

**HANDOUT**

# Articles and Discussion Questions | Boston Educational Justice Gallery Walk

**Quotation 1 Headline:**

**'What exactly is fair about this?': Great high schools aren't available to all Boston kids**  
(*Boston Globe*, June 15, 2023)

**Discussion Questions:**

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

**Summary:**

*Adapted from the original article, published June 15, 2023, in the Boston Globe.*<sup>1</sup>

Today there are 34 high schools in Boston Public Schools. That includes three “exam schools.” To get into one of the exam schools, students must apply, pass an exam, and have a record of good grades. Most of the other high schools are “open enrollment” schools, which means that students get assigned to them through a lottery process. These schools are open to all, and about half of Boston’s high school students attend one of them.

Exam school students can choose from a wide variety of classes and extracurricular activities. Boston Latin School (BLS), for instance, has more than two dozen Advanced Placement courses, at least 13 different arts classes, seven foreign languages, and a wide variety of sports, including fencing, sailing, and lacrosse.

Open-enrollment schools offer fewer arts electives, AP courses, and extracurriculars, and far less academic variety and challenge. And there are fewer of the extras — like sports and clubs — that inject joy into the high school experience and build friendships that help teens navigate adolescence. Instead, they tend to be more focused on the basics: attendance, standardized tests, social and emotional support, and safety.

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<sup>1</sup> Deanna Pan, “[‘What exactly is fair about this?': Great high schools aren't available to all Boston kids](#),” *Boston Globe*, June 15, 2023, accessed August 9, 2023.

The exam schools take many of the city's most motivated young scholars and artists from each high school class, and they attract the children of the wealthiest households. The district eliminated racial quotas in exam school admissions in the 1990s, following a lawsuit by white parents. At BLS today, 38 percent of students are white, compared with 15 percent of the district overall and 3 percent at the Burke, an open-enrollment school. Just 28 percent of BLS students are low income, and only 3 percent have disabilities.

For years, public debate over high school education in Boston among politicians, parents, and the media has mostly revolved around the rules for exam school entrance — essentially, which few fortunates should be given this prized opportunity — while the plight of open enrollment high schools has been largely ignored.

Maybe now Boston is prepared to move beyond the exam school fight and to confront a much harder question: Why aren't great high schools available to everyone?

## Quotation 2 Headline:

**How a group of Boston teenagers organized a massive district-wide protest (Boston.com, March 11, 2016)**

## Discussion Questions:

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

## Summary:

Adapted from [the original article](#), published March 11, 2016, on Boston.com.<sup>2</sup>

On March 7, 2016, more than 3,600 Boston Public Schools students walked out of class and marched to Boston Common to protest cuts to the budget for Boston's public schools.

The idea for the protest came from three students at Snowden International High School, who were inspired by college protests against racism and sexism. On February 29, 2016, they posted a letter on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram explaining why they believed the budget cuts were wrong.

The students were especially angered by the impact that the budget cuts would have on extracurricular and arts programs. They believed losing those programs would eliminate opportunities for students in the school district, 87% of whom were minorities, that students in other districts have.

Their letter inspired more students to reach out to them and join the cause. On March 5, a handful of students from Snowden and other schools met to decide on a plan for the school walkout and protest.

At 11:30 am on Monday, March 7, more than 3,600 6–12 grade students stood up and walked out of their classrooms. They chanted "They say cut back, we say fight back," and "What do we want? Education!"

Some city officials, including Mayor Marty Walsh, assumed that adults had organized the student protest. While the students did attract some adult allies, none were involved in planning or executing the protest.

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<sup>2</sup> Allison Pohle, "[How a group of Boston teenagers organized a massive district-wide protest](#)," Boston.com, March 11, 2016.

### Quotation 3 Headline:

**In Mattapan’s Haitian Creole program, a taste of the bilingual education BPS wants to expand (*Boston Globe*, November 29, 2022)**

### Discussion Questions:

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

### Summary:

*Adapted from the original article, published November 29, 2022, in the Boston Globe.*<sup>3</sup>

The Toussaint L’Ouverture Academy is a 75-student bilingual education program at the Mattahunt Elementary School in Mattapan [a neighborhood in Boston]. The program is designed to teach Haitian students. Some of them are recent immigrants. The teachers are all Haitian American, and they lead lessons in both Haitian Creole and English. Many of the children are learning English while others are native English speakers.

