



Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)

PROJECTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2003-Present

BSAC actively engages students in decision-making in the Boston Public Schools.

BSAC is a partnership between Youth on Board and the Boston Public Schools.

POLICY CHANGES

- 1. Climate Change** – BSAC began examining climate change issues in the spring of 2014, recognizing that young people of color will be the ones most impacted by the effects of climate change. BSAC participated in the Reject & Protect Rally against the Keystone XL tar-sands pipeline and helped to mobilize groups across the city to fill 7 busses with young people and their allies for the People's Climate March. Locally, BSAC aims to improve the sustainability and efficiency of Boston Public Schools (BPS) through solar energy, retrofitting buildings, etc., and is developing a climate change curriculum to educate their peers. BSAC worked with City Councilors to pass a resolution urging the state to divest from fossil fuels.
- 2. Youth Affordabili(T) Coalition (YAC)** – BSAC joined YAC in 2011 to advocate for the Youth Way on the MBTA campaign. BSAC believes that every young person deserves affordable access to transportation. BSAC has participated in YAC Coalition and planning meetings, participated in rallies and marches at the State House, and lobbied BPS, MBTA, and state officials. YAC successfully influenced the Department of Transportation (DOT) to increase fares by 23% instead of 100%. In 2014, the DOT Board of Directors voted to pilot a university/youth pass, allowing 1500 youth between the ages of 12 to 21 residing in Boston, Chelsea and Cambridge to purchase a monthly pass for \$26 or a weekly pass for \$7 beginning in July 2015.
- 3. Code of Conduct (formerly Code of Discipline)** – BSAC students worked with the BPS administration to update the district's Code of Discipline (now the Code of Conduct) in light of their concerns regarding student rights, disciplinary actions used for minor offenses, and the uses of suspension and exclusion of students from instruction. BSAC serves on the Code of Conduct Advisory Council (COCAC) which aims to promote the practice of alternative and restorative discipline in the district, and the Chapter 222 Coalition, a group focused on the implementation of new state legislation aiming to make discipline more equitable and mandating alternative means for disciplining students. As a Dignity in Schools Campaign member, BSAC participates annually in the national Week of Action with the Listening Project. BSAC and Youth Organizers United for the Now Generation (YOUNG) members go to train and bus stations after school to listen to and collect data on young people's experiences with school discipline. The data is collected, analyzed, and fed back to the School Committee and COCAC.
- 4. New School Discipline/Dropout Reform Law** – BSAC testified at a hearing to pass Chapter 222 of the Acts of 2012, which would improve school discipline and decrease dropout rates in Massachusetts public schools. Signed into law in 2012, some of the improvements this act includes are: a) schools must have

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documented proof that they have taken every other disciplinary measure before resorting to out-of-school suspension or expulsion, and b) students have the right to access all tests, quizzes, and materials administered during the time of their out-of-school suspension or expulsion. Currently BSAC is represented in a state-wide coalition to address the implementation and enforce the police power of the legislation.

