

# Dilemmas of Educational Justice: A Collaborative, Case Based Dialogue

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# Agenda

- Who are you?
- Who are we?
- Framing: Justice in Schools
- Dilemma: Boston Public Schools' new school assignment policy
- Discussion
- Resolutions? Next steps

**Research and teaching project designed to help us all grapple productively with dilemmas of justice in schools.**

Helps educators, policy makers, and activists:

- ask the right questions,
- use shared language to talk about the ethical choices they face,
- access frameworks and heuristics through which they can understand others' points of view.

Helps moral, political, and educational theorists:

- ask the right questions about justice in non-ideal contexts,
- develop new language to talk about educational ethics,
- take account of empirical cases and evidence in developing principles of educational justice.



# Justice *in* Schools

linking educators, researchers,  
and philosophers to foster  
educational justice



**Research and teaching project designed to help us all grapple productively with dilemmas of justice in schools.**

We try to do this through:

- Researching and writing *normative case studies*: complex, empirically-researched ethical practice and policy dilemmas
- Taking the *mitigation of injustice* seriously as a step on the path toward justice
- Bringing *ethics* and *values* into conversation with *evidence* and *practice*



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[www.justiceinschools.org](http://www.justiceinschools.org)

Normative Case Study Dilemma:

**School Assignment  
Policies in the Boston  
Public Schools**

## Ideal:

A quality school for every child

## Next-best:

Policies that will lead toward creation  
of quality schools for every child

*and*

Equal opportunity to attend  
quality schools that currently exist

## Next-best:

Policies that will lead toward creation  
of quality schools for every child  
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Equal opportunity to attend  
quality schools that currently exist

magnet schools

racial and class  
balancing in school  
assignment

inclusion and dual  
immersion schools

family/community  
voice



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voice

How does Boston's  
new school  
assignment plan  
work?

# Quality Schools, Closer to Home

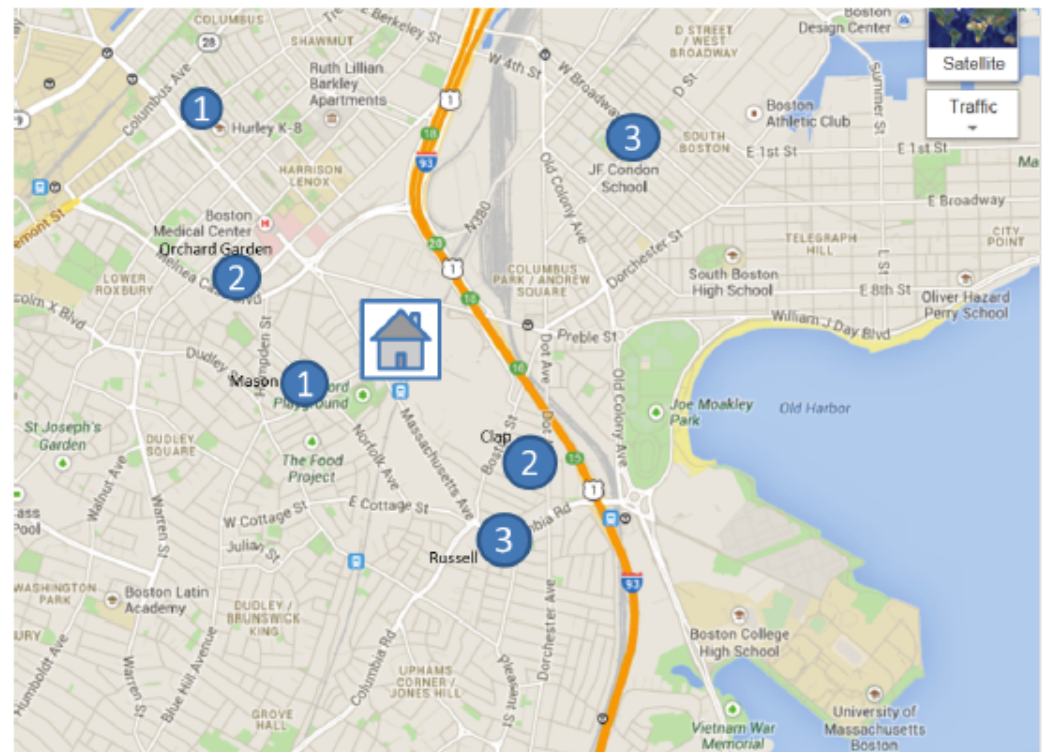
- In March 2013, the School Committee approved a new school choice process
- The core of this process is the **Home Based Assignment plan**
- Under the Home Based plan, school choice lists contain an average range of 8 to 14 schools, including the closest:
  - 2 MCAS tier I schools
  - 2 MCAS tier I or II schools
  - 2 schools from the first, second, or third MCAS tiers
- Every list will also include all schools within one mile from home, citywide options, regional schools, and other option schools to ensure program and seat availability
- Tiers are based on a combination of a school's MCAS proficiency and academic growth