The academy covers the same curriculum as other elementary school classes, but these teachers and students spend the day interacting in both languages so students learn both fluently. The Boston Public Schools recently announced plans to significantly expand bilingual education. The Toussaint L’Ouverture Academy shows what they hope to accomplish.

Bilingual education is one approach to teaching students whose first language is not English. Those students are taught in the language they know best while they also learn English. Once they become more fluent in English, they join classes taught entirely in English. This was the approach that Latino and Chinese activists fought for in the 1960s and 1970s.

Some people argue that the best way to teach children with little English is to put them into English-only classes, even before they have learned the language. The “English-only” approach became more popular in the 1990s. In 2002, Massachusetts voters approved “Question 2,” which made the bilingual approach illegal. Schools could only use the English-only approach.

In recent years, many studies have found that immigrant students learn English faster in bilingual programs than they do in English-only ones. In 2017, Massachusetts passed the LOOK Act, a new law that gave schools the choice to use bilingual education again.

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<sup>3</sup> Naomi Martin, “[In Mattapan’s Haitian Creole program, a taste of the bilingual education BPS wants to expand](#),” *Boston Globe*, November 29, 2022.

But BPS still has too many immigrant students remaining in English-only classes where they hear only English all day, said John Mudd, a member of the School Committee's English Language Learners task force.

Bilingual programs are great in theory, but they reach too few students because they require highly trained staff, Mudd said. (The Haitian Creole program, for example, serves 75 students, a small fraction of the 1,330 students in BPS whose first language is Haitian Creole.) Mudd said BPS needs to move urgently to better serve its 14,000 English-language learners by incorporating more of their native languages into their classes.

"BPS is not implementing the LOOK Act, much less doing justice to these students," Mudd said. "You only need to look at the achievement data to see how profoundly we are failing to provide an opportunity to learn to these students."

#### **Quotation 4 Headline:**

**Boston schools lost 15,000 Black students in the past 20 years. Where did they go, and will they ever return? (*Boston Globe*, November 26, 2022)**

#### **Discussion Questions:**

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

#### **Summary:**

*Adapted from the original article, published November 26, 2022, in the Boston Globe.*<sup>4</sup>

In 2022, Boston Public Schools had only half as many Black students as they did in 2002. The number of Black students has fallen from 29,300 to 14,600 during that time.

There are many reasons why this happened. Over those twenty years, the overall number of children who live in Boston declined. Housing also became more expensive, driving Black families, like many other families, to move to places where it is less expensive to live.

But the drop in the number of Black students is also because Black families are increasingly sending their children to schools that are not part of the Boston Public Schools system. Demanding the best education for their children, many Black families believe improvements to Boston Public Schools have occurred too slowly.

The numbers of white and Asian students in Boston Public Schools also fell over those 20 years, but the decrease in the numbers of Black students has been much greater. While the numbers of Latino and multiracial students have grown, the overall number of students in Boston Public Schools is also smaller.

Where have Black students gone? Many have enrolled in charter schools. Half of charter school students in Boston are Black. They have also moved to the communities that surround Boston and enrolled in the schools there. The Black student population in the city of Quincy, just south of Boston, has more than doubled in the past 20 years. Many students also attend schools in districts outside of Boston through the METCO program, founded by Ruth Batson in the 1960s.

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<sup>4</sup> Jenna Russell and Christopher Huffaker, "[Boston schools lost 15,000 Black students in the past 20 years. Where did they go, and will they ever return?](#)," *Boston Globe*, November 26, 2022.

“For the Black community, this is the fight of our lives,” parent Vernée Wilkinson said. “Education was, and will always be, the thing we fight for.”

### Quotation 5 Headline:

**'Asians are an afterthought': Asian American students at BPS report feeling less safe, more undervalued (*Boston Globe*, March 20, 2023)**

### Discussion Questions:

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

### Summary:

*Adapted from the original article, published March 20, 2023, in the Boston Globe.*<sup>5</sup>

Every year, the Boston Public Schools conducts a “school climate” survey. The survey asks students to answer a series of questions about their experiences and attitudes towards school.

In 2023, a group of experts analyzed the answers that Asian American students gave in the school climate survey a few years before. Their analysis showed that many Asian American students feel overlooked and invisible. Asian American students ranked their experiences at school poorly in the following areas:

PHYSICAL SAFETY: How safe do students feel at school?

SENSE OF BELONGING: How much do students feel like they belong at school?

SUPPORT STAFF: Do students have an adult they can talk to at school?

