

Transforming the Boston Public Schools

A Roadmap for the New Superintendent



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Citizen Commission on Academic Success for Boston Children

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Preface

The Citizen Commission on Academic Success for Boston Children is grounded in the belief that in a democracy, citizens have a right and responsibility to critically examine societal institutions and try to change them for the better. We were not appointed by a governmental body or elected officials, as is usually the case with commissions. Our authority is derived from our collective deep experience in public education reform and our longstanding commitment to radical transformation of the Boston Public Schools (BPS). Four of our commissioners have carried out this work for more than four decades, while others have been tirelessly engaged in it for years.

Our coming together was fueled by our outrage over Boston's intractable achievement gaps from elementary through high school: many Black and Latino students achieve at lower levels than their white and Asian counterparts, English language learners at lower levels than native speakers, and students with disabilities at lower levels than their nondisabled peers.

While we are heartened by the progress Boston has made in raising academic achievement during Superintendent Thomas Payzant's tenure, we are

deeply troubled that the majority of Boston's students have not achieved proficiency in any of the subjects measured by the MCAS. A school and civic culture that celebrates the "needs improvement" result on the MCAS institutionalizes low expectations for student achievement. We are concerned that, without more rapid and transformational change, proficiency and advanced levels will continue to be attained by only a small percentage of BPS students. In a similar vein, it is absolutely unacceptable that up to 30% of students drop out during their high school years. By dropping out, a third of our young people, overwhelmingly Black, Latino and male, close themselves off from the possibility of achieving economic prosperity. The dropout rate is a crisis and demands an urgent and comprehensive response from school and city leaders.

Our Citizen Commission shined its spotlight on what is required to ensure excellent instruction and support services for students, because these are the keys to achieving academic success for all Boston children and young people. Years of educational research have confirmed that high quality principal leadership and parents who are actively engaged in the schooling of their

We urge the new superintendent to devote the first six months primarily to devising a plan to eliminate the achievement gaps within five years, making them a sad relic of the past, and ensuring that many more of our young people stay in school and successfully graduate.

children also contribute to academic success. Believing, like smart architects, that “form follows function,” we have not focused on central administration arrangements and organizational charts. School system leadership, however, must breathe life into a culture of change, place exceptional principals and competent teachers in schools, and support them with effective instructional models and resources. There must also be an accountability system that swiftly removes inadequate principals and teachers from the school system. We expect School Committee stewardship that shapes, promotes, and cherishes a school-by-school and a systemwide culture of high expectations of academic achievement for all, rigorous accountability, and transparency.

There is no greater challenge, and no greater promise, than for this school system to overcome deeply rooted issues of race and class and finally respect students and their parents as full educational partners in this endeavor.

Superintendent Payzant branded his administration’s work “Focus on Children.” Thus, we were constantly reminded that meeting the needs of children is at the core of the educational enterprise. For this legacy, we are grateful. Our commission has identified the improvements achieved during Dr. Payzant’s tenure, which provide us with a platform for the transformational change we seek.

Demanding academic success for all of Boston’s children, today we find ourselves far from our destination. What BPS needs now is a “focus on results.” We urge the new superintendent to devote the first six months primarily to devising a plan to eliminate the achievement gaps within five years, making them a sad relic of the past, and ensuring that many more of our young

people stay in school and successfully graduate. There is no higher calling for BPS leadership.

We caution against a single-minded focus on preparing children to pass MCAS tests to the exclusion of a vibrant, well-rounded education. We want for all of the children of the Boston Public Schools what all parents want for their own children: not only mastery of academic skills and knowledge, but also curious and inquiring minds, creative gifts, leadership potential and a commitment to serving their communities. MCAS tests cannot evaluate those attributes and assets. In short, teaching to state-mandated tests is unacceptable pedagogy.

Our Citizen Commission has produced a roadmap report that will guide the new superintendent and the School Committee in radically transforming the Boston Public Schools. We want this document to stimulate vigorous public conversations in Boston about the educational issues that really matter. An activated and engaged citizenry is indispensable to achieving the transformational changes that are urgently needed. The emergence of charter schools, pilot schools, home schooling, voucher schemes, and interdistrict transfer programs reveal that public schooling, as we have historically known it, is at a crossroads in the nation. Boston, as the intellectual capital of the nation, has a responsibility to lead public education to the correct destination. This is probably our last chance to save public schooling.

Hubert E. Jones
Citizen Commission Chair

Acknowledgments

The work of the Citizen Commission was coordinated by our staff director Kathleen Traphagen and her associate Marc Osten, both of Summit Collaborative. Susan Miller edited the report, and Ha Nguyen provided graphic design services.

We are grateful to an anonymous foundation, the Boston Foundation, the Hubie Jones Fund of the Boston Foundation, and the Schott Foundation for their financial support of this project.

We give special thanks to the dozens of people who gave generously of their time and expertise by participating on subcommittees, providing us with data, and reviewing drafts of the report. Because so many of those who participated in this project preferred to do so anonymously, our thanks go to them as a group, not as individuals.

Finally, we extend our appreciation and respect to the people who attended the Commission's public hearing and shared with us their experiences with, and aspirations for, the Boston Public Schools.

Citizen Commission's Message to the Community

If we are going to achieve real change in our schools then we must begin to change our own behavior. We must recognize that the schools reflect the values and behavior that we exhibit in our communities and the way we relate to each other on the basis of race, class, sexual orientation, religion, gender, and disability.

We must adopt a parental and community ideology that values all of the children as our own and demands for them the best education imaginable.

We must understand that we hold in our heads, hands, and hearts our children's trust. We must adopt a parental and community ideology that values all of the children as our own and demands for them the best education imaginable.

To achieve the kind of results we seek, we must develop positive and substantive relationships between parents and the institutions in our city and communities. We must understand that the children's separate seating in school cafeterias reflects our own separate communities, our own separate seating in the lunchrooms of our working places. So we must be serious in our efforts and work to build the relationships that send our children the message that we are a village working in their interest.

We must as parents and as a community understand that it is our responsibility to protect our children physically and psychologically, to help them to understand their history and culture, to give them meaningful work and responsibilities, and to help them address their rage—and, in particular, the impact of trauma in their lives.

We must collaborate with our young people to find solutions to the issues and problems they are dealing with. They understand, and have the energy to grapple

with, the day-to-day problems that plague our schools. They should take a leadership role in school reform. At the same time, we must insist they address self-destructive behaviors and honor the legacy of the youth who in their name confronted danger and endured hardship to provide them with the opportunities they have today.

We must insist that resources, both monetary and human, are available to the children. We must all have high expectations for our children, we must believe that they can achieve intellectually, and we must recognize the genius in them. The youth must see us visibly banding together across racial, ethnic, class, and religious lines to make sure that the schools provide them with the best.

They must understand that we respect each other, and that we insist that they be respected

and that they respect each other and the adults who work with them.

Once we are clear on who we are, the dual questions of whose schools are these and in whose interest should they be operating must be answered with a resounding “ours, and in our children’s interest.” Without ownership and a sense of our own power, there cannot be any real change that will result in equity and excellence in the schools.

We must be willing to work together to challenge and hold accountable those responsible for public education, from the mayor and the incoming superintendent to the School Committee and staff, school by school and classroom by classroom. This means organizing in every school, with community support. In several instances, community organizations, churches, and elected officials will have to be challenged and pushed to get behind these efforts.

We must resolve to make every school a place where parents and community members regularly meet to discuss and support efforts to bring out the best in our children. It will be a struggle, but it must be waged if the schools are going to work for all of our children. We have no alternative if we want to honor our children’s trust.

Executive Summary

After eleven and a half years with the “stars aligned”—a superintendent, School Committee, and mayor all working together to improve the Boston Public School system—it’s time to take stock. We want our schools to work for all students and to offer them the best education imaginable. How close are we to getting there, and where do we still need to go? These are the questions that *Transforming the Boston Public Schools: A Roadmap for the New Superintendent* attempts to answer.

The Citizen Commission on Academic Success for Boston Children was not appointed by policy makers or elected officials. It formed itself through the leadership of Hubie Jones, Mel King, Chuck Turner, and other community leaders. The Commission’s 17 members have all been involved for many years in improving the Boston Public School system. Many others, both inside and outside BPS, provided us with valuable information and insights. This spring, the Commission held a public hearing to listen to testimony from parents, young people, BPS employees, activists, and representatives of community-based organizations. What we heard affirmed our findings and informed the recommendations presented here.

Our aspirations for this report are high. We hope it will spark and help frame a public debate about the direction of BPS. We hope that the new superintendent and his or her leadership team will make use of its information and recommendations. And we hope, perhaps most of

all, that this report will catalyze people and organizations in Boston to work together to transform the school system.

Achieving proficiency on the MCAS should be the floor—not the ceiling—of student achievement. Unfortunately, by that measure, the Boston Public Schools have far to go to reach their destination. In 2005, less than half of the students in any grade level achieved a proficient or advanced score in any MCAS subject. Among students of color, students with disabilities, and English language learners, an even lower percentage reached that goal. Since 2002, following an initial period of great improvement, MCAS scores for third and fourth grade literacy have stagnated. These outcomes worry us.

Up to one-third of our students drop out over the course of their high school years, with dire consequences for their earning potential, life expectancy, and life opportunities. Society as a whole is affected by the increased poverty, community and family conflict and social costs incurred by dropouts.

Although a platform for further change has been built over the last eleven years, too much in the school system is still broken. Laudatory goals and good intentions are not enough. Therefore, this roadmap report is a cry for skilled execution driven by a compelling vision. Nothing less than urgently needed transformative change at BPS will achieve academic success for all Boston students. A major paradigm shift is required to have

a high-performing school system with an affirming, supportive culture, where management, principals, and teachers take ownership of their successes, and of their failures, in reaching their common goal: to have all students achieve at proficiency or above.

This report is divided into nine chapters, each of which addresses an essential area of school reform:

- Literacy Instruction
- Math Instruction
- Special Education
- The Impact of Trauma on Learning and Behavior
- English Language Learners
- The Dropout Crisis and High School Reform
- Family and Community Engagement
- Human Resources: Hiring, Supporting, and Retaining Teachers and Principals
- The Boston Teachers Union—Boston Public Schools Contract

Each chapter outlines BPS’s approach during Superintendent Payzant’s tenure; offers student outcome data; presents the Commission’s case for, and vision of, change; and makes specific recommendations to the new superintendent.

The Commission’s Vision

Every child in the Boston Public Schools will be treated with respect and supported to succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

BPS will undergo **transformative change**. Parents, students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers will be deeply and actively engaged in the dynamic process of moving the system past the status quo.

Increased **accountability** will create a culture of authentic and palpably high expectations for students, teachers, and administrators, and consistent action will be taken when these expectations are not met. All the adults in each school will share the goal of helping every child succeed and will feel accountable to one another for achieving that goal.

Trust between school personnel and parents, students, and community leaders will be built through operational **transparency**. It will be easy for parents, students, and other stakeholders to get information, and their participation and input during decision making will be welcomed.