# What schools can families choose?

## How the list of school options is built

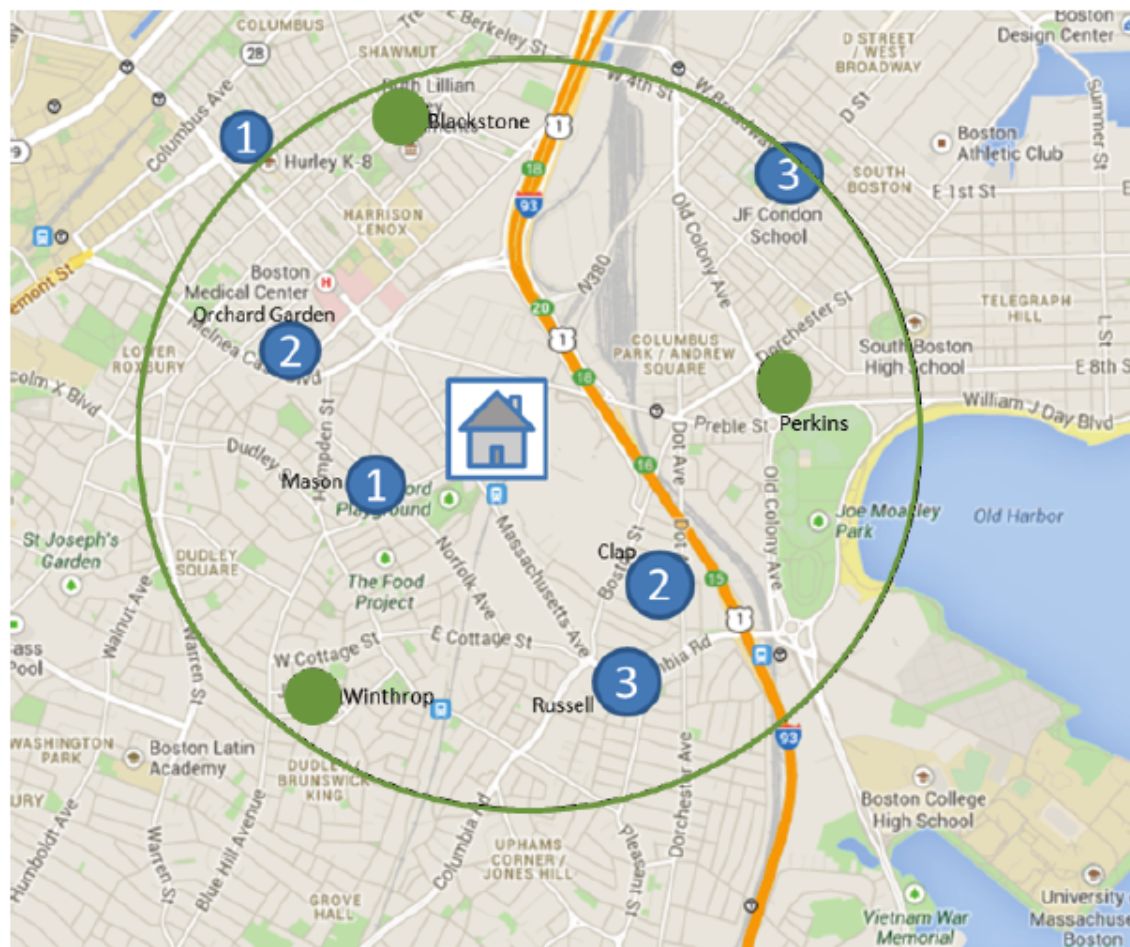
- The following series of maps shows the list of school options for a K2 student living at Massachusetts Ave. and Magazine St. in Roxbury
  
- First, the student will receive 6 **MCAS tier schools**
  - 2 schools from MCAS tier I
  - 2 schools from MCAS tier I or II
  - 2 schools from the top three MCAS tiers