ACADEMIC STRESS: How stressed do students feel about schoolwork?

CULTURAL RELEVANCE: Do students feel represented in school? Do they see their culture in the curriculum?

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE TAKING: How often do students try to see the perspective of others?

CIVIC PARTICIPATION: Do students feel getting involved in the community is important?

ACADEMIC CHALLENGE: Are students encouraged to do their best work?

TEACHER INTEREST IN STUDENTS: Do students feel cared for by their teachers?

About 9 percent of Boston Public Schools' 46,000 students are Asian American. About 80 percent of them speak a language other than English at home — usually Vietnamese or a Chinese dialect — and, like the majority of BPS students, are mostly low income.

Education researcher Rosann Tung noted the study's findings echo the body of academic research on the “model minority myth” and its impact on Asian Americans' mental health. Studies show Asian American students who feel pressured to conform to the myth that all Asians

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<sup>5</sup> Deanna Pan, “[‘Asians are an afterthought’: Asian American students at BPS report feeling less safe, more undervalued.](#)” *Boston Globe*, March 20, 2023.



Americans are naturally high achieving often suffer from anxiety and low self-esteem, especially if they struggle academically. As a result, they may fear asking for help while their teachers wrongly assume they don't need any.

"We don't just need more Asian teachers," Tung said. "We need all educators to understand and care about the Asian experience."

## Quotation 6 Headline:

**Neighborhood over quality in school plan? (Letter to the editor, *Boston Globe*, March 1, 2013)**

## Discussion Questions:

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

## Summary:

In 2013, many years after Boston regained control of its school system from the federal courts, the Boston School Committee adopted a new plan to decide which students would attend which schools. Under this new system, families would be offered multiple choices for where to send their children to school. The choices provided to each family would be determined, in part, by how close the schools were to their home.

This plan was based on the fact that most families, regardless of race, ethnicity, or wealth, prefer their children to attend schools that are both good *and* close to home, if at all possible. This was the case in the 1960s and 1970s, just as it is today. But then and now, segregation in the city of Boston makes it difficult to assign students to schools that are both good *and* close to home.

In 2013, as today, Boston remained a city with neighborhoods and schools that were highly segregated by race, ethnicity, and wealth. Schools in neighborhoods with more white and wealthy residents tended to be schools where there are more resources and students have higher test scores. Therefore, students in those neighborhoods would have better school options to choose from than students in neighborhoods whose residents were people of color or poor.

This school assignment system prompted many organizations and parents to speak out. Mary Battenfeld was a member of the organization Quality Education for Every Student and a parent of a public school student. After attending a school committee meeting in which this plan was debated, she wrote a letter to the *Boston Globe*:

On Monday night, cameras flashed, hugs were exchanged, and everyone congratulated the External Advisory Committee on School Choice on its selection of a new student assignment plan for the Boston Public Schools. Based in both family address and school MCAS [standardized test] performance, the assignment model answers the call for “quality schools, close to home.”

Or does it? Driving to my house after the Beacon Hill meeting, through Chinatown, the South End, Roxbury, and finally to Jamaica Plain, I worried about children who have no quality schools close to home . . .

Student assignment alone cannot fix the crushing disparities in our city's schools. But we can use it to make things better, or worse. We can accept inequality and segregation as inevitable, or turn education, as the great nineteenth century reformer Horace Mann put it, into "the balance wheel of the social machinery."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Mary Battenfeld, "[Neighborhood over quality in school plan?](#)," letter to the editor, *Boston Globe*, March 1, 2013.

## Quotation 7 Headline:

**Use Restorative Justice Practices to Reduce Suspension and Dropout Rates (826Boston.org, spring 2016)**

## Discussion Questions:

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

## Full Text:

### **Use Restorative Justice Practices to Reduce Suspension and Dropout Rates**

*By Nicole María Peña, senior at Boston's Margarita Muñiz Academy in 2016*

During the 2011–2012 school year, American students lost almost 18 million days of school due to suspensions.<sup>7</sup> This is just one of the countless disadvantages placed upon students when penalized by school-mandated protocols such as the zero-tolerance policy. This policy mandates punishment against students for offenses made, regardless the seriousness of the behavior. These offenses may include possession of a weapon, arguing with a student, or even talking back to the teacher. Despite these policies and the level of severity, one should realize that no one should be deprived of their education because of their wrongdoings.

