

New BPS/BTU Contract Driven by State Mandates

The Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and the Boston School Committee agreed to a \$141.7M three-year contract focused on improving outcomes among students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) in the Boston Public Schools (BPS). The [state's district review report](#), released in May 2022, noted that BPS was not providing adequate services to its most vulnerable students. In large part due to the state report, the new contract is a commitment to meet the needs of students with IEPs. BTU is one of the largest city unions with 8,767 members as of January 2022, making up almost half the City's total union employees (46.1%).

Cost of BTU Contract – The total cost of the contract is \$141.7M, the bulk of which is for wage increases (\$102.8M or 72.6%). BPS employees will see an increase of 7.5% in their wages over three years. The cost of inclusion implementation is \$30.9M (21.8%), which includes hiring special education staff and training. Other costs, such as increases to tuition reimbursement and wage scale changes, total \$7.9M (5.6%). Compared to the 2018-2021 contract, which focused on adding support staff to help with students' overall well-being, this new contract costs \$32.8M more and commits to major changes in special education.

BTU Wage Increases

2022: 2.5%, \$16.8M

2023: 2.5%, \$34.1M

2024: 2.5%, \$51.8M

Key Reforms - In order to meet the state's goals to improve education among students with IEPs, the new contract completely overhauls previous language regarding inclusion. Previously, IEP students were largely segregated from the rest of the student population. Inclusion now allows students with special needs to learn alongside general education students. Other inclusion-related changes include implementing an Inclusion Planning Team at all schools, hiring more support staff for students with IEPs, and requiring all staff to participate in professional development related to special educational services.

The new contract allows BPS to focus funds on students by taking into account their individualized needs instead of applying a blanket solution for all students. The contract also provides educators the support they need to implement the new version of inclusion by reducing the ratio of students with IEPs to teachers and allowing special education teachers to request more support.

Minor changes to the contract include matching the BPS paid family leave policy to the City's policy, hiring a Building Representative to track work orders at schools, and adding three more paid holidays.

Conclusion - While this new contract is a step in the right direction to improving BPS's special education, it should not be seen as a checkbox for BPS to meet DESE's requirements. There is more work to be done, so BPS must now implement and build on the inclusion changes that the contract requires. BPS and the City should track lessons learned from this new contract since they will have to return to the bargaining table in just a couple years to negotiate another contract. Bold and data-driven changes are still needed for BPS students, families, and educators.