Educational equity strategies will eliminate achievement gaps between white, Asian, Black, and Latino students; between regular and special education students; and between English language learners and native speakers.

Superintendent Payzant’s Legacy: A Platform for Change

We appreciate the stability and the successes of Dr. Payzant’s long tenure as superintendent. What he has accomplished provides BPS with a solid platform for change. It was not so long ago that BPS was plagued by a frequent turnover of leadership, which stymied any serious efforts at long-lasting reforms. For his longevity as superintendent and for his steady focus on student achievement, all residents of Boston should be sincerely grateful. To Dr. Payzant’s tenure we owe:

- citywide learning standards
- common curricula in math and English and a districtwide pedagogical approach (Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop)

- districtwide Collaborative Coaching and Learning for professional development
- the MyBPS information system for data-driven improvements in teaching and learning
- a solid, systemwide information technology platform
- nearly \$100 million in grants from private sources to support school reform
- the development of pilot schools
- new Early Education Centers and four new schools in Black and Latino neighborhoods
- the Boston Teacher Residency program and the Principal Academy, which attract new teachers and principals into the system.

In full recognition of the achievements of Dr. Payzant’s leadership, we say that now is the time for the new superintendent, the School Committee, and the mayor to grasp the urgency with which the school system needs to be transformed and to move rapidly to do so.

The Need for Change

The “Need for Change” sections of the chapters that make up this report contain data and concerns particular to the area being covered. However, taking a bird’s eye view, certain common themes emerge across chapters. It is fair, then, to say that improvement in the following areas is essential and will have wide and deep impact:

- *Teacher quality.* Teacher quality is the core of success or failure in school. Recommendations for improving teacher recruitment and retention, professional development, and systems of accountability are found in nearly every chapter of this report.
- *Curricula.* The overwhelming majority of BPS students who are not in advanced-work classes or exam schools do not have access to challenging, rigorous curricula that will prepare them for success in postsecondary education.
- *District leadership.* We repeatedly found that the lack of dynamic leadership, organized support, and collaboration at the top levels stymied the successful implementation of reform initiatives.
- *Family and community engagement.* BPS’s approach to family and community engagement has often been criticized, and the Commission’s findings echo and affirm that critique. The way the system engages with external stakeholders—parents, community members, and community-based organizations wishing to partner with the schools—must be transformed.
- *Respect for parents and students.* In our increasingly multicultural city, cultural competence is a prerequisite for engaging students and reaching parents. Immigrant, Black, Latino and other students and their families frequently feel they are treated disrespectfully within their child’s school and by BPS administration.
- *Special education and English language learning.* The past decade of school reform has largely passed over special education students and English language learners (ELLs)—together a significant portion of the BPS student body. The needs of these students must be a priority for the incoming superintendent.

Recommendation Highlights

Assemble a High-Performance Leadership Team

We believe it is critical for the new superintendent to improve the effectiveness of the central leadership organization. Departments must break out of their silos and work together much more effectively to support schools and students. Central leadership staff should consider input from a wide range of stakeholders, including parents and students, before making major decisions about adopting reform initiatives, new curricula, standards, or other changes that significantly affect the system. The new superintendent should be committed to rigorously evaluating reform initiatives, sharing appropriate data widely, and changing course when that turns out to be necessary. Central leadership staff should be held accountable for how their actions affect individual schools and the district as a whole.

We call on the new superintendent to devise a plan to eliminate the achievement gaps among students. Many of the recommendations that follow should be included in this plan.

Strengthen the Teaching Force

Teacher quality is the core of success or failure in school. Recommendations for improving teacher recruitment and retention, professional development, and systems of accountability are found in nearly every chapter of this report.

Improve Teacher Recruitment and Retention

- The recruitment, hiring, development, and retention of teachers should be added to “The Six Essentials for Whole School Improvement.”¹

- BPS must energize recruitment at all levels. Innovative recruitment strategies are needed to increase diversity and to eliminate staff shortages in special education, math, and science.
- Teachers must be hired earlier, so BPS can compete with suburban districts. Principals must take advantage of open postings to hire early.
- Principals and the personnel subcommittees of School Site Councils need to be trained in recruiting, screening, background-checking, and interviewing.
- Teacher retention must be increased. This can be accomplished by strengthening in-class support and mentoring and by frankly addressing cultural competence, race, and class issues as part of professional development.
- Evaluation and monitoring must become high priorities. BPS needs to simplify the performance evaluation process, train principals and personnel subcommittees in evaluation skills, monitor each school for timely hiring, monitor the effectiveness of professional development programs, evaluate principals on their hiring and team building performance, and work with the Boston Teachers Union to create a Peer Assistance Review program.

Maximize the Effectiveness of the Boston Teachers Union-Boston Public Schools Contract

- BPS and the BTU must negotiate a new contract that puts the educational and developmental needs of students first.
- The new contract should guarantee that legitimate protections for teachers—including seniority and transfer rights—do not force a

principal or headmaster to accept teachers who do not come up to the school's standards for excellent teaching and do not fit into its whole-school improvement plan.

- The superintendent should have the authority to quickly fill vacancies in underperforming schools and ensure that teachers participate in increased professional development.
- Teachers in the excess pool who are not likely to receive teaching positions should be placed in a reserve pool for one year, after which they should be terminated from BPS.
- BPS needs a top-flight management team capable of implementing the contract according to an ambitious timetable.
- Preparations for the next contract that will be negotiated in three years should include a review of the research being compiled by the Boston Municipal Research Bureau on effective contract provisions in other urban school systems and the formation of a team of managers, teachers, union officials, and parents that will obtain first-hand data by visiting school systems that have good contracts. These and other collaborative ventures would help build a much-needed alliance between BTU leadership and BPS managers.
- Teachers, especially those at that the high school level, should be required to participate in professional development workshops that support standards-based pedagogy and that teach content.
- Every teacher whose classroom includes an ELL student must be trained in English language development and in delivering content instruction understandable to that student. BPS must ensure that coaches are trained in English language acquisition and in ELL literacy development.
- Professional development for regular education and special education teachers should be linked to current practices in standards-based reforms. Teachers should be trained in differentiated instruction by coaches who are dual certified in both regular and special education.
- A professional development program must be created that will help educators examine how their beliefs about the intellectual ability of Black and Latino students influence their educational practices and policy decisions.
- Beginning in fall 2006, responsibility for hiring and evaluating coaches will be shifted to principals and headmasters, who will need support from central administration to carry out this role effectively. At the same time, BPS must devise a mechanism to monitor how well coaches are being utilized.

Require Comprehensive Professional Development

- BPS urgently needs to strengthen professional development and teacher support, including implementing Peer Assistance and Review and reinvigorating Collaborative Coaching and Learning. The CCL model needs to be rigorously evaluated to assess its effectiveness, and improvements should be made on the basis of that evaluation.
- All school personnel should be trained in respectful ways of working with families.

Improve Curricula

- All high schools must have curricula as challenging, broad, and coherent as those at Boston Latin School, Latin Academy, and other highly sought-after high schools.
- Advanced-work curricula must be as available to Black and Latino students as they are to white and Asian-American students.
- The high-standards curriculum must be available to students with disabilities, whether they are in inclusion classrooms or separate settings.
- An institutionalized effort should be set in motion to develop challenging and robust curricula linked to the racial, cultural, and ethnic histories and traditions of BPS students. BPS should assist teachers in developing these curricula, aligning them to the state and national standards, and connecting them to the “mainstream” curriculum.
- BPS must develop materials, curriculum guidelines and standards, and differentiated benchmarks for grade progression appropriate for English language learners. The system has to recognize that mainstream educational curriculum materials (e.g., grade-level basal readers) may not be appropriate tools for building academic competence among ELLs. Also, BPS must ensure that teachers in Sheltered English Instruction (SEI) classrooms are taking advantage of the policy that allows for native-language clarification of academic content.

Hold Teachers and Staff at All Levels Accountable

BPS should develop a clear set of expectations for principals in the areas of instructional leadership and operational management, and

ensure that these expectations are fulfilled through a training, support, and evaluation system. Expectations for teacher participation in professional development should be set and enforced. The process for evaluating teacher performance should be streamlined and put into practice. Central office leadership must also be held accountable for the quality of its own work, both at the school level and in the district as a whole.

Improve Literacy and Math Instruction

If followed, the Commission’s recommendations for strengthening the teaching force, improving curricula, and developing new systems of accountability will boost the quality of literacy and math instruction. In addition:

- Ongoing, steady funding for literacy and math coaches must be secured.
- The structured workshop-format English language arts curriculum, currently being used by 34 out of 84 elementary schools, should be examined for possible adoption districtwide.
- Supplemental tutoring, expanded extracurricular activities that reinforce literacy skills, and improved partnerships with nonprofits focused on literacy activities in out-of-school time should become key components in the district’s strategy for helping children acquire literacy skills.
- To ensure that all children, especially those from low-income communities, enter kindergarten with the skills they need, BPS should strengthen its partnerships with nonprofit organizations that serve the literacy needs of preschool children.

- A standards-based high school mathematics curriculum should be selected to replace the current traditional curriculum. The selection process should be widely inclusive and encourage input from a range of stakeholders. High school math teachers will benefit from expanded training on the workshop approach, the new curriculum, and mathematics content.
- Work begun this year to improve the elementary curriculum to ensure students' mastery of basic addition and multiplication facts should be rapidly expanded. Supplemental materials should be introduced to ensure that elementary students develop efficient and reliable strategies for solving multi-digit multiplication and division problems and a strong understanding of place value.
- The elementary and the secondary math offices should lead an effort to align the math curricula from kindergarten through twelfth grade, addressing gaps, overlaps, misalignment with MCAS, and the transitions between elementary and middle school and middle and high school.
- Every student who is prepared should have access to precalculus, calculus, and advanced placement courses.

Assure Individual Supports and Increase Inclusion Options in Special Education

- Hire a special education director who has expertise in inclusion and provide that director with the authority to implement reforms.
- Conduct a review to bring special education into compliance with the law, enable it to participate in standards-based reform, and move it toward an inclusion-based system. Develop a strategic plan to transform the system based upon that review.
- Immediately implement a series of administrative changes in special education, including the restoration of legal authority to IEP teams to make specific placement decisions and the elimination of waiting lists or delays for referrals, evaluations, placements, or services.
- Ensure that students with disabilities who need a separate classroom or school have access to standards-based reform and to high expectations for academic success.
- Establish an independent Parent Advisory Council that can fulfill its legal mandate.

Address Issues of Trauma that Disrupt Student Learning

- The system needs a strategic and sustainable approach for equipping schools with the expertise and resources necessary to respond to children's exposure to trauma.
- Each school should have the resources to develop an action plan for creating a trauma-sensitive environment. The plan should include staff development, clinical support, teaching strategies, nonacademic supports, partnering with parents, individual and group supports for children, linkages with mental health professionals, and a review of the school's policies and procedures.
- The role trauma and other mental health issues may be playing in rule-abiding behavior at school should be taken into account, and each school should reevaluate its discipline policies and protocols in that light. Emphasis should be placed on reducing suspensions and expulsions through the use of positive

behavior supports and other trauma-sensitive approaches.