Continuous punishment against someone doesn't correct their mistake, instead, it leads the person to think they're an awful person. They will continue making wrong decisions. In the article "Principals Not Police," The American Press claims that "Students who are taken out of school, or experience it as a punitive and unwelcoming place, are more likely to drop out and become entangled in the criminal justice system."<sup>8</sup> Consequently, these students are categorized within the "school-to-prison pipeline." This means that those students are most likely to end up in prison after being kicked out of school or dropping out.

On the other hand, restorative justice is a rehabilitation/healing process that allows the victim and the perpetrator to reconcile. Not only [do] restorative justice programs provide students with a chance to vent, but to also take responsibility for themselves, forgive, understand, and listen. "In many schools, such programs are intent on developing closer relationships among students, teachers and administrators while encouraging young people to think of meaningful

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<sup>7</sup> Sophia Tesfaye, "Bill O'Reilly Attacks 'Restorative Justice Programs' That Reduce Racially Disproportionate School Discipline," *Media Matters for America*, March 17, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> "Principals, Not Police," *America*, February 17, 2014, 1.

reparations for misdeeds.”<sup>9</sup> All humans have the ability to reconcile, and if you’re constantly being punished for what you’ve done wrong, you won’t “develop the inborn capacities to acknowledge the fact that you did hurt someone.”<sup>10</sup>

Restorative justice programs gather students together to discuss something that was never resolved. According to Matt Davis in his article “Restorative Justice: Resources for Schools,” [in] “the growing number of districts using restorative justice, the programs have helped strengthen campus communities, prevent bullying and reduce student conflicts.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it is elaborated that “early adopting districts have seen drastic reductions in suspension and expulsion rates, and students say they are happier and feel safer.”<sup>12</sup> The program helps kids talk through their problems in school, fix current conflicts, and avoid ones in the future. This sense of relief and forgiveness may increase the student’s interest in genuinely staying in school.

Some people may say that we do not have enough time during the school day to include restorative justice in the curriculum. Nevertheless, if a program is helping reduce the amount of people leaving school every day, then some thought should go into realizing the benefit it has on students, and on the community as a whole. In the schools that are using this, the academic performance goes up and behavioral problems go down.<sup>13</sup>

*Note: In 2013, the Boston Public Schools adopted a code of conduct for students that included restorative justice practices and created an Office of Restorative Justice for the district.<sup>14</sup> In the spring of 2023, the Boston Education Justice Alliance criticized BPS because the Office for Restorative Justice staff included three people to support restorative justice practices in 125 schools. That same year, BPS announced plans to add nine new staff members, but the critics said that was not enough.<sup>15</sup>*

**This [essay](#) originally appeared in [Attendance Would be 100 Percent: Student Proposals for High School Redesign Boston from Margarita Muñiz Academy/Academia Margarita Muñiz & 826 Boston](#), published by the nonprofit organization 826 Boston in 2016.**

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Gray Wallace, “[A Circle of Support: Restorative Justice at Summer Camp](#),” American Camp Association, May 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Carolyn Boyes-Watson, in discussion with author, January 15, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Matt Davis, “[Restorative Justice: Resources for Schools](#),” Edutopia, last modified October 29, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Matt Davis, “Restorative Justice: Resources for Schools.”

<sup>13</sup> Carolyn Boyes-Watson.

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah Thompson, “[Council probes BPS on restorative justice](#),” *Bay State Banner*, March 1, 2023, accessed August 30, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Ruby Reyes, “[Why does BPS skip restorative justice as a solution to school safety?](#),” *Bay State Banner*, March 31, 2023, accessed August 30, 2023.

## Quotation 8 Headline:

### Integrate Latino Cultural Studies into the Curriculum (826Boston.org, spring 2016)

#### Discussion Questions:

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

#### Full Text:

### Integrate Latino Cultural Studies into the Curriculum

*By Isamar Sánchez, senior at Boston's Margarita Muñiz Academy in 2016*

I have always had the privilege of having Latino Studies in both middle school and high school. I cannot imagine what my school experience would be like if I were in a box where I had no knowledge about Latino history. In my humanities Spanish class in tenth grade, I had the opportunity to learn about the dictatorship in the Dominican Republic. Being the daughter of Dominican parents, I have always heard about the dictator Rafael Trujillo but would never have had the chance to study it in depth if it were not for the Latino courses offered at the Margarita Muñiz Academy. Learning about Latino history that is directly connected to my Dominican background is something that kept me interested and engaged. This is something that every Latino student in the Boston Public Schools system should have.

