to deal with as many of the significant changes that confronted veteran staff.

#### CHANGES THAT AUTONOMY HAS ENABLED AT BCLA

*Autonomy is used to increase instructional time and faculty planning time and to reduce class size and student:teacher loads, all key ingredients to improving outcomes.*

Autonomies enable changes in structure, culture, and instruction. While implementing autonomies is challenging work, some of the direct results can be observed by analyzing staffing patterns, schedules, course rosters, and outcomes. Categorized primarily by type of autonomy, one can see many improvements from before to after Pilot status summarized in the table below.

**Table 5. Summary of Changes Due to Autonomy**

	<b>Before Pilot</b>	<b>After Pilot</b>
Mission	College-preparatory	College-preparatory and Leadership
Enrollment	>600	~400
<b>Staffing (and Budget) Autonomy</b>		
Number of staff	65	51
Teacher:student ratio	13 : 1	11 : 1
Percentage of staff who are student support	14%	20%
<b>Curriculum and Assessment Autonomy</b>		
Remedial track of courses	yes	no
Advanced Placement courses	no	yes, 5
Performance assessments	no	yes, ELA and math, all grades
Courses of choice (electives)	5	16
Advisory class	no	yes
<b>Governance Autonomy</b>		
Governance model	Principal	Distributed
Teams for decision making	None	Governing board, leadership team, and curriculum team
Percentage of staff who are administrators	11	8
<b>Schedule Autonomy</b>		
Predominant instructional block (minutes)	58	109
Length of school day (minutes)	374	398
Time on core academic instruction per day (minutes)	222	263
Collaborative planning time per week (minutes)	none	425 (7+ hours)
<b>Student Outcomes (Equity)</b>		
ELA MCAS pass rate	30% (worse than BPS)	87% (better than BPS)
Math MCAS pass rate	21% (worse than BPS)	83% (better than BPS)
Graduates going to postsecondary education	55%	75%
Attendance rate	85%	94%
Out-of-School suspension rate	19%	18%
Within district transfer rate	19%	6%
District leaver rate	19%	14%

Clearly, many aspects of the school changed during the conversion to Pilot status. The above table captures some of the quantifiable changes, categorized by autonomy. These structural changes have created the conditions to enable cultural and curriculum/assessment changes to occur. Our interviews and focus groups clearly describe the change in the tone and culture of the school at the teacher and student levels. The expectations of students have increased and leadership is more distributed. In addition, curriculum offerings have expanded and performance assessments have been implemented. The result has been improved student outcomes.

### THE ROLE OF THE COACH

*An outside facilitator with expertise on the autonomies is valuable in the conversion process.*

The CCE coach's job was to guide this school community through the changes into a small, vision-driven, autonomous, and accountable school. In her coaching role, she brought expertise to the process from a position outside the district and school. Her in-depth understanding of school change and the charter-like autonomies enabled her to provide the school with a roadmap of the conversion. Her main contributions to the transformation were to coach the principal around shared leadership, keep the conversation close to issues of teaching and learning, and build capacity in the school. As a coach working for an external organization, she was able to keep a distance from the politics of the moment, whether it was union contract negotiations or internal personnel dynamics.

The school coach was a key person in the school's dramatic shift from top-down leadership, appointed by the district, decision-making by teams, about curriculum and scheduling. Staff noted the change in their leader, as did the principal herself. She noted that without the coach, the changes would have been difficult if not impossible to make.

The school coach worked closely with the principal to guide the development of processes for effectively organizing, communicating, and making decisions as a group. She also worked with the principal to help her encourage and support teacher input into the decision-making process at the school. The principal has thus changed her leadership style to a collaborative approach. Concurrently, the coach has also provided support to teachers and other administrators to help them to understand their roles as shared decision makers.

I think her greatest use is her helping the Leadership Team and Governing Board, and Headmaster spearhead the changes that need to go on...The Leadership piece was critical in getting us to understand many of the ways in which we could manage the changes and the change process. She has given us a little less stress to worry about, because we could lean on her when we were needing someone.

Administrator 2

The coach also kept a strong focus on teaching and learning while the autonomies were being implemented. Though at times the structural changes might have been easier to implement, she reminded the school leaders that changing teaching and learning is at the heart of all this work.

At the two leadership retreats, we've moved purposely into teaching and learning conversations. So it's not about the structure anymore or work agreement stuff anymore or the autonomies anymore. It's about, "What is rigor?" That's the conversation. What is the implication of that in our school? This last retreat was all about the portfolios. So what do we mean by portfolios in

this school? That's all about teaching and learning, and how do you build a consistent portfolio system in this school that reflects what we want.

