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NEARLY 5,000 BOSTON STUDENTS ATTEND CLASSES WITHIN SUBSTANDARD FACILITIES

Boston City Hall (May 8, 2014) – Boston City Councillor Charles C. Yancey, at a budget hearing on May 5, 2014, asked the superintendent of Boston Public Schools for the number of high school students currently taking classes in non-high school facilities.

Interim Superintendent, John McDonough, who served as the school system's chief financial officer for 17 years before being appointed as superintendent last year, was prepared for Yancey's question.

"There are 4,868 students who attend school in facilities that were not originally designed as high schools," McDonough said.

According to a memorandum from Superintendent McDonough's office on April 22, 2014, numerous Boston high school students take classes in 16 buildings not originally designed as high schools.

Those high schools, which are housed in middle and elementary school buildings, and inside commercial and industrial spaces, include Quincy Upper (219 students), English High School (531), Fenway High School (328), Mary Lyon High (128), Dorchester Academy (400), Snowden International (367), Boston Arts Academy (439), Another Course to College (222), Greater Egleston High School (199), Community Academy (77), Boston International High School (406), Margarita Muñiz Academy (158), Boston Day and Evening Academy (414), Boston Adult Technical Academy (260), Kennedy Academy for Health Careers (325), and Community Academy of Science and Health (395).

Yancey reminded members of the city council and the school department that the Boston City Council in the year 2000 passed his loan-order for \$57 million to build a new high school at the old Boston State Hospital Grounds in Mattapan on 20 acres set aside by state legislation.

"It's kind of miraculous that the land is still available and nothing's been developed on it," said Yancey, who envisioned a state-of-the-art facility in Mattapan similar to some of the high schools in suburban areas where students have access to science labs, libraries, cafeterias and athletic facilities.

Yancey noted that there have been more than two dozen new high schools constructed in surrounding communities since he introduced his loan-order 14 years ago.

"We know that many of these suburban students go to first-class facilities, but we cannot say the same for the vast majority of Boston's high school students," he said, acknowledging that even some of the high school buildings are inadequate.

"Boston Latin Academy, built in 1926, is housed in the same building in which my mother attended high school in the 1960s. So the point I'm making is that even our high school facilities are outmoded," he said.

Yancey said the cost of constructing the high school today would be nearly \$120 million, but put in perspective, he argued that it's far less than another administrative proposal to establish a new high school on a one-acre site in downtown Boston for



Boston City Councillor Charles C. Yancey stands on 14-acres of vacant land in 2006 on the grounds of the former Boston State Hospital on Walk Hill Street in Mattapan. The land was set aside in 2000 by state legislation to construct a state-of-the-art high school.

\$266 million. He argued that it didn't make sense to support building a high school downtown on a one-acre spot for \$266 million versus \$120 million for a 14-acre, campus-style environment.

Yancey asked the superintendent what it would take for the Administration and the Boston School Department to actively pursue building a high school on grounds that have been set aside for that purpose.

McDonough promised, before making any commitment to the project, to visit the site, which sits adjacent to MassBiologics at 460 Walk Hill Street in Mattapan and Mass Audubon's Boston Nature Center and Wildlife Sanctuary at 500 Walk Hill Street in Mattapan.

"I happen to think you are probably right on the mark," he said.

Yancey concluded his comments to McDonough by recapping the City of Boston's 1996 Blue Ribbon Commission report, which recommended the construction of two new high schools.

"As long as I am here, whoever the superintendent or mayor happens to be, I will categorically state that our students deserve first-class, high school facilities, and we've been depriving them of that for far too long. I am willing to work with you, the school committee, and the Walsh Administration to provide Boston students with the opportunity to learn in a state-of-the-art high school facility featuring 21st century technology," he said.

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