5. **Pepper Spray** – BSAC, alongside youth, families, teachers, community organizing groups, and the YOUNG Coalition, made it clear in public forums, school committee meetings, and meetings with BPS officials that students did not want school resource officers to carry OC spray (also known as pepper spray) due to possible health impacts, particularly for students with asthma, and student safety concerns. BPS was receptive to student and community voices and chose not to arm school police officers with pepper spray.
6. **Student Rights & Responsibilities Campaign and Phone App**– BSAC created posters for Student Rights & Responsibilities (SR&R) to educate students on their rights regarding Cell Phones, Punctuality, Student Government, Military Opt-out, and Metal Detectors and other BPS policies. BSAC then designed and distributed SR&R pocket-sized pamphlets in 2012 and designed an SR&R unit for the district’s 12th grade Civics Curriculum. In recent years, BSAC has supported schools-based campaigns to raise awareness of SR&R. Additionally, BSAC developed a phone application that details each SR&R, provides general information about BSAC, explains the Code of Conduct, and offers students a place to report grievances.
7. **Student Vote** – Each year, one non-voting student representative is appointed to the Boston School Committee. In light of the fact that the student who sits on the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is a member with full voting rights, and that in Boston the student represents the 56,000 students served by BPS, BSAC is seeking to pass a home rule petition to change law in the City of Boston so that the student member on the Boston School Committee will become a voting member.
8. **Student Feedback in Teacher Evaluations** – BSAC lobbied the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education to include student feedback as an official component of teacher evaluations. In a set of regulations passed by in July 2011, all districts in the state must include student feedback in educator evaluations. BSAC’s success at the state level trickled down to the BPS where BSAC leads the Student Feedback Working Group with the BPS Office of Human Capital to monitor the tool and process used to collect student feedback in educator evaluations. BSAC has also actively engaged with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a model survey tool and develop best practices in implementation for all Massachusetts districts and created a video to promote student feedback.
9. **Student to Teacher Constructive Feedback** – In May 2010, the Boston School Committee passed BSAC’s “Student to Teacher Constructive Feedback Policy” mandating that all high school teachers administer the “Constructive Feedback Form” in their classrooms which allows students to give their teachers constructive feedback on their strengths and weaknesses and is proven to improve classroom culture by promoting positive relationships. Every high school teacher will administer the survey at least once per year.
10. **Boston School Committee’s Format and Rules** – BSAC and YOUNG members provided public comment

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at the Boston School Committee to speak against the proposed format and rules for school committee meetings that would prohibit signs, cheering, and clapping in the chambers. BSAC's student representative to the Boston School Committee brought that feedback from BSAC and YOUNG to his fellow School Committee members while serving on the subcommittee drafting the proposed new format and rules. The student representative helped draft a new proposal that took into account the community's concerns regarding their lack of voice. BSAC helped push for the final recommendations on the format and rules.

- 11. Student Government mandated in high schools** – BSAC worked with the Student Engagement Advisory Council (SEAC) in writing the Student Government Circular and reinstating it in the Boston Public Schools, mandating that all BPS High Schools are required to have a functioning student government, a student council, a student leadership team, or other student leadership structure. An annual conference has been established for members of the student governments across the district to attend.
- 12. Punctuality Policy** (formerly known as the Tardiness/Lockout Policy) – BSAC lobbied the schools, Headmasters, School Committee, and the Superintendent to reevaluate the BPS Tardiness Policy, particularly the prevalent practice of locking tardy students out of the school building for the rest of the day. The School Committee, which agreed to remove the lockout component from all tardiness policies in all BPS schools, quickly accepted BSAC's proposal; this became effective in the fall of 2006.
- 13. Military Opt Out & Peace Rally** – BSAC members had over 2000 conversations with BPS students on the issue of military recruitment and opting out during the spring of 2007. They conducted an open training for BPS students on how to organize and advocate around the military opting out issue. Students also participated in a rally on June 1, 2007 to deliver over 1300 opting out cards to the Superintendent.
- 14. Cell Phone Policy** – BSAC drafted a district-wide policy on cell phone use in schools and developed it with feedback from the Superintendent. The School Committee approved this new policy, which retained much of the original wording proposed by BSAC. The policy states that students have the right to use their mobile devices *before* and *after* school hours but must remain off and not visible during school hours.
- 15. School Start Time** – BSAC gathered opinions on school start time from current students, parents, and students who dropped out. Students created a proposal, educated people about sleep and time management, and then conducted informal focus groups that led to BSAC's rethinking of the BPS schedule. BSAC presented their recommendations to the School Committee and a later school start time was piloted at 10 high schools in the fall of 2007. The later school start time is now permanently in place at some schools.
- 16. Dual enrollment funding from the state** – BSAC worked with Jobs for the Future (JFF) and other collective groups to lobby the state legislature to bring dual enrollment back to the Massachusetts budget funding. Dual enrollment allows for students in their senior year of high school to be simultaneously enrolled in high school and college. Due to the lobbying work of BSAC and other groups, there is now an official line item in the state's budget dedicated to dual enrollment for high school students.