Coach

To encourage sustainability, the coach has aimed for a gradual shift of responsibility from herself to the staff at the school. For example, she has slowly turned over meeting facilitation to the staff.

## FUTURE STUDIES

The purpose of this study was to document the transformation process, its successes and challenges, so that others schools considering adopting Pilot-like status could have a window into the process. This narrative of BCLA's conversion process could not address or answer several key questions, due to the scope and timeline of the study. However, these questions are important to address and understand if Pilot Schools are to be part of Boston Public Schools' portfolio of school choices for families.

We described in detail some of the changes in curriculum offerings at the school. Teachers were clear that their autonomy allowed them deviate from the district-mandated curriculum, to choose their own books rather than use district textbooks, and to improve student engagement through advisory and elective curricula. Many of the changes described above were structural and cultural in nature. This study did not delve as deeply into whether and how instruction has changed. Such a study would be valuable, to answer the question of how such changes occur when autonomy is granted. Once curriculum and assessments change, inevitably instruction, too, must change. For this, we would need to observe classrooms, examine student work and performance assessments, and further interview teachers and students.

Another question which this study does not address is, "How do our students fare after BCLA?" Given the school's mission, data on college admissions, college-going, and college retention over the next years to determine whether or not they are reaching their goal of success in college and developing future leaders would be necessary and powerful.

Finally, it will be important to follow the school in future years. As this paper documents, the school community has accomplished a tremendous amount in a relatively short period of time, resulting in significant improvements in student performance. How does the school continue to grow and improve its culture and instruction? How does Pilot status contribute to this growth? How has Pilot status impacted the district and union?

## APPENDIX 1: DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PILOT SCHOOL AUTONOMIES

Boston Pilot Schools, unlike most public schools, have autonomy over their budgets, staffing, curriculum/assessment, governance and policies, and the school calendar. Along with the commitment to creating and maintaining smallness, these freedoms are necessary to promote successful learning.

**Budget:** Pilot Schools have a lump sum per pupil budget. Each school may spend its money in the manner that provides the best programs and services to students and their families. A Network Fiscal Autonomy Committee, works in collaboration with the district to increase the percentage of the budget over which schools have autonomy.

- Schools receive a lump sum per pupil budget, the sum of which is equal to other district schools within that grade span and that includes salaries, instructional materials, etc.
- The district has itemized all central office costs and now allows Pilot Schools to choose either to purchase identified discretionary district items and services or to not purchase them and include them in the school's lump sum per pupil budget

**Schedule:** Pilot Schools have the freedom to set different school days and calendar years for both students and faculty in accordance with their principles or school reform models. In particular, research supports a correlation between faculty planning time spent on teaching and learning and increased student achievement. Scheduling which allows for summer and school year faculty planning time contributes to a more unified school community and educational program. Pilot Schools use this flexibility to:

- Increase planning and professional development time for faculty
- Increase learning time for students
- Organize the school schedule in ways that maximize learning time for students and planning time for faculty

**Curriculum and Assessment:** Pilot Schools have the freedom to structure their curriculum and assessment practices to best meet students' learning needs. While acknowledging that all Pilot Schools are held accountable to state-required tests, these schools are given the flexibility to determine the school-based curriculum and assessment practices that will best prepare students for state and district assessments.

- Pilot Schools have autonomy from local district curriculum and testing requirements—they can choose what content to cover and how to cover it
- Promotion and graduation requirements are set by the school, not by the district, with an emphasis on competency-based, performance assessments

**Governance and Policies:** Pilot Schools have the freedom to create their own governance structures that give school staff increased decision making powers over budget approval,

principal selection and firing, and programs and policies, while being mindful of state requirements on school councils. The school's site council takes on increased governing responsibilities, including the following:

- Principal selection, supervision, and firing, with final approval by the superintendent in all cases
- Budget approval
- Setting of school policies, including schools' promotion, graduation, attendance, and discipline policies

**Staffing:** Pilot Schools have the freedom to hire and excess their staff in order to create a unified school community.