- Every school should have a full-time student support coordinator to ensure that the mental health needs of children are met and to maximize and coordinate the use of external resources.

Improve Instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs)

- There should be a comprehensive, districtwide system for identifying each and every ELL, placing them in appropriate programs with all necessary services, and assessing their progress in English in an accurate and timely manner.
- The needs of ELLs must be considered when making and implementing all policy and program decisions. Administrators at every level of BPS should have expertise in second language learning issues, programs, and curriculum.
- ELL students with disabilities must be ensured appropriate services. This will require ongoing collaboration between the department of language learning and support and the department of special education.
- BPS's literacy programs for ELLs have proven successful for students who have had little or no formal schooling in their native countries. These programs should be strengthened and expanded to accommodate all the children who need them.
- Two-way bilingual programs, which have been very successful, should be expanded to more schools and to more languages.

Address Leadership and Organizational Barriers to Successful High School Renewal; Decrease the Dropout Rate

- Clear goals for High School Renewal should be established, and the resources to achieve those goals need to be coordinated.
- The new superintendent must appoint a deputy superintendent who has the clear authority to implement High School Renewal.
- More attention needs to be paid to curriculum and pedagogy.
- Small schools and small learning communities must be funded at the necessary levels.
- BPS must make sure that new high schools can provide small populations of students with the education they need, whether they are ELLs, students with disabilities, or students capable of doing advanced-placement work.
- New dropout prevention strategies are needed. Thus far, small schools have not, in themselves, produced a demonstrable reduction in dropouts.
- BPS should follow the dropout prevention and dropout recovery recommendations in *Too Big To Be Seen: The Invisible Dropout Crisis in Boston and America*, a 2006 report by the Boston Youth Transitions Task Force.
- BPS needs to develop new methods of identifying students at risk of dropping out because of poor attendance or course failures, and it must fulfill its promise to provide an adult mentor for each student. In addition, there should be a range of programs for students at

risk of dropping out, so that a wide variety of learning needs can be met.

- Information on the full spectrum of educational options for dropouts should be made available, and outreach to dropouts should be increased.

Transform Family and Community Engagement to a School-Based System

- The number of school-based family and community outreach coordinators (FCOCs) should be increased each year until there is a family engagement staff in every school. The new superintendent should develop a strategy for establishing fully funded and staffed family centers in each school by school year 2010.
- It is up to the new superintendent to ensure that the family and community engagement effort is led by a strong deputy superintendent who has a clear, transformative vision and who can create a sound, adequately staffed middle management team that will support and assist the school-based FCOCs.
- BPS should maintain dedicated staff to support parents of children with disabilities and limited-English-proficient families to help them navigate the system. The bilingual outreach specialists should focus on those schools with large ELL populations.
- Parents' capacity to support their children's learning should be bolstered through trainings and workshops on such subjects as effective parent-teacher conferences, literacy and math skills, parenting skills, parents' rights, etc. Parents also need training in leadership skills and in how to help develop and implement whole-school improvement plans.

- It is BPS's responsibility to make sure that parents are aware of available services and supports as well as school and district policies, including MCAS prep support, advanced-work placement procedures, new residency requirements, the bilingual waiver process, and special education rights, etc.
- There should be an active and well-functioning School Parent Council and School Site Council in every school, supported by training in leadership skills for parents and hiring skills for principals and those on School Site Council personnel subcommittees.
- BPS has to fully grasp the importance of collaborating with community-based organizations, and it should regard strong parent and community constituencies as assets.
- BPS should evaluate principals on their success in increasing family and community involvement.
- The entire family engagement system should be assessed for effectiveness, and performance measures devised for all staff.

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We hope this report inspires vigorous public conversation and debate about the issues we have raised. We do not intend for the debate to center on the past or to devolve into finger-pointing or casting blame. We want the debate to be about the future—what should Bostonians expect from their public school system? How can we overcome the many obstacles to our vision of providing a high-quality public education to every single one of our children?

Boston is blessed to have a wealth of dedicated people, both within and outside the school system, who are committed to this goal. With a new resolve, a renewed sense of urgency, and a determination to put our children's interests first, we are optimistic that Boston will succeed in building the best big-city public school system in the country.

¹ Boston's whole-school improvement effort is organized around these six essentials: "ONE: Focus on *literacy and mathematics*. TWO: Use *student work and data* to identify student needs, improve instruction and assess progress. THREE: Focus *professional development* to offer teachers and principals the skills they need to improve instruction. FOUR: Identify and replicate *best practices* for instruction. FIVE: Align all *resources* with the instructional focus. SIX: Engage *families, community and partners* to support Whole School Improvement."

Introduction

Background

Formation and Approach of the Citizen Commission

In February 2005, Work 4 Quality Schools, a grassroots organization focused on educational equity, voiced concerns about a new student assignment plan for the Boston Public Schools (BPS). In response, Mel King, professor emeritus at MIT, called a meeting to discuss the implications of the student assignment debate. The meeting was attended by Hubie Jones, dean emeritus, Boston University School of Social Work and social justice entrepreneur in residence at City Year; City Councilor Chuck Turner; Paul Parks, former secretary of education in the Commonwealth and former Boston School Committee chairman; and other community leaders.

The idea of forming a Citizen Commission on Academic Success for Boston Children was born at that meeting. The Citizen Commission the group envisioned would review major initiatives carried out during Dr. Thomas Payzant's tenure as superintendent, assess the overall status of the school system, and write a road-map report that would provide recommendations and guidance to the new superintendent.

The Commission was formed by the end of March 2005, held its first meeting on April 5, and met at least once a month until September 2005 to explore the dimensions and focus of its examination of BPS. During this period, the

commission was aided by meetings with Dr. Payzant; Ellen Guiney, executive director of the Boston Plan for Excellence; Dan French, executive director of the Center for Collaborative Education; and Kathi Mullen, assistant superintendent for high school renewal.

At the end of this exploratory phase, the Commission established nine subcommittees, each one charged with reviewing data and research and interviewing key experts in a specific subject area. The areas investigated by subcommittees were math instruction, literacy instruction, special education, English language learners, family and community engagement, human resources, the contract between BPS and the Boston Teachers Union, and the dropout crisis and high school reform.

In the spring of 2006, the Commission held a two-day retreat to review and critique the findings and recommendations of the subcommittees. On May 6, 2006, the Commission held a public hearing at the Boston Public Library in Copley Square to listen to testimony about BPS from parents, students, and community leaders. The testimony confirmed the Commission's findings and recommendations.

Context: The Boston Public Schools

Anyone possessing even a passing familiarity with Boston knows something about the tumultuous history of the city's public school system over the past several decades. Boston has



confronted challenges similar to those that have unfolded in other large, urban districts: frequent leadership turnover, deteriorating facilities, inadequate resources, and a student population that is increasingly ethnically diverse and low-income.

Boston also has had to contend with the persistent and unwelcome legacy of events surrounding the busing crisis of the 1970s. Issues of race and class are never far below the surface as the school system continues its struggle toward the critical goal of equalizing educational opportunity for all of its young people.

Over the past eleven-and-a-half years, Boston has had a rare period of stability in school leadership. In 1995, Dr. Thomas Payzant was hired as superintendent of schools by the appointed School Committee. (Three years earlier, voters replaced

the elected school board with a smaller School Committee appointed by the mayor.)

In 2003, as a result of the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act, passing the 10th-grade English language arts and math MCAS tests became a requirement for high school graduation in the Commonwealth (MCAS, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, is a standards-based assessment covering English language arts, mathematics, and science and technology.) In early 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, affecting kindergarten through 12th-grade education nationwide. NCLB's extensive and complicated provisions require schools to publicize achievement data not only by whole-school population but also by racial/ethnic, special education, and English language learner subgroups.

Today, 57,900 students attend 145 public schools in Boston. The student population is 44% Black, 33% Latino, 14% White, and 9% Asian. Nearly three out of four students are low income, and 11,450 (20%) are enrolled in special education. About 37% of BPS students speak a language other than English as their first language, and 17% are categorized as English language learners or limited English proficient. In fiscal year 2006, there are 4,733 teachers in the BPS system. The teaching staff is 61% white, 26% Black, 9% Latino, and 5% Asian.

Superintendent Payzant's Tenure

The Commission supports Dr. Payzant's consistent focus on improving student achievement and his initiatives to:

- institute citywide learning standards, defining what students should learn in different subjects and at different grade levels

While we think that many of these initiatives must be improved to achieve faster and better results, we recognize that together they constitute a solid foundation for improving teaching and learning throughout the district.

- adopt common curricula in math and English and a districtwide pedagogical model (Readers' and Writers' Workshop)
- assist teachers in improving their effectiveness through districtwide implementation of the Collaborative Coaching and Learning model of professional development
- create the MyBPS intranet portal to aid teachers and staff in using data to drive improvements in teaching and learning.
- creating new Early Education Centers
- building four new schools in Black and Latino neighborhoods;
- establishing a Principal Academy to further the professional development of principals
- creating the Boston Teacher Residency program, in partnership with the Boston Plan for Excellence.

We also recognize other accomplishments of Dr. Payzant's tenure, which include:

- building a solid information-technology platform throughout the school system
- garnering close to \$100 million from the private sector to support school reform efforts
- investing in an evaluation program for new initiatives, carried out by Education Matters, Inc.
- supporting the development of pilot schools, with the assistance of the Center for Collaborative Education
- launching a high school renewal program focused on the creation of small high schools and small learning communities

While we think that many of these initiatives must be improved to achieve faster and better results—and we provide specific recommendations throughout this report for doing so—we recognize that together they constitute a solid foundation for improving teaching and learning throughout the district.

Indeed, although the percentage of students reaching proficiency is still alarmingly low, and the flat achievement scores of third and fourth graders over the past four years are a matter of grave concern, scores on English and math assessments (both on the MCAS and on national tests) have improved across all racial subgroups since 1998.

It is an encouraging development that the rate of BPS graduates going to college has risen over the past decade, from a low of 62% in 1993 to the record high of 76% for the class of 2004. According to a recent report on Boston's

As one of the speakers at the Commission’s public hearing observed, “This system represents a chance for children to learn . . . but it always turns out to be only some children.”

dropout rate, BPS graduates are more successful in the labor market than their peers across the nation. Black BPS graduates have a 54% rate of employment, compared to a national rate of 37% for their peers. BPS Latino and Asian graduates are also employed at a higher rate than their peers nationwide. We must temper the good news about BPS graduates by pointing out a cohort dropout rate approaching 30%, which constitutes a crisis in an economy that requires a high school degree for all.

The Opportunity Today

As we mark the retirement of Superintendent Thomas Payzant after more than eleven years at the helm of BPS, many well-intentioned people across the nation have abandoned the notion that public schooling as currently constituted can ever reach the goal of providing high quality education for all its students. Instead, they look to charter schools, vouchers for private school placement, and other alternatives. In this climate, we recognize Mayor Menino’s long-term commitment to improving the public school system. There is no doubt that Boston has benefited from the stability and consistency brought to the school system by Dr. Payzant’s leadership and the support he has received from the mayor and the School Committee.