17. Graduation Requirements – BSAC developed recommendations on the most effective way to implement and communicate the new Graduation Requirements Policy and presented the recommendations to the School Committee and Superintendent. The new policy allowed schools to choose from three different tracks of requirements. BSAC was also responsible for communicating these changes to the student body.

ADVOCACY

18. Superintendent Search – BSAC has infused student voice into the Superintendent search processes in 2007 and 2014. During both searches, BSAC requested that a current student have a seat on the search committee, which is appointed by the School Committee. Although the School Committee never acquiesced, students ensured their involvement in the process by hosting forums, creating a video about what students want from a new Superintendent, and developing search criteria which was shared with the School Committee, the Search Committee, the search firm, and broadly with the public. By leveraging their relationships in the district and with community partners, BSAC students were able to secure some student voice in the search process. Students will interview finalists in 2015 and have contributed to the interview questions.

19. National Student Bill of Rights (NSBR) – NSBR is a national movement bringing together youth from across the country to define youth vision for education and social justice. Youth from different cities have developed local bills and worked together to write a national bill that will become a unifying document for youth nationwide. BSAC played a major role in providing feedback and recommendations for the document. In March 2012, BSAC co-hosted an NSBR workshop with the Baltimore Algebra Project to raise awareness around NSBR. BSAC and YOUNG assisted in the implementation of the national youth voting week.

20. Friendly Feedback Form – BSAC believes that students should be involved in some form of teacher evaluations. Nearby school districts have a more formal process for students to evaluate their teachers. The Friendly Feedback Form is BSAC's first step to initiating one for the Boston Public School district. It was first piloted at the Community Academy of Science and Health (CASH) in the Hyde Park Educational Complex. Students were able to provide anonymous evaluations for teachers in the Math Department. The findings were presented to the Headmaster at CASH in January 2009.

21. Class size – BSAC made public students' desire for small class sizes. BSAC is against averaging class size requirements across the district, and strategized a plan for opposing the policy. BSAC aided the Boston Teachers Union with the circulation of a document that justified smaller class sizes across the district.

22. Dimensions for Effective Teaching and Learning – BSAC added to the existing "Dimensions for Effective Teaching" and created "Dimensions for Effective Learning" to make sure the essential perspective of young people was represented in this widely-distributed and used publication.

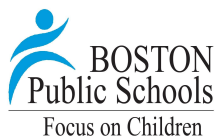
- 23. Metal Detectors** – BSAC developed a proposal that outlined students’ concerns about metal detectors in schools and recommended ways to make metal detector searches more efficient, more effective, and more respectful of students. Students presented the proposal to the Superintendent, who agreed to ask the security department to act on these resolutions.
- 24. Sexual Harassment in Schools** – With leadership from the Hyde Square Task Force, BSAC approached the question of sexual harassment in schools. Students conducted informal focus groups with their peers to find out how common they believe sexual harassment is in their schools. The Office of Equity has decided to include student voice in their discussions about these policies.
- 25. Food and Nutrition** – BSAC met regularly and advised a group over the course of a year with representatives from BPS Food and Nutrition Services to discuss issues related to school food and vending machines. Students advised a group of doctors working with the Nutrition Group on how to create healthy snacks that students will actually eat. BSAC is also exploring the possibility of working with the Boston Food Project to bring local and seasonal food to schools.
- 26. School Dress Code** - BSAC met with a City Councilor to discuss the possibility of a district-wide dress code. Students were in agreement that this should not be a “uniform policy,” but a dress code that holds students accountable for the clothes they wear at school. This movement is still happening at individual schools but has been dropped as a district-wide policy.
- 27. District Budget Cuts** – To combat budget cuts within the district, BSAC has worked with a budget coalition made up of eight youth organizations from around Boston to rally against budget cuts across the school district, facilitated meetings between students and the Mayor, and helped organize students for a march to a School Committee meeting. The coalition organized a forum with an estimated 350 students and many BPS officials in attendance. BSAC worked with the coalition to create a platform with an emphasis on lobbying to increase revenue to the city and the school system.