- Each school can decide on the staffing pattern that creates the best learning environment for students
- Each school may hire staff who best fit the needs of the school, regardless of their current status (member of the district or not, although every teacher hired becomes a member of the local teachers union)
- Schools may excess staff (into the district pool) who do not fulfill the needs of the school

## APPENDIX 2: STAFFING PATTERNS PRE- AND POST- PILOT STATUS

The following is a table of the Teaching, Administrative, and Student Support staffing at Boston High, 2000-01 school year, and BCLA, 2004-05 school year:

2000-01	Role	Number of staff	2004-05	Role	Number of staff
Teachers	English	8	Teachers	ELA	6
	Foreign Language	2		Spanish	2
	Math	8		Math	7
	Science	6		Science	4
	Social Studies	6		Social Studies	4
	Special Education	12		Special Education	9
	Multi-Lingual	2		ELL/ESL	1
	Technology	3		Tech/Journalism	1
	Fine Arts	1		Art	2
	Music	1		Cluster Substitute	1
	<b>Total Teachers</b>	<b>49</b>		<b>Total Teachers</b>	<b>37</b>
Student Support	Student Support	2	Student Support	Student Support Coordinator	1
	Guidance	3		Guidance	2
	Team Leader Senior Advisor	1		Community Field Representative	2
	Team Leader Student Advisor	1		Nurse	1
	Media Center	1		Parent Liaison	1
	Attendance Officer	1		Paraprofessional (ELL)	1
	<b>Total Student Support</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>Total Student Support</b>	<b>10</b>
Administrators	Headmaster	1	Administrators	Headmaster	1
	Assistant Headmaster	2		Assistant Headmaster	2
	Registrar	1		Special Education Director	1
	Special Education Program Director	1			
	Team Leader Multi-Lingual	1			
	Team Leader Technology	1			
	<b>Total Administrators</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>Total Administrators</b>	<b>4</b>

## **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS**

### STUDENT INTERVIEW

#### **Demographics**

Have you all been here since freshman year?

#### **BCLA**

Why did you choose to attend Boston High?

What did you expect from a high school education?

How has this experience been the same or different from what you expected?

Probe: easier or more challenging academically than expected?

When were you aware of the decision to convert Boston High into BCLA? How did you find out?

Were you a participant in the decision? How? (marching, protesting, design team) If yes, how did you participate and did your voice have an impact on the discussion?

What specifically has changed since your freshman year? (own experiences with examples)

- Academic expectations- workload?
- Academics - course options?
- Teachers/Teaching?
- Student support?
- Schedule?
- Student attitudes/behavior/voice?

What has been the best part of your education at BCLA?

What has been the worst part of your education at BCLA?

Would you choose BCLA again? Recommend it to family/friends? Why?

#### **Leadership**

Why do you think the word “Leadership” is in the name of your school?

How has your thinking about being a leader changed since you’ve been at the school?

Do you consider yourself a leader? Did you freshman year?

Have you had the opportunity to develop your skills as a leader here at BCLA?

In what ways?

#### **Future Plans**

What are your plans for the future? For immediately after graduation?

Have any of the BCLA staff been involved in your planning for the future? If so, who and how?

Do you feel the school prepared you well to pursue those plans? In what ways?

Based on your experiences applying to jobs or college, how could it have better prepared you?

Is there anything that you would change about BCLA? (probe: teaching, course offerings, rigor) (to improve the school for current and future students and to better prepare them for life after high school). If so, please describe.

What advice would you give to students starting this high school now?

Is there anything else that we should know about your high school?

## TEACHER INTERVIEW

### **Role**

Please describe your role/s in the school (title, grades, membership on school committees)  
How long have you been at the school?

### **Process of Conversion**

Were you part of the decision to convert to Pilot status? How?  
What were your feelings about converting BHS to BCLA?  
Were you a part of the design team?  
If so, what was your role on the team?  
How were decisions made in terms of setting vision/mission, curriculum, governance, and school structures?

### **Impact of Pilot Status on Teacher Practice**

How has the school changed as a result of Pilot status – having autonomy over schedule, budget, staffing, governance, and curriculum and assessment?  
(esp: leadership, staff, decision-making, curriculum, and student expectations)  
How has Pilot Status impacted your day-to-day teaching? What you teach, how you teach?  
How has it changed the curriculum?  
Your instructional strategies?  
Your classroom?  
Your collaborative planning time?  
Your workload?  
What was difficult?  
How has Pilot status influenced the daily life of the school?  
Has the overall school culture/climate changed? In what ways? (discipline)  
Are you more involved in school level decision-making? If so, how?  
Do you feel like you have more voice now than prior to the conversion?  
What are some challenges in the current decision-making model?  
Has school leadership changed? In what ways?

### **Impact of Pilot Status on Students**

How has Pilot Status impacted students?  
What are the expectations for student learning and achievement at BCLA?  
How are expectations different now than before the conversion?  
In what ways are expectations communicated to students?  
Do students have more voice in decision-making than in the past? How?  
How has your CCE coach participated in the conversion? What has been the most useful part of her role? Where could she have improved?  
What was your understanding of BHS's mission? What is your understanding of BCLA's mission? In what ways is BCLA close to that mission?  
In what ways does it have to change?