It is critical that we now take stock of the progress made over the past decade, identify the urgent challenges yet before us, and provide guidance to the incoming school leadership.

This report offers an overall vision for transformative change in the Boston schools and provides in-depth analysis in several areas we believe should be essential priorities for the new superintendent:

- Literacy Instruction
- Math Instruction
- Special Education
- The Impact of Trauma on Learning and Behavior
- English Language Learners
- The Dropout Crisis and High School Reform
- Family and Community Engagement
- Human Resources: Hiring, Supporting, and Retaining Teachers and Principals
- The Boston Teachers Union—
Boston Public Schools Contract

As one of the speakers at the Commission’s public hearing observed, “This system represents a chance for children to learn . . . but it always turns out to be only some children.”

We offer this report not only to BPS leadership, but also to the Boston community, in the hopes that it will spark substantial, productive, and ongoing involvement and conversation about the quality of education Boston provides to all of its young people.

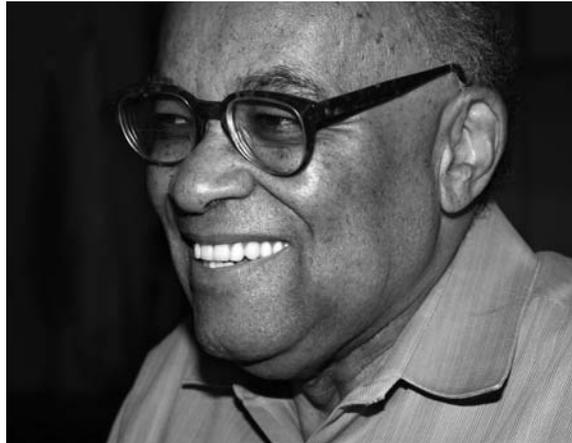
The Need for Change

Themes from the Citizen Commission Public Hearing

On May 6, 2006, our Citizen Commission held a public hearing at the Boston Public Library in Copley Square. For four hours, we listened to testimony from parents, students, and community leaders who expressed their disappointments in, and aspirations for, BPS.

Several powerful themes emerged throughout the testimony, themes that for the most part echoed what the Commission subcommittees had discovered during the course of their own work.

- **BPS needs a more robust, demanding curriculum** across the board, carried out by instructors who believe students can and must achieve at high academic levels. Too many teachers and staff still have low expectations for student achievement. We heard, “Our children are not given the chance to compete. Average should not be the ceiling for urban kids.”
- **There is a pervasive lack of respect for students and parents.** We heard, “I’m amazed at the hostility that parents still encounter when they go to their children’s schools.” Another person said, “Students told us of feeling disrespected by the schools, the staff, and the system. No one is connecting with their everyday reality, no one is engaging and challenging them. They feel disrespected by the low expectations teachers have for them.”
- Parents and students believe that too much is being done *to* them and not *with* them. The School Committee, in particular, could be a model for inclusive decision making, and is not. At every level of the system, it is critical to **institute open and inclusive decision-making processes**, so that those benefiting from change are also participating in making it. **Students, especially, need more of a voice** if they are to be empowered learners and effective citizens.
- Despite the mandates of the special education law (Chapter 766), **students with disabilities are being shortchanged.** Parents report great difficulty in gaining access to special education evaluations and disappointment with the implementation of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for their children. Students suffering



At the Citizen Commission’s public hearing, we heard, “Our children are not given the chance to compete. Average should not be the ceiling for urban kids.”

At the Citizen Commission’s public hearing, we heard, “We need leadership that recognizes that the system is what is not working; not that there are children who can’t learn and parents who don’t care. How will we transform it?”

- with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their parents are particularly in need of greater instructional accommodations and support services from Unified Student Services. The Joseph Lee and the Mattahunt Schools were cited as exemplars of how to serve these students. There are not enough behavioral therapists in the BPS system who are qualified to both assist children with ADS in the classroom and help parents learn how to support their children at home.
- The trauma that students bring to school due to violence in their neighborhoods and/or personal troubles in their homes is too often unrecognized and unaddressed. **BPS lacks a sustainable strategy to ensure that teachers and headmasters have the resources and knowledge to address trauma.** Without mental health services and support, students exposed to trauma are adversely affected in learning and social behavior and often develop disciplinary problems.
 - **The two-tier system in BPS must be deconstructed** to eliminate racial and economic stratification that is as reprehensible as previous de jure segregation. We heard, “Not just the exam schools should have high standards—all schools should have high standards.”
 - **Middle schools have been lost in the reform initiatives.** A rethinking of grade organization is necessary.
 - **Parents do not understand high school reform.** There is a lack of information and clarity about the various thematic options for students in new small school communities.
 - Many students are **struggling with substance abuse** problems, particularly in middle schools. These students need “recovery” school programming.
 - **The inadequate provision of art, music, and physical education** was cited as an impediment to the education of the whole child. We heard, “By the time these kids get to middle school, they don’t understand how to play, and they are not happy.”
 - **A lack of transparency in the system** is reflected in the unwillingness or inability to share data, particularly regarding the achievement of English language learners and special education students.
 - **Schools should be accountable** to parents, and the School Site Councils should vigorously carry out their monitoring responsibilities.
 - BPS still has not organized itself to take advantage of numerous community-based organizations (CBOs) that have the resources

and expertise to help address many of the challenges students face. Partnerships remain dependent on school-by-school leadership, with **no systemic strategy for external organizations to productively partner with BPS**. We heard, “They assured us that they would like to work together but we have not seen any support in helping to bring us to the table.”

- CBOs are increasingly encountering illiterate **teenagers** in their programs. CBOs need assistance in addressing these extremely low literacy levels, and BPS must be held accountable for failing to educate these children. We heard, “We see kids who are 16 who are at the second- and third-grade level. We cannot refer them to the alternative schools because they cannot read.”
- We must ensure that those who lead the system—including the mayor, the School Committee, the superintendent, and the teachers union—have the **well-being of children as their first priority**. We heard, “We need leadership that recognizes that the system is what is not working; not that there are children who can’t learn and parents who don’t care. How will we transform it?”

The collective message articulated at the public hearing is congruent with the Citizen Commission’s overarching vision for the school system. It is a vision centered on excellence,

responsive service, transparency, accountability, and transformative change. Embedded in the hearing testimony is an urgent plea for a more rapid rate of institutional improvement and better academic outcomes for students.

The Commission’s Vision of Change

Every child in BPS will be treated with respect and supported to succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. All students will be enthusiastically engaged in learning. The racial and cultural diversity of students will be seen as a great asset for building a vibrant school community. This diversity will be respected, honored, and celebrated through instructional practices and adult behavior. Understanding the unfortunate legacy of racism in our society, school personnel will do the deep personal work and training to achieve cultural competence. Such knowledge and skills will be viewed as indispensable to understanding the needs and perspectives of students and parents and as necessary for preparation of curriculum and effective instruction.

The educational enterprise will be driven by high quality instruction, high standards for performance, and high expectations for students, all of which will be articulated and demanded by organizational leadership. Teachers and principals will take ownership for the success or failure of their students. Principals and teachers will be given the tools and support that they need to be

The school system will achieve transformative change by dynamically moving past the status quo, with all constituencies—parents, students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers—thoroughly engaged together in the process.

successful educators. Research and evaluation data will be used to influence policy decisions and instructional practices.

Each child's family and community will be valued as critical educational partners that make unique contributions to the child's success in school. A predictable, civil, loving, and caring school climate will be pervasive and considered essential for effective learning. Parents will see clear pathways for their children to reach full potential and achieve excellence, and students themselves will follow those pathways. The outside community will be heavily invested in supporting BPS, parents, and students in a powerful transformational process to achieve academic success for all Boston children.

Transformative Change

The school system will achieve transformative change by dynamically moving past the status quo, with all constituencies—parents, students, teachers, administrators, and policy makers—thoroughly engaged together in the process. Transformative change will be driven by institutional urgency to achieve reform outcomes without unacceptable delays. It will mean a paradigm shift at BPS, promoting the empowerment of teachers, principals, and parents to serve the interests and needs of students, unfettered by entrenched institutional obstacles and cultural impediments. Transformative change will be fostered by out-of-the-box thinking and action.

Accountability

BPS will function effectively by making performance expectations clear for students, teachers, administrators, and all others in the school system. When performance standards are not met, consistent action will be taken by those responsible for accountability. This will create a



culture in which high expectations for all are authentic and palpable. Well-understood procedures and processes for holding everyone accountable for their behavior and work will be in place and utilized. Staff members in departments and units will consistently share essential information with each other, creating shared accountability, breaking down a silo mentality, and fostering transparency.

Transparency

Operational transparency will create trust between parents, students, and community leaders on the one side and school personnel on the other. It will be easy for parents and students to get access to information. Information will be made available in as many translations as necessary, so it can be immediately consumed and used by parents and students. The School Committee's policymaking will be open to scrutiny and critique, with information provided to all constituents in a timely manner.

The Achievement Gap

The achievement gaps between white and minority students, between regular and special education students, and between English language learners and native speakers will no longer exist. This condition will be confirmed by

measurements on standardized tests, classroom performance, and competent functioning in the world. Educational equity will be reflected in fair distribution of instructional resources and fair deployment of principals and teachers. The special instructional needs of potentially underperforming students will be met through targeted, innovative educational programs.

There will be numerous high-quality pathways to academic success for all students, eliminating racial and class stratification and ensuring that all students have access to the best educational resources for their needs and circumstances. The positive, affirming attitudes and support of teachers, coupled with academic success, will be a powerful antidote to the internalized oppression of students, which often manifests as failure in school.

High school graduation rates will be high, and students will be academically equipped for admission to college. The student dropout rate will be close to zero.



Literacy Instruction

Introduction

Literacy skills are the foundation of learning. Children who absorb literacy skills in elementary school will develop a love of learning, be able to comprehend a wide variety of information in different genres, and understand and appreciate how learning connects them to their own communities and to cultures across the world. By the end of third grade, children should be reading and writing with the ease, confidence, and understanding to be able to succeed to their potential in the fourth grade and beyond. Students who possess a solid foundation of literacy skills will become increasingly confident and able learners across a wide range of content areas as they progress through middle and high school.

The Literacy subcommittee of the Citizen Commission set out to examine the Boston Public Schools' (BPS) approach to literacy instruction over the past ten years, look closely at student achievement data, consider the challenges to achieving proficiency in literacy for all BPS students, and provide recommendations to the incoming superintendent.

How Has Boston Approached Improving Literacy?

Improving literacy instruction has been the district's flagship initiative during Superintendent Payzant's tenure. In partnership with the Boston Plan for Excellence and with upwards of \$65 million in funding over the past ten years, BPS has implemented a pedagogical approach—Readers' and Writers' Workshop—and a professional development model—Collaborative Coaching and Learning—with the goal of improving literacy instruction in every classroom, in every school, for every child.