Not having Latino cultural studies in the Boston Public Schools high school curriculum causes Latino students to feel left out of the community. They lose touch with their culture and history. The most serious problem is that they have nothing that can connect to their life and express who they are. Having Latino cultural studies in the curriculum is something that Latino students can immediately hook into.<sup>16</sup>

A serious problem in the Boston Public School system is the high dropout rates and low graduation rates among Latino students. Studies have shown that students can really benefit from having a culturally relevant education. A recent study showed that graduation rates within the Mexican-American student population had strengthened about ten percent after forming part of the Mexican-American Studies class.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Miren Uriarte, in discussion with author, January 26, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Natalie Gross, "[Chicago Schools Launch a Latino Studies Curriculum](#)," *Latino Ed. Beat* (blog), Education Writers Association, March 11, 2015.

Adding Latino cultural studies to the curriculum would not only benefit Latino students, it would teach each and every student the importance of history all over the world. Being more aware of the cultural diversity surrounding you and the important facts of history makes us all understand more about the way things are today. Miren Uriarte, an expert in the field of Latino cultural studies, stated that non-Latino students still benefit from taking Latino cultural studies because it is a chance for them to learn about a different cultural background than their own. It also allows those students to feel free and travel to a new world when learning about new cultures.<sup>18</sup>

Making room for all different cultural studies will be even greater. The more diversity that is put into the curriculum, the more exciting it may be. This means that an African-American student can be learning about not only Latino culture, but also Asian culture, European culture, American Indian culture, and vice-versa. Having that bridge connecting who you are at home and at school can really make a difference.

**This [essay](#) originally appeared in [Attendance Would be 100 Percent: Student Proposals for High School Redesign Boston from Margarita Muñiz Academy/Academia Margarita Muñiz & 826 Boston](#), published by the nonprofit organization 826 Boston in 2016.**

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<sup>18</sup> Miren Uriarte.

**Quotation 9 Headline:****Implement More Two-Way Bilingual Programs to Decrease Segregation (826Boston.org, spring 2016)**

*By Lorian De Lahoz Cruz, senior at Boston's Margarita Muñiz Academy in 2016*

**Discussion Questions:**

- How is this reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
- What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

**Excerpt:**

Having moved to the United States from the Dominican Republic, I felt a huge sense of relief when I found out that I'd be attending the only two-way bilingual high school in the state. I have had many positive experiences at the Margarita Muñiz Academy, but there is something important missing: cultural diversity. I am surrounded by students that look and speak like me: Latinos. This kind of segregation is something that Boston Public Schools needs to change.

"In a diverse classroom the students have the opportunity to experience new cultures and develop new skills that can impact their life in a positive way,"<sup>19</sup> said Dr. Frances Esparza, the assistant superintendent at the office of English learners for Boston Public Schools. Esparza believes the district should do more to grow these programs by informing all parents, not just Latino parents, that a multilingual and multicultural education is an asset.

A culturally diverse school has a deep impact on students. According to Esparza, "The student performs better when they are in a diverse classroom or school."<sup>20</sup> When the school is multilingual a newly-arrived immigrant can feel more comfortable, because there may be others that speak the same language or have the same ethnicity. Also, students in a culturally-diverse school have a deeper understanding and respect for other cultures. At a diverse school, the students spend time talking with people who are different from them, opening their minds, exchanging ideas, and improving their lifestyles.

In a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom, students develop awareness for language and understand that there are many ways to communicate their ideas. Students can transfer their native language skills and learn English faster! Multilingual students can transfer their knowledge

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<sup>19</sup> France Esparza, in discussion with author, January 25, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> France Esparza.



of one language to any other language, and they can have the opportunity to navigate in many cultures. Also, the more languages students speak, the more global opportunities they will have to find employment in any country . . .<sup>21</sup>

Multilingual education can be controversial. Many think that the most important language in the United States is English, because it is the dominant language. They think if you come to the United States, you should forget about your native language. People need to remember that the United States is comprised of many different cultural groups, and that this country does not have an official language.

The implementation of multilingual education in the Boston Public Schools will promote cultural, social, and intellectual development in every student. It will develop students' linguistic skills, not only in their native languages but also in their second or even third language of study. More importantly, learning more than one language and learning about many cultures will benefit not just the students, but Boston as a whole.

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<sup>21</sup> Alison DeNisco, "Immigrant Surge Slows, but Challenges Remain," District Administration, October 2015, 22, accessed December 3, 2015.