 MCAS Tier Schools






# What schools can families choose?

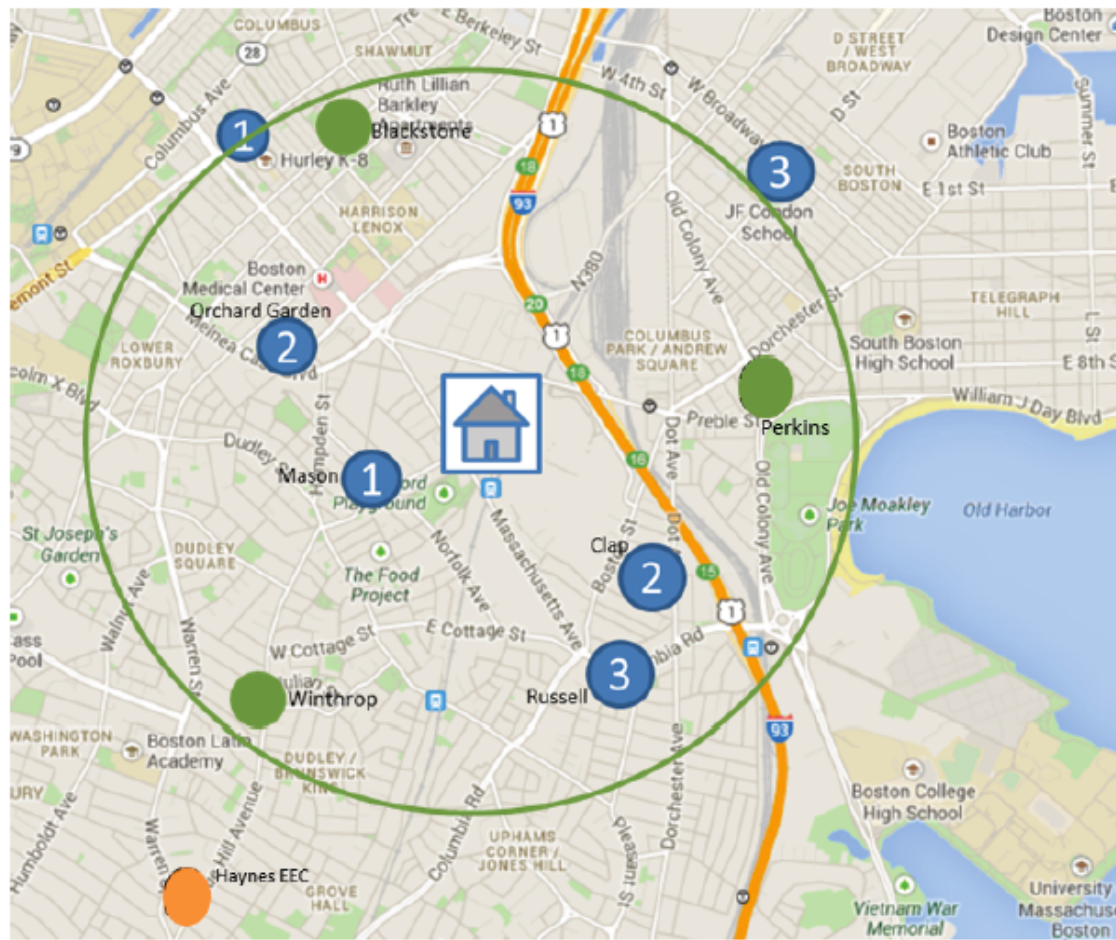
- Next, the student will receive any **schools within one mile of home**
- Measured using a straight line, centered at the student's address



# What schools can families choose?

- Next, the student will receive any **option schools**
- Two types:
  - **Programmatic options** (e.g., AWC, EEC/ELC)
  - **Capacity options**
- This includes a regional option in Allston-Brighton for some neighborhoods