Readers' and Writers' Workshop, or “workshop,” is an instructional approach that seeks to “draw students into the hard work of learning and build their ability to function for themselves,” in the words of the Boston Plan for Excellence. In a workshop classroom, the teacher “introduces a specific concept, and the teacher and students work to learn it, engaging in a high level of questioning and rigorous discourse.” In 2003, to assist teachers in becoming skilled practitioners of the workshop approach, BPS adopted the Collaborative Coaching and Learning

The majority of students at every grade level tested in 2005 still fell short of achieving proficiency.



professional development model across the district. In this model, school-based coaches work with teams of teachers to provide on-site, continuous professional development. The CCL model emphasizes collective learning, discovery, observation, feedback, and reflection.

Despite the district's efforts, the measurable outcomes suggest that much remains to be done.

Student Outcomes

The enormous investment of financial and human resources to improve literacy instruction has yielded gains in the percentage of students passing the English language arts (ELA) MCAS. The failure rate of BPS 10th graders on the ELA MCAS dropped from 57% in 1998 to 27% in 2005.

However, the majority of students at every grade level tested in 2005 still fell short of achieving *proficiency* (defined as “demonstrating a solid understanding of challenging subject matter and solving a wide variety of problems” by the Massachusetts Department of Education). The percentage of students achieving an *advanced* score on the MCAS, “demonstrating a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of rigorous subject matter, and providing sophisticated solutions to complex problems,” ranges from 3% to 11% across grade levels and has remained essentially flat since 2002.

Gaps in achievement—specifically, the gap between students of color and white and Asian students, between regular and special education students, and between English language learners (ELLs) and native English speakers—are significant and in many cases have increased in recent years. The low rate of ELA proficiency across the system no doubt impacts subsequent student performance in other areas. The persistence of the achievement gap at the elementary level sets up a two-tiered system that leads to more opportunities for advanced work and exam school acceptance for white and Asian children and a higher dropout rate for Black and Latino students.

MCAS

Elementary Test Scores: At the third grade level, often considered a key benchmark for literacy, the percent scoring proficient declined from 35% to 31% between 2002 and 2005. At the fourth grade level, proficient/advanced was relatively flat, moving from 24% to 25%.

Middle and High School: Seventh and tenth grade scores from 2001 to 2005 show substantial gains in both the percentage passing and the percentage reaching proficient/advanced. However,

achievement gaps persist: 73% of white seventh graders and 68% of Asian seventh graders reached proficient/advanced by 2005, but only 35% of Black students and 32% of Latino students did. White tenth graders made substantial gains, going from 32% to 70% proficient/advanced from 1998 to 2005—a 49% increase, and Asian students showed a gain from 32% to 87%. Over the same period, the percentage reaching proficient/advanced increased from 4% to 26% among Black students and from 5% to 31% among Latino students.

National Tests

SAT: Sixty-three percent of the BPS class of 2004 took the SAT, scoring an average of 431 on the verbal section; the state average was 516, and the U.S. average was 508. BPS students' SAT scores dropped slightly from 2003 to 2004. However, between 1995 and 2004 the combined average verbal and math SAT scores of Boston students rose by 45 points, outpacing state and national gains.

National Assessment of Educational Progress:

Between 2003 and 2005, Boston's fourth and eighth grade results on the NAEP Trial Urban District reading exam were essentially flat, tracking slightly above the average results for students from large central cities. For fourth graders, 49% scored below the basic level, and 17% were at or above proficient; for eighth graders, 39% scored below the basic level, and 23% were at or above proficient. The percentage of minority students reaching proficiency was well below the overall average in both grades (11% of Black and 10% of Latino fourth graders and 14% of Black and 15% of Latino eighth graders). The gap between white students and students of color increased from 2003 to 2005 at both grade levels, with the exception of a

slight decrease in the gap between eighth-grade whites and Latinos.

After ten years of literacy-focused standards-based reform as the centerpiece of BPS's whole-school change efforts, it is fair and reasonable to ask why the majority of students in BPS are still not proficient in literacy skills. There is an urgent need to examine the district's reform initiatives to uncover new strategies that will accelerate increases in achievement.

The Need for Change

Explaining Student Outcomes: Areas for Examination

There is no single explanation of why student achievement in literacy has not increased at a faster rate over the past several years. Student outcome data is the result of a complex set of factors, some internal to the school community and some external. However, if BPS is going to realize the goal of literacy proficiency for all students, we believe the interrelated areas discussed below demand close examination—and a revised course of action—from the incoming superintendent.





Implementation of Workshop and CCL Across the District

Although BPS has mandated adoption of workshop and CCL throughout the district, the extent and quality of implementation is uneven. As one evaluator commented in an interview, “Coaching is absolutely uneven. Some coaches are great and have helped teachers change practices in the classroom. Some are not performing, not suited temperamentally, or not skilled in coaching.”

A 2003 memo by independent evaluators Education Matters outlined the conditions necessary for CCL to take root and flourish in a school:

- principal leadership and support
- knowledgeable and skilled literacy coaches

- a workable schedule (since CCL requires time for teachers to work collaboratively)
- a social context that supports and encourages collaboration among staff and a distributed leadership approach in which teachers and principals are eager to work together
- adequate grasp of and progress toward achieving the “Six Essentials of Whole-School Improvement.”¹

Education Matters found significant inconsistency in the quality of CCL implementation. They report that “requiring schools to implement CCL (or anything else) when they lack the infrastructure/context in which to do so, is a) a guarantee that coaching resources will be wasted, b) a likely way to persuade teachers and principals that this coaching model is ineffective or too hard to implement, and c) therefore a setback to the progress of instructional improvement that the district hopes to achieve and which its children deserve.”

A more recent Education Matters report focusing on high school reform reported little workshop-based instruction and continued obstacles to creating viable CCL groups in small high schools and small learning communities. Barriers included “scheduling, lack of administrator support, and, to some extent, lack of teacher support.”

Some experts interviewed by the Commission questioned whether CCL is an adequate vehicle for addressing the complex and difficult task of vastly improving teacher quality. CCL cannot fully meet the needs of teachers who are missing content knowledge, have weak classroom management skills, lack cultural competence, and actively or unwittingly communicate low expectations to their students.

One interviewee close to the reform efforts said, “Close to the majority of teachers don’t think that the kids can do as much as they are capable of... There is not a sense of urgency across the board.”

High quality implementation of CCL and a high-functioning workshop classroom will make a positive difference in student achievement. When implementation is uneven or nonexistent, positive results cannot be expected.

Expectations for Student, Teacher, and Administrator Performance

Low expectations of student performance can contribute to continuing achievement gaps. The impact of the district’s approach to this issue is unclear. We heard from many experts, both inside and outside the system, that low teacher expectations for minority, special education, and ELL students are extremely pervasive.

One interviewee close to the reform efforts said, “Close to the majority of teachers don’t think that the kids can do as much as they are capable of. We haven’t done a good enough job in getting these teachers to see kids do work that they didn’t think the kids could do. That’s what creates a sense of urgency, and they know they have to change what they are doing. There is not a sense of urgency across the board.”

One of the significant critiques contained in Education Matters’ high school report is the continuing lack of access to rigorous curricula for high school students who are not in exam schools: “If students are going to achieve at levels considered necessary for success in postsecondary education and/or work, then their schools must engage them in producing high quality work that represents the academic rigor desired by the

district and required for a score of ‘proficient’ on the state’s assessment. The data we collected from the students in our sample suggest that from their perspective, not only were most classes unengaging, for the most part a) their classes were not rigorous, and b) it was easy to get an A or B in most of them.”

Several people involved in reform efforts told us that the culture of BPS has historically bred low expectations not only among teachers for student performance but also among headmasters for teacher performance and administrators for school progress. Students and parents who attended the Commission’s public hearing made it clear that they believe the lack of access to rigorous material, uneven distribution of resources, and the absence of high standards outside the exam schools signifies the school system’s lack of respect for some groups of students and low expectations for their achievement.

Cultural Competence

All children come to school with sophisticated linguistic skills and with cultural knowledge and traditions. They are more likely to attach to school and invest in learning when educators view their home cultures as strengths and incorporate them into the instructional process. Students who see learning as compatible with their home culture and with the history, culture, and traditions of their racial and ethnic group are more likely to commit to acquiring fluency in, and knowledge of, the culture of power. Students of color whose racial and/or ethnic identity is

strong tend to do better in school than other students of color.

BPS has not paid enough attention to how issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and class inform its literacy reform initiatives. It is critical for school leaders to understand that these issues are central to school reform. Boston's literacy efforts must be designed to work with significant numbers of children who do not speak English as a first language, and the literature that is used should represent the backgrounds and cultures of the children.

Said one expert, “We have a lot of talent in this system, but we operate in silos.”

Central Organization

Many people, both inside and outside the school system, told us that the organization of the central office is an obstacle to school improvement in general and literacy instruction in particular. Among the complaints voiced are:

- The disjointed organization of literacy curricula and instruction efforts. CCL, led by the director of literacy and coaching, is not part of the department of curriculum and instruction. Meanwhile, two major curricula programs, Reading First and America's Choice, led by the director of English language arts for elementary students, are located in the department of curriculum and instruction. America's Choice and Reading First have their own set of literacy coaches. This fragmented organizational structure, and the “silo” behavior that follows from it, leads to incoherence in the district's overall approach to literacy

instruction and interferes with providing school staff with crucial support.

- The lack of opportunity for leaders of distinct academic reform initiatives, such as literacy and math, to learn from one another and engage in joint planning and strategizing.
- The gap in accountability for instructional leadership. The responsibility and authority for evaluating principals currently resides with the deputy superintendents for clusters and school leaders and is illogically separated from the department of teaching and learning.
- The lack of a functioning organizational structure to support high school reform efforts, which have at their core two goals: improving student literacy and reducing student alienation.
- A siloed organizational structure. The result is that the department of unified student services (responsible for special education) and the office of language learning and support services (responsible for ELLs) do not have adequate interaction with the department of teaching and learning.

Said one expert, “We have a lot of talent in this system, but we operate in silos. Literacy is the single most important piece kids need to wrap their heads around. They have to be highly literate when they leave. We have never generated a think tank around literacy where we pull from different departments to grapple with trying to bring some cohesiveness to this approach.”

Principal Leadership

Despite the fact that Superintendent Payzant has replaced nearly three-quarters of BPS principals during his tenure, the system still harbors weak

principals. Principal leadership is critical to implementing the district's school-improvement initiatives. It is also essential for creating partnerships with external agencies, which can bolster a school's resources and help address the nonacademic barriers that drag down student achievement. Critics pointed to professional development that has been, "too slow to move [principals] from 'I am the manager of my building' to 'I am the leader of my school.'"

Approach to Special Education Students and English Language Learners

The weaknesses of the district's approach to special education and ELL (detailed in other chapters in this report) have a direct impact on the literacy achievement scores of the entire district.