RESEARCH/ADVISING

- 28. Health and Wellness** – BSAC works with community groups and BPS to improve the quality of health education, in the district and across the state. BSAC has been a member of the BPS District Health and Wellness Council for several years and was instrumental in editing the Boston Public Schools’ new health curriculum, dubbed the “Health Frameworks,” which has since been used to train teachers in the district.
- 29. Participatory Budgeting** – As part of the Youth Lead the Change steering committee, BSAC has helped facilitate the process of getting input from young people across Boston on how to spend \$1 million in capital funds for the past two years. BSAC participated in EdVestors' Education Review Team Youth Panel (an extension of EdVestors' grant review process) to read and review grant applications describing projects

within the Boston Public Schools. The Youth Team recommended two initiatives, BPS Credit Recovery and Debate Across the Curriculum, for EdVestors to fund within BPS.

- 30. Homework Task Force** – Following the work around effective teaching, students hope to end “busy-work” assigned by teachers that is irrelevant to course material. Students were part of a formal Homework Task Force along with teachers and staff from the Academic Superintendent’s office to establish a policy to increase the quality of homework and access to school resources that will make for more effective learning.
- 31. Anti-Bullying** - Students began looking at anti-bullying policies and working with the district to look at anti-bullying from all perspectives. BSAC provided feedback on the BPS Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan. BSAC wants support for families and students, both aggressors and targets, throughout any discipline procedure. Students want non-exclusionary methods considered first, especially restorative justice approaches. Prevention is key, which requires training all school staff in prevention and intervention and incorporating empathy and diversity training in the K-12 curriculum.
- 32. Drop-out Rate** – With the drop-out rate increasing steadily, BSAC found it necessary to get to the root of the problem. They surveyed over 300 BPS students about what makes students drop out of, and stay in, school. They presented the results to the School Committee and school administrators. BSAC also presented the results of the survey to Boston Private Industry Council’s Boston Youth Transitions Planning Group, as well as on local cable television and other venues. Solutions were outlined in a living document and a video was produced and sent to the Oprah Winfrey show.
- 33. School Climate Surveys** – BSAC collected 500 responses to the 2005-2006 Drop-out Survey which indicated the drop-out rate should be addressed by increasing student engagement and providing greater student support through changes to the curriculum and school structure. BSAC worked with the Youth Transitions Task Force to create a survey that looked at analyzing how student-student, student-teacher, and teacher-administration relationships were affecting school climate. The Academic Superintendent conducted a focus group with BSAC on the topic of a district-wide student survey focused on School Climate. This survey is distributed to both students and parents. BSAC students provided input on the survey questions.
- 34. Truancy** – BSAC investigated why students do not stay in school and become disengaged. BSAC created a survey, interviewed students, collected data and presented their findings to the School Committee. BSAC combined their solutions with those of the dropout rate research and created a document that is still used.
- 35. Social Emotional Learning** – BSAC hosted a National Conference for the Dignity in Schools Campaign, where members of the Dignity in Schools Campaign (teachers, students, parents and advocates) discussed the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in schools, as well as learned how to practice SEL. With funding from the NoVo Foundation, BSAC helped hold another convening for groups across the country working on student feedback in teacher evaluation could gather to discuss their SEL-centered



approaches to the work. Currently, BSAC is being studied by the Susan Crown Exchange along with several other organizations selected from around the country for their unique, SEL-centered program models.

36. Voter Registration- Worked with the League of Women Voters during the 2004 presidential election to ensure that 18-year-olds had access to voter registration. BSAC students went into over 10 BPS high schools and set up registration tables. They also raised awareness about the presidential election and registered people to vote.

37. Downtown Planning Process – Boston’s Downtown has traditionally been seen as a place for students to hang out after school. Business owners have expressed concerns to the City about youth loitering by storefronts during after-school hours. As the Downtown is being redeveloped, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) has incorporated youth voice into the planning process through focus groups.