-  MCAS Tier Schools
-  Schools within 1 mile
-  Option School

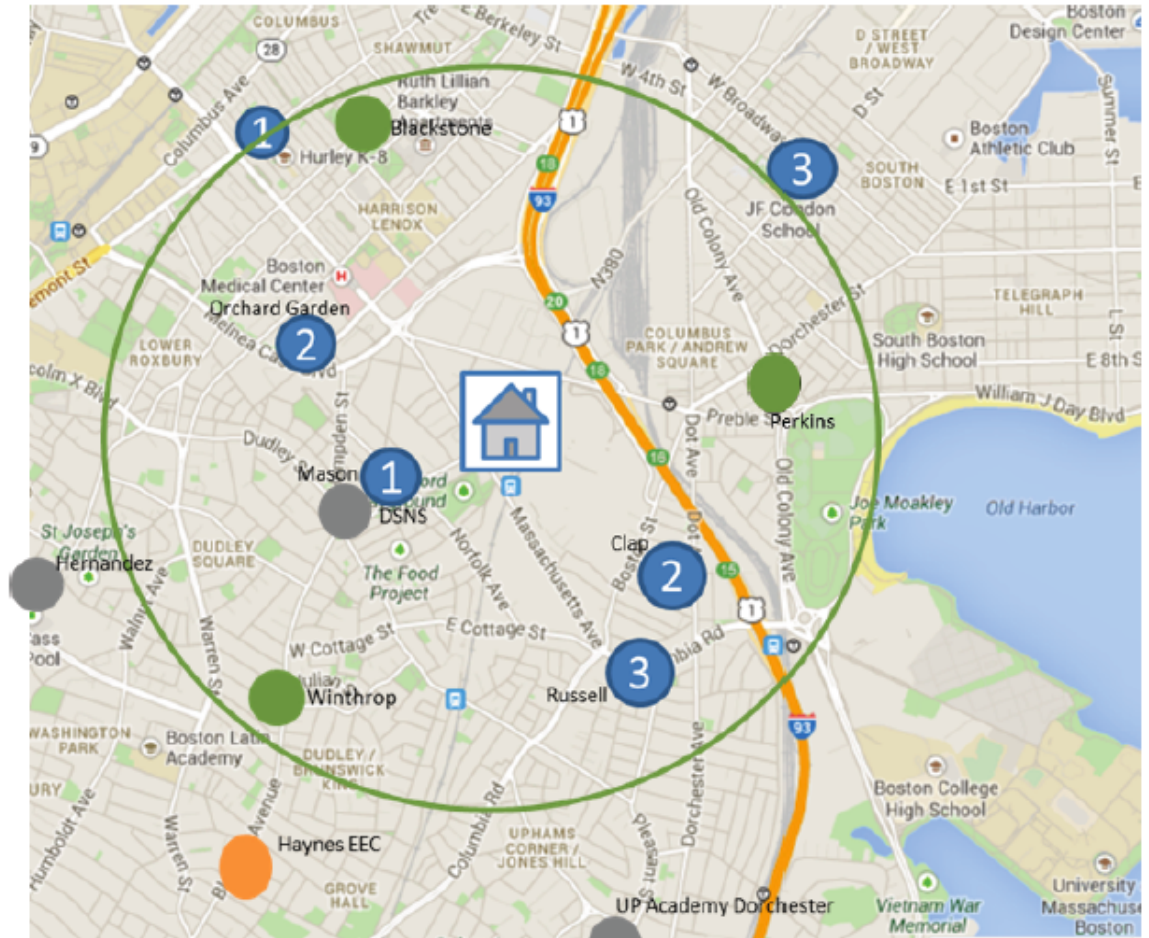




# What schools can families choose?

- Next, the student will receive any **citywide schools**
- Horace Mann in-district charters
- Other citywide schools (e.g., Hernandez)