The district nominally requires CCL teams to include special education and ELL teachers, but this directive is not always followed. Many special education teachers have not participated in CCL or learned how to implement the workshop approach. Furthermore, regular education teachers who have special education students in their classrooms lack expertise in teaching this population. One principal of a school committed to inclusion told us that a highly skilled coach who is dual certified in special and regular education was able to convince teachers that special education students could perform at high levels. It is troubling that this level of attention to the instructional needs of special education students has not been replicated across the system.

As it is currently implemented, the CCL model does not provide sufficient support for teachers



attempting to address English language acquisition. Most coaches themselves do not have any substantive knowledge or training in English language acquisition or in literacy development in a second language.

Supplemental Tutoring

BPS has not sufficiently explored ways to supplement improved classroom instruction. Supplemental tutoring has been used effectively by other urban districts and has long been a core strategy of private and suburban schools for supporting students who face challenges. BPS does not appear to have a concerted districtwide tutoring strategy. The Boston Volunteer Literacy Collaborative is a coalition of major nonprofits that provide Boston public schools with tutors, some paid and some volunteer. These nonprofits—Boston Partners in Education, City Year, the Jewish Community Relations Council, and Generations, Inc.—have been meeting monthly for over three years to come up with strategies for improving their services and for getting more recognition from, and better coordination with, BPS. Historically, most of these organizations have formed school-by-school partnerships, with little or no coordination at the district level.

BPS does not have a high-level, districtwide strategy to leverage nonprofit CBOs whose mission is to provide services and programs to BPS students.



Maximizing Community Partnerships

A host of nonacademic factors—exposure to trauma, instability at home, mental and physical health issues—impact student readiness to learn and academic performance. Boston is fortunate to have a rich and complex array of community-based organizations (CBOs) providing some of the expertise, resources, and programming needed to address this array of nonacademic barriers to student success. There are thriving partnerships with CBOs in individual schools and in some clusters throughout the district.

The potential of community partnerships to improve literacy outcomes can be maximized by looking specifically at early literacy programming, family literacy strategies, and improving the literacy content of after-school programs.

BPS does not have a high level, districtwide strategy to leverage nonprofit CBOs whose mission is to provide services and programs to BPS students. Remarkably, there does not appear to be a single entity or person in all of BPS who has an accounting of every partnership in every school. CBOs find it difficult to partner with the BPS. At the Citizen Commission public hearing, a representative of a CBO remarked, “[BPS] assured us that they would like to work together, but we have not seen any support in helping to bring us to the table.”

Experts both within and outside the school system repeatedly referred to the topics covered in this section as obstacles to

successful literacy instruction. We also heard many of the same themes from the wide variety of constituents who testified at our public hearing. We believe the incoming superintendent and his or her team should closely examine each of these areas for their potential impact on the success of literacy instruction, seeking input from a wide range of stakeholders in the process. A targeted improvement effort could bring Boston significantly closer to realizing a vision of successful literacy instruction for all students.

Vision of Change

What Do We Want for Boston’s Students?

All students within BPS—regardless of race, ethnicity, special education or ELL status—will be offered the support they need to master

literacy skills, including a love of reading and the ability to confidently express themselves in writing. The increased self-esteem that accompanies this mastery will translate into success in all areas of academic work. All students will have access to rigorous, challenging, and engaging curricula throughout their elementary and secondary education.

Along with effective and engaging instruction in literacy, students will have ample opportunities and resources outside the classroom to improve, practice, and enhance their literacy skills. Supplemental tutoring using structured tutoring methods will be easily available. Students will also have a rich array of in-school and after-school literacy-enhancing extracurricular opportunities to choose from, such as student newspapers and book, debate, drama, poetry, and creative writing clubs. A citywide effort to ensure that young children participate in high quality enrichment activities—through preschool programs, child care centers, libraries, and at home—will equip children with the pre-literacy skills they will need when they enter kindergarten.

The BPS teaching staff will be more representative of the race and culture of the student population. They will have high expectations for all students, including those with disabilities, and act on that belief. Teachers will display strong cultural competence, content knowledge, and mastery of pedagogical approaches to addressing varied learning needs. Principals will provide effective instructional leadership and receive outstanding support from central district leadership.

The district will have a comprehensive strategy for engaging families and CBOs in the ongoing process of ensuring that all students reach their potential.

Five years after all the above elements are put into place, every BPS student will reach, at minimum, a score of proficiency on the ELA MCAS, and a significant percentage will achieve an advanced score.

Recommendations for Change

Teacher Quality

- Follow the recommendations in the chapters of this report that focus on human resources and on the Boston Teachers Union contract with BPS. Improving teacher recruitment, support, retention, and diversity will likely have significant impact on literacy instruction.

Overcoming the Achievement Gap

- Make cultural competence and culturally responsive pedagogy central and integral to literacy instruction.
- Develop and implement a professional development program that will help educators examine how their beliefs about the intellectual ability of Black and Latino students influence their educational practices and policy decisions.
- Provide professional development that will give teachers and principals the skills to design schools organized around a belief in the academic potential of Black and Latino students.

Successfully Implementing Workshop and CCL

- Secure ongoing, steady funding for literacy coaches.
- Provide literacy coaches with training in English language acquisition and in ELL literacy development.

- Provide regular education and special education teachers with professional development linked to current practices in standards-based reforms.
- Use coaches who are dual certified in both regular and special education to train teachers in differentiated instruction.
- Evaluate each school's progress in meeting the conditions for successful implementation of workshop and CCL detailed in Education Matters' 2003 report. Target resources and support to ensure that schools are adequately prepared to implement these initiatives.

Curriculum

- Ensure that all high schools provide curricula as challenging, broad, and coherent as those at Boston Latin School, Latin Academy, and other highly sought-after high schools.
- Ensure that advanced-work curricula are as available to Black and Latino students as they are to white and Asian-American students.
- Ensure that the high-standards curriculum is available to students with disabilities, both in inclusion and separate settings.
- Institutionalize an effort to help teachers develop challenging and robust curricula linked to the racial, cultural, and ethnic histories and traditions of BPS students. Help teachers align this curriculum to the state and national standards, and connect it to the "mainstream" curriculum.
- Examine expanding the use of the structured ELA curriculum currently being used by 34 out of 84 elementary schools.

Resources

- Eliminate the resource gaps between and within schools.

Accountability

- Create a system that holds principals accountable for instructional leadership and provides them with adequate support and professional development.
- Create a system that holds central office leadership accountable for the quality of its work, both at the school level and in the district as a whole.

Maximizing Community Partnerships

- Develop a districtwide tutoring strategy and policy that regards tutoring as a key tool for helping children acquire literacy skills. Regular, consistent tutoring (at least three days per week) by a qualified tutor using a scientifically based tutoring methodology has been proven to result in improved literacy skills and performance. Tutoring is currently a core component of the Reading First program. BPS should build on what has been learned about tutoring in that program and apply those lessons to tutoring in all schools. Principals and teachers and, most importantly, literacy coaches should be trained in how to incorporate tutoring into and after the school day.
- If BPS decides that tutoring will not be one of its core competencies, then it should fully embrace working with CBOs that provide that service, including City Year and the BELL Foundation. The department of curriculum and instruction has partnered with City Year to provide tutoring and other services to nine out of the twelve Reading First schools. The

BELL Foundation’s tutoring model has enabled children to reach proficiency. BPS should consider expanding these or other models in its overall strategic plan for tutoring.

- Expand engaging extracurricular activities that reinforce literacy skills by making reading and writing more relevant and exciting, such as drama, student journalism, debate, creative writing and book clubs, and service learning. BPS should take advantage of the broad array of nonprofit organizations that seek to provide literacy-enriching extracurricular activities. Citizen Schools, in particular, has a large, robust program that includes literacy and writing content and uses lawyers and other professionals as mentors.
- Increase support for the Boston Full Service Schools Roundtable, organized in 2003, a quasi-independent organization promoting comprehensive, full-service or community schools. The Roundtable helps schools form strategic partnerships with external organizations and could flourish with greater support from district leadership.
- Continue and expand support for the After-School Literacy Coaching Initiative, a promising collaboration of BPS, Massachusetts 2020, the Boston Plan for Excellence, and ReadBoston, which provides on-site literacy training and curriculum materials to after-school program staff.
- Increase investment in, and support of, BPS’s Bridging the Gap training series, designed to improve coordination between after-school activities and school-day instruction. Even more could be done systematically to connect teachers and after-school staff, including facilitating communication about specific students.
- Continue to actively promote the importance of early education and aggressively expand preschool classrooms throughout the district. To ensure that all children enter kindergarten with the skills they need, BPS should also consider expanding its partnerships with nonprofit organizations that serve the literacy needs of preschool children, including ReadBoston, Jumpstart for Young Children, and Boston Community Partnerships for Children, among others.

¹ Boston’s whole-school improvement effort is organized around these six essentials: “ONE: Focus on *literacy and mathematics*. TWO: Use *student work and data* to identify student needs, improve instruction and assess progress. THREE: Focus *professional development* to offer teachers and principals the skills they need to improve instruction. FOUR: Identify and replicate *best practices* for instruction. FIVE: Align all *resources* with the instructional focus. SIX: Engage *families, community and partners* to support Whole School Improvement.”



Math Instruction

Introduction

There is an urgent need to improve the performance of Boston Public Schools (BPS) students in mathematics at all grade levels. Mathematics is unforgivingly cumulative, so it is best that a strong foundation be laid in this subject from a very early age. This preparation is vital; access to a college education leading to careers in high technology and other math- and science- dominant fields can be gained only by those who demonstrate high levels of competence in mathematics in high school. Gone are the industrial jobs that once sustained many a public school graduate. Jobs in today's service economy are poorly paid and come with scant benefits. To earn a decent living, students must successfully complete some form of postsecondary education. What is more, with the growing prevalence of statistical analyses in every area of life, basic mathematical literacy is necessary merely to understand news reports, exercise one's

political franchise, or otherwise function as a good citizen. The school system's responsibility in this area is intensified by the fact that many parents were themselves not successful in school mathematics and are unaware of its increasing importance for their children's future.

The Need for Change

Student Outcomes

While student performance data have, for the most part, been moving in the right direction, BPS faces very substantial challenges in mathematics education.

BPS student performance on the MCAS improved between 2001 (the first year the BPS math plan was implemented) and 2005 for fourth, sixth, and tenth grades, as shown both by reduced failure rates and by improved

In 2005, roughly one in two sixth and eighth graders failed the math MCAS, as did close to one in three fourth and tenth graders.

Because participation in professional development is not strictly mandatory, there are still significant gaps in knowledge of mathematical content and pedagogical skill for many BPS math teachers.

percentages of students scoring at or above proficient levels.

Yet, in 2005, roughly one in two sixth and eighth graders failed the MCAS, as did close to one in three fourth and tenth graders. Statewide, 39% of eighth graders, 41% of fourth graders, and 46% of sixth graders scored proficient/advanced on the MCAS, compared to fewer than 25% of Boston fourth, sixth, and eighth graders. The BPS eighth grade failure and proficiency rates were basically unchanged between 2001 and 2005 (an initial failure rate of 54% fell only four percentage points, and the percent proficient or advanced increased only three percentage points).