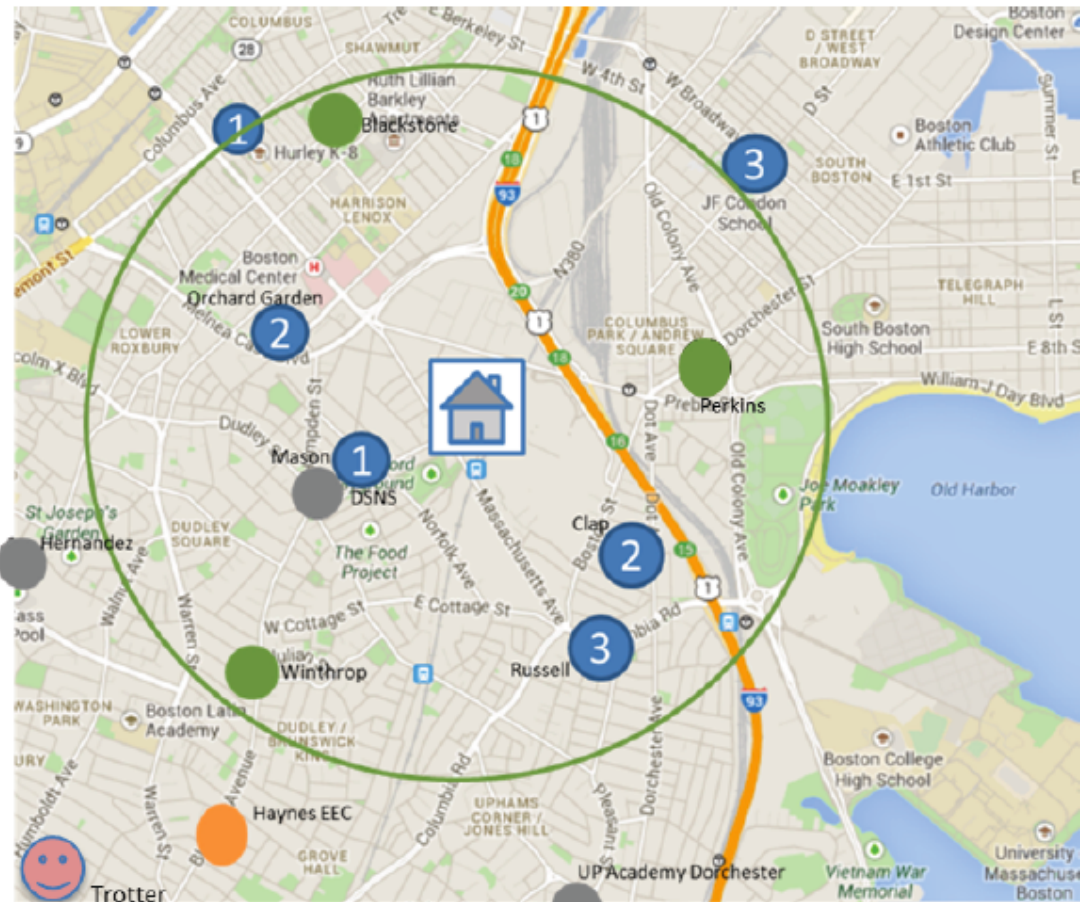
-  MCAS Tier Schools
-  Schools within 1 mile
-  Option School
-  Citywide School



# What schools can families choose?

- Finally, the student will receive any **schools his or her siblings attend**
- In all, this student would have a total of **14 school options** under the Home Based plan

-  MCAS Tier Schools
-  Schools within 1 mile
-  Option School
-  Citywide School
-  Sibling School





What ethical dilemmas of justice arise in Boston's school assignment plan? What should be done?

# Formal vs. Substantive Equality

- Should families have an equal *minimum* # of schools or also an equal *maximum*?
- What should we be trying to equalize?
  - # of quality schools
  - # of quality seats
  - Competition for seats: equal opportunity to “win the lottery” and gain entry to a quality school

Leveling Up vs. Leveling Down

# Managing Privilege: Voice vs. Exit

How can privileged families be attracted into the system without undercutting struggling families without exit options?

# Student Demographics

School-age children in BPS: 77,200  
BPS SY2013 enrollment: 57,100

## Students who attend BPS

40% Hispanic

36% Black

13% White

9% Asian

2% Other/multiracial

## Students who do not attend BPS

46% Black

33% White

16% Hispanic

4% Asian

1% Other/multiracial

## Of Students who do not attend BPS:

5,550 go to parochial schools

4,200 go to private schools

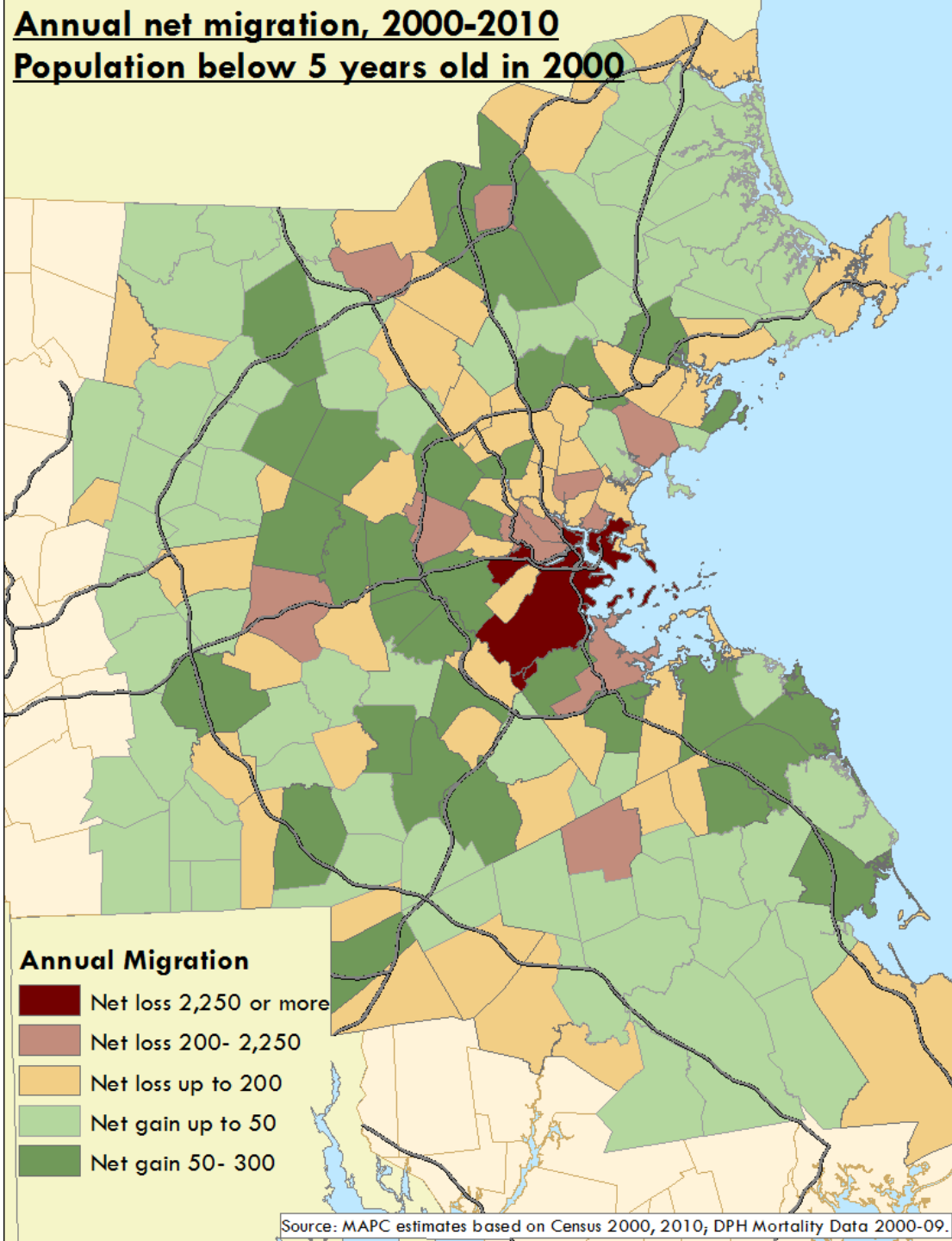
3,070 go to suburban schools through METCO

6,680 go to public charter schools

450 are placed by BPS Spec. Ed in  
non-BPS schools and programs

150 are home schooled

**Annual net migration, 2000-2010**  
**Population below 5 years old in 2000**



# Managing Privilege: Voice vs. Exit

- How can privileged families be attracted into the system without undercutting struggling families without exit options?
  - K1 vs. K2 entry points
  - 1<sup>st</sup> vs. subsequent lottery rounds
  - Parent compacting

Leveling Up vs. Leveling Down  
Making “sacrifice” transparent

# How are student assignments made?

## Parent Compacting Pilot

- **Who is eligible for the Parent Compacting Pilot?**
  - Compact must include a minimum of four applicant families, and all families must have the school as one of their Home Based choices
  - Only available for Turnaround schools Note: Now Level 3 and 4 schools
  - All students must be applying for the same grade
- **How would the Parent Compacting Pilot operate?**
  - Available starting in Round 2 for transition grades and starting in Round 3 for all other grades
  - 75% of open seats would be available for compacts, with the remaining 25% set aside for individual applicants (including families new to Boston)
  - Parent compacts receive a priority second only to sibling priority
  - All students in a compacting group are assigned the same random number
  - If a compacting group does not receive an assignment, each member's initial round assignments and waitlist placements remain intact

# From Dilemmas to ... ?

- Formal vs. Substantive Equality
- Managing Privilege: Voice vs. Exit
- Leveling Up vs. Leveling Down
- Obscuring “Sacrifice” vs. Elevating Equity

## What Next?

- How should we talk with one another about these issues?
- What additional concepts, evidence, research, strategies, or other resources would be helpful?
- What resolutions are possible, even necessary, and why?