The data reveal little improvement in the performance of special education students. It is difficult to analyze the performance of English language learners (ELLs), due to the dramatic changes caused by enactment in 2002 of Question 2, after which the number of students categorized as limited English proficient was roughly halved. ELLs did remarkably worse on the math MCAS in 2005 than those designated as limited English proficient in 2003.

Fourth and eighth grade students made statistically significant gains on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) between 2003 and 2005. Boston's gains at both grade levels exceeded the national average in the same period. Black students made gains on both the NAEP and the MCAS; however, the achievement gap between

their performance at or above proficiency and white students' is essentially unchanged on either test. Between 2001 and 2005, eighth and tenth grade Latinos showed greater progress than eighth and tenth grades whites in achieving at or above proficiency levels on the MCAS.

In 2005, BPS Black and Latino college-bound seniors scored 402 and 409, respectively, on the math portion of the SAT, versus 559 for BPS whites and 520 for all seniors nationwide. In 2005, only 264 out of a total of nearly 8,500 BPS 11th and 12th graders took the advanced placement math exams; however, this represented an increase of 19% over 2004. Only 16 of 33 BPS high schools offer any advanced placement exams.

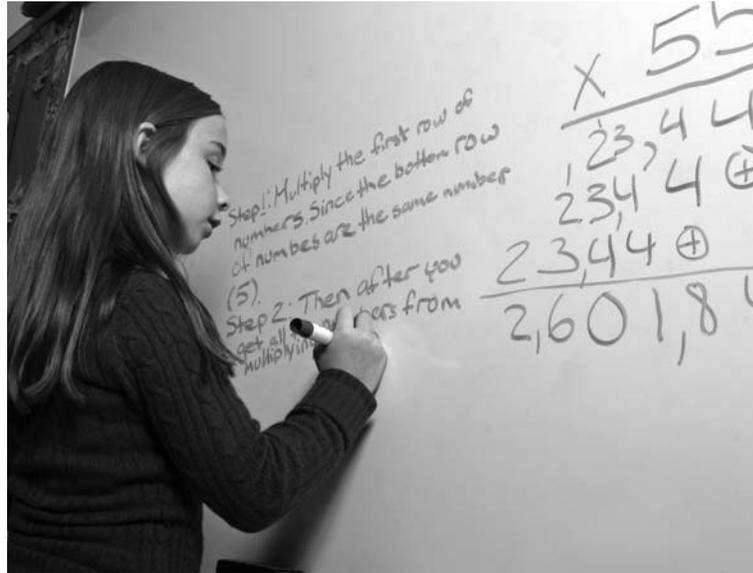
Explaining Student Outcomes: Areas for Examination

There are numerous reasons why the significant resources BPS has devoted to improving math instruction over the past five years have not yet yielded desired performance results. Areas that need examination are the following:

Curriculum

Students' mathematical knowledge has been improved by the adoption of districtwide curricula that has more challenging content and clearer sequencing and by the introduction of firmer expectations for what will be taught at the middle and elementary levels. However, there are serious problems with the current curricula.

- **High school:** After initially adopting a standards-based curriculum, BPS's office of secondary math switched back to a traditional curriculum. Our committee's understanding is that this decision was made because gaps in the standards-based curriculum caused students to be ill-prepared for the MCAS and other standardized tests. However, the decision was made without input from teachers and other stakeholders. The traditional curriculum now being used does not engage students' critical thinking skills as well as the elementary and middle school curricula do.



middle and high school. Lack of collaboration and communication between the office of elementary mathematics and the office of secondary mathematics exacerbates the problem.

- **Elementary school:** The elementary curriculum has failed to address a dramatic lack of fluency in recall of basic addition and multiplication facts and has given students fewer, not more, efficient and reliable strategies for multiplication and division. Moreover, the curriculum is painfully weak in its treatment of place value, a critical concept for understanding the number system, especially as students begin working with decimal fractions.
- **Vertical integration:** BPS does not appear to have a vision of a mathematics curriculum that integrates concept and skills development from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The disjointed approaches to critical topics and the differences between the elementary and middle school curricula and between the middle and high school curricula have created holes in students' mathematical knowledge. These discrepancies are most acute between

Professional Development

Five years ago, the BPS adopted a new teaching approach for mathematics, the workshop model, in conjunction with standards-based curricula for elementary, middle and high school. Substantial training in both implementing the workshop model and improving knowledge of mathematical content has been made available to middle and elementary teachers (it appears there has been less support available to high school teachers). Yet, because participation in this professional development is not strictly mandatory, there are still significant gaps in knowledge of mathematical content and pedagogical skill for many BPS math teachers.

At the elementary level, all teachers of mathematics are expected—but not required—to complete a curriculum institute and at least three Developing Mathematical Ideas (DMI) seminars.



Out of a total of 2000 elementary teachers, just 150 have completed the expected professional development. Much larger numbers have completed part of the training (1,400 have completed the curriculum institute, 1,350 the first DMI seminar, and 900 the second). Specific information on the extent of teachers' participation at the middle and high school levels was not available.

- *Differentiated instruction:* There is currently no clear plan for how to address the wide range of mathematics readiness of students in the average BPS classroom. A plan for special education students is only now being crafted. It appears that a math-specific plan for ELLs is not yet under consideration. Students in 17 of 30 district high schools have no access to advanced placement math classes.
- *Math Coaching:* Elementary schools whose principals have used math coaches effectively

for professional development have seen sizeable gains in student achievement on district assessments and on MCAS. Middle and high school teachers have also benefited from coaching using the Collaborative Coaching and Learning model for the last two years and from a more intensive approach to coaching for two years prior to that.

Unfortunately, funding for coaches is diminishing, and good coaches are very hard to find. Only 30 elementary schools, or 40% of the BPS total, will have math coaches next year (data on high and middle schools was not available). Another challenge is how to sustain contact between coaches and a critical mass of teachers in each school at every grade level. Beginning this fall, coaches will report to principals, who may or may not be effective math instructional leaders with the expertise necessary to appropriately evaluate the coaches' work.

Accountability

The system for ensuring that principals and headmasters are effective instructional leaders and math teachers are effective instructors must be strengthened.

Although principals and headmasters are expected to be instructional leaders in math, it is unclear how many actually understand and fulfill this role or how they are held accountable for fulfilling it. While the elementary math office has developed a range of supports for principals, participation is voluntary, leaving the principals who may need the support the most not necessarily taking advantage of it. The elementary math office states: "Math coaching is most effective when there is a principal who ensures that all teachers are using the elementary math curriculum fully, all teachers are participating in the

expected professional development, and all teachers are expected to collaborate with the math coach.” However, it is unclear how many principals are currently meeting this standard and what the district is doing to support and compel those who are not.

Although the offices of elementary and secondary mathematics each have several program directors to evaluate teachers, only those at the high school level have the authority to do so directly. Elementary program evaluators provide feedback on teachers to principals. There is no rubric to guide elementary school principals in how to evaluate math teachers, and the metric used at the secondary level should be strengthened.

Finally, while principals can and do instruct teachers to participate in professional development during the school day, there is no absolute requirement for teachers’ participation in the professional development provided by the system.

Cultural Competence

In mathematics, as in other subjects, the gap that exists between the cultures of most teachers and those of students and their families is a barrier to establishing the mutual respect that facilitates learning.

Family Involvement and Support

BPS needs to help counter the belief, still pervasive in our culture, that it is acceptable not to have a strong grasp of mathematics. BPS must

make much more vigorous efforts to educate parents about the importance of competence in mathematics for their children’s future and how they can support the development of that competence at home.

Vision of Change

In our vision of successful mathematics education, every teacher will encourage students to think deeply about mathematics and to discover for themselves the relationships and structures that are at the heart of the discipline. Teachers will skillfully probe students’ thinking and facilitate their discussion of mathematical concepts. At the same time, careful attention will be paid to ensuring that students are developing fluency in computation and symbolic manipulation.

Students will see mathematical inquiry as a tool to explore their world and will use real-world problems in the development and application of mathematical ideas. They will have a sense of confidence about, and feel ownership of, the mathematics they are learning, and will be committed to working hard to master new ideas, believing that they will be successful if they are diligent. The classroom will be an environment in which students feel comfortable taking risks. Schools will foster a love of mathematics through math teams, clubs, and competitions.

Each mathematics teacher will be well prepared, possess the appropriate credentials, and have a deep understanding of the material being taught,

BPS must make much more vigorous efforts to educate parents about the importance of competence in mathematics for their children’s future and how they can support the development of that competence at home.

its underlying concepts, and the more advanced material that arises from those concepts. All teachers will be familiar with the obstacles students encounter in understanding the material they are teaching and will have mastered a variety of strategies to help overcome those barriers.

Teachers will value the cultural background and varied strengths and knowledge of each student and will establish a respectful, cooperative classroom culture in which considerate behavior that promotes learning is the norm. They will employ successful strategies for differentiated instruction and for supporting special education students and ELLs; these strategies, along with appropriate teaching materials, will maximize learning for all students. Schools will utilize community-based organizations and higher education partners to offer additional support to students who are behind.

With the help of family and community engagement teams, schools will understand the cultures of their students' families and help them become involved in supporting student learning. Parents and community partners will be informed about curriculum, teaching approaches, and the importance of students' performing well in mathematics in general and on the MCAS in particular. There will be workshops for parents on fostering good study habits and on the mathematics their children are being taught.

Although the BPS will make sure that students are prepared for the math MCAS, especially in the 10th grade, the overall approach of teachers, principals, and administrators will be guided by the nationally recognized principles and standards set by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in 2000. Students in every high school will have access to precalculus and calculus courses. Curriculum materials will be rich in

challenging and engaging problems that develop concepts from, and apply them through, realistic problem solving, while also providing effective models for more abstract material. Teachers will have access to a copious supply of practice problems that review current and previous material and expand student understanding. Teachers will use multiple types of formative assessments, get timely feedback, and have designated times for re-teaching and for providing individualized support.

All the above elements will result in the overwhelming majority of students scoring at the proficient level on the math MCAS. The achievement gaps among racial groups, between ELLs and native speakers, and between regular and special education students will be minimized. All but a handful of students will pass Algebra II before graduating, and the majority will pass precalculus. High school seniors and juniors from all backgrounds will achieve high rates of success in advanced placement math courses.

Recommendations for Change

Strengthen the Teaching Force

- Make it a top priority to recruit, support, and develop pedagogically strong teachers who have a deep and flexible understanding of mathematics, especially at the high school level. We recognize that math is a particularly difficult area in which to recruit and retain strong teachers, but there are individual principals who are succeeding in doing so. It is especially pressing that BPS develop and implement stronger system-wide strategies for reaching this goal because a large number of teachers will be retiring in the next few years.



- Institute a plan for elementary teachers to specialize either in math and science or in language arts and social studies, so that teachers can build expertise in targeted areas. The Boston Teacher Residency program would be an excellent place to prepare elementary teachers to specialize in one of these subject pairs.

Create Strong Accountability Systems

- Develop a clear set of instructional leadership expectations in math for principals and ensure that these expectations are fulfilled through a training, support, and evaluation system. Set and enforce expectations for teacher participa-

tion in professional development and delivery of mathematics instruction in the classroom.

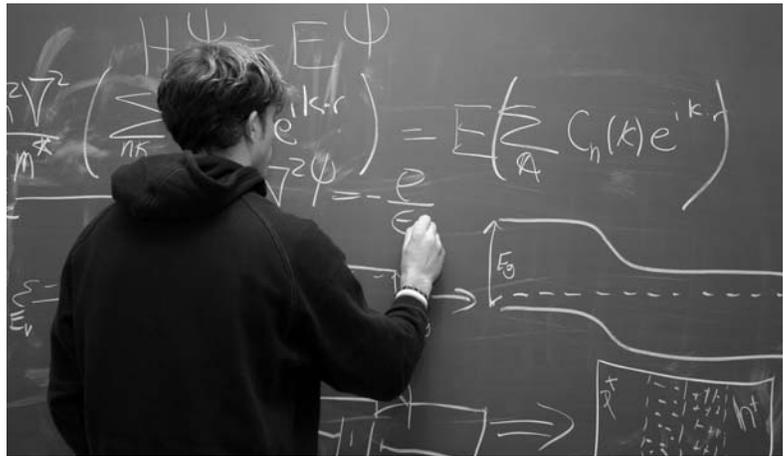
Improve Curriculum

- Using an inclusive decision-making process, select a standards-based high school curriculum to replace the current traditional curriculum. Several existing curricula are being revised to address deficits in practice problems and fill gaps in content. A new curriculum currently in development by Educational Development Center, Inc. might address Boston's need for a standards-based curriculum that is more closely aligned with the traditional American high school course structure.
- Implement comprehensive training for high school teachers in the workshop approach.
- Rapidly expand work begun this year to improve the elementary curriculum to ensure students' mastery of basic addition and multiplication facts.
- Immediately train teachers to facilitate elementary students' development of efficient and reliable strategies for solving multi-digit multiplication and division problems, through deepened understanding of the current curriculum, or the use of supplementary materials. To strengthen elementary students' understanding of place value, implement a supplemental instructional program, preferably manipulative in nature, or provide intensive training on the latest edition of the

Make it a top priority to recruit, support, and develop pedagogically strong teachers who have a deep and flexible understanding of mathematics, especially at the high school level.

Investigations in Number, Data, and Space curriculum, once it has been ensured that this version addresses the issues outlined above.

- The math department should lead an effort to align kindergarten through 12th grade math curricula, addressing gaps, overlaps, misalignment with MCAS, and the transitions between elementary and middle school and middle and high school. This initiative should take advantage of work in this area by the curricula publishers, the Massachusetts Department of Education, and other school districts.



Require Comprehensive Professional Development

- Require participation in professional development workshops that support standards-based pedagogy and that teach content, especially for high school teachers. Allot workshops substantial chunks of time, preferably off site, to make certain that teachers are fully engaged. Ensure that workshops are supplemented by briefer follow-up meetings and on-site coaching. Provide opportunities for math teachers to learn from each other and work with their colleagues across the district.

- Improve the cultural competence of teachers, principals, and other administrators by training them to respect their students' backgrounds and to utilize the strengths students bring to the classroom. Provide teachers with effective strategies to address student weaknesses, nurture strengths, and establish trust and cooperation in the classroom.
- Train teachers in strategies for engaging and supporting students at a range of achievement levels. Ensure that special education and ELL teachers are included in professional development, with a particular focus on differentiated instruction and math content.

Reinvigorate Math Coaching

- Launch a major initiative to reinvigorate math coaching. Energetically renew efforts to attract funding for coaching. Recruit strong coaches

The Math Department should lead an effort to align kindergarten through 12th grade math curricula, addressing gaps, overlaps, misalignment with MCAS, and the transitions between elementary and middle school and middle and high school.

to support teacher leaders. Provide math coaching support for every school. Invest heavily in expanding time for joint planning for teachers. To supplement individual coaching sessions, promote sharing of best practices among teachers. Ensure continued support and training of coaches by the offices of elementary and secondary math.

Expand Family Involvement and Support

- Dramatically increase outreach to parents by sponsoring events based on mathematical activities and offering training in math to parents. The offices of elementary and secondary mathematics should support schools in these efforts and coordinate with the family and community engagement department to ensure that parents across the district have access to these events and trainings. Successful fledgling efforts in this area at the elementary and middle school levels must be greatly expanded to eventually include every school.

Provide All Students with Access to Advanced Math Courses

- Provide pre-calculus, calculus, and advanced placement courses (Calculus AB, Calculus BC, and statistics) for every student who is prepared by increasing the number of teachers qualified to teach these courses, through cross-registration with other district high schools or colleges, and through on-line access. BPS must prepare students for these courses by improving the mathematics instruction in the earlier grades and by providing individualized tutoring and remediation.



Special Education

Introduction

Special education is the name given to a set of laws that require schools to provide a “free and appropriate public education” for students with disabilities, ages three to twenty-two. These laws stipulate that the instruction provided to all students must be “specially designed” to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities, giving them the same opportunity as their nondisabled peers to progress toward meeting statewide and district educational standards. This means that the district must adapt the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction in both academic and nonacademic activities in accordance with such considerations as social/emotional development, behavioral issues, mobility, communication difficulties, limited English proficiency, and other needs as determined by a team of parent(s) and professionals. As of March 2006, 11,450 students in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) were enrolled in special education, or 20% of the total BPS population.

The rights of these students are spelled out in a very robust set of state and federal laws that

require timely and thorough student evaluations and the development of individualized education programs (IEPs). These laws specify the roles of teachers, specialists, and parents on IEP teams, parents’ rights, and protections around student disciplinary procedures. The law also states that students with disabilities must be placed in the least restrictive environment and that there must be transition planning for three-year-olds receiving early intervention services and for high school-age students with disabilities.

The education of children with disabilities has a troubled history in Boston. The groundbreaking 1970 report, *The Way We Go to School: The Exclusion of Children in Boston*, documented the systematic exclusion of physically, intellectually, and emotionally handicapped children from the BPS system. This hard-hitting report led to the enactment in 1972 of Chapter 766, the first state law in the nation that granted children with disabilities the right to supports, services, and programs that would enable them to succeed in school. In 1976, BPS was placed under a court order (*Allen v. McDonough*) for systemic

noncompliance with Chapter 766. BPS remained under that court order for 22 years.

The Need for Change

It is the opinion of many observers that special education in Boston is being delivered through a broken system. BPS has been unable to provide many of its struggling students with the supports they need, either in regular or special education. Too many students with disabilities are being denied or are receiving inadequate or inappropriate special education placements and/or services. Although there are certainly pockets of success within BPS for students with disabilities, the system is failing many students both because of systemic administrative roadblocks and an inability to integrate special education into standards-based reform.

Students with disabilities are the lowest performing subgroup in nearly all grades and subjects as measured by performance on the MCAS test. The results of the 10th grade “high stakes” MCAS test illustrate that gap (Figure 1).

Students with disabilities also drop out at disproportionate rates. When the dropout data

for the class of 2002–2003 was analyzed by gender, race, ethnicity, English language learners, and so forth, special education students had the highest dropout rate (37%).

Focus on Children, BPS’s blueprint for setting and meeting high standards for all children, was adopted in 1996. In 2004, a BPS report, *The Special Education Achievement Gap in the Boston Public Schools*, included the stunning admission that, “In many schools, special education is just at the beginning of standards-based reform.” Other studies and observers confirmed the findings suggested by that report, including the following:

- Many students in special education have suffered from low teacher expectations and from school climates that allow them to be labeled, stigmatized, and excluded from general classes.
- Many special education teachers have not participated in reforms and professional development (e.g., coaching, Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop, instructional leadership teams, and whole-school improvement planning).
- Many students with disabilities have not had access to content areas measured by MCAS and to appropriate test-taking strategies.

Figure 1: Fall 2005 10th grade MCAS scores

Boston	ELA*			MATH		
	Advanced/ proficient	Needs improvement	Warning/ failing	Advanced/ proficient	Needs improvement	Warning/ failing
Regular Education	51	37	13	51	29	20
Special Education	6	33	61	8	29	63

*English language arts

- Many regular education teachers have lacked the expertise to teach students with disabilities, principals and teachers have not been adequately trained in the use of accommodations, and paraprofessionals have been poorly utilized for instructional support.



The administrative barriers erected by the special education department have been devastating to students with disabilities.

When *Allen v. McDonough* was settled in 1998, BPS set out to aggressively reduce special education enrollment and costs. One method was to place special education under the umbrella of Unified Student Services, along with counseling, health services, and a variety of other support services. This model, designed to create a continuum of student supports throughout the district and within each school, has been ineffectively implemented by BPS, and other efforts to control costs have unfortunately failed to adhere to the letter and spirit of the special education law, as evidenced by the following:

- Contrary to state and federal law, it has been BPS policy and practice to centralize decision making and strip IEP teams of their legal responsibility to determine special education placement, leading to delays and even, at times, to rejection of IEP team recommendations. As a result, children can languish in inappropriate placements, including at home, for extended periods and do not get the education and services mandated in their IEPs.
- Federal and state laws require that an evaluation be completed and an IEP written within 45 school days of a student's referral to special education and that the IEP be implemented immediately after it is signed by the parents. Despite this requirement, many parents are told there are waiting lists for evaluations and waiting lists for placements.
- Parents and teachers report being actively discouraged from making referrals for evaluations of preschool and kindergarten children who show clear symptoms of behavioral or learning difficulties, despite the fact that early intervention can make a significant difference in the ability of these children to succeed in school. Special education enrollment data bear out these reports. This failure is both morally reprehensible and "penny wise and pound foolish," since lack of support at an early age can lead to diminished capacity for improvement (for example, in children on the autism spectrum) and to more restrictive and expensive placements later on. It is a particularly cruel irony that some children in community-based child care settings who *do* have IEPs cannot get their mandated services because of bureaucratic transportation barriers.

- Many children whose underlying emotional disturbances manifest as behavior problems do not get prompt evaluations and services. The system erects many barriers to including therapeutic support services in IEPs for eligible students. The current system of including mental health services under unified student services has failed to provide adequate supports at many schools, leaving many children who have emotional disturbances with worsening conditions, which in turn can lead to more difficulties in the classroom, suspension or expulsion, and/or referral to the courts. Because services are often provided much too late in the child's school experiences, children who otherwise may have remained in the mainstream have sometimes required segregated placements in LAB clusters in order to address emotions and behaviors that could have been ameliorated by early intervention.
- Parents of children with disabilities are voiceless and marginalized. A Special Education Parent Advisory Council is mandated by law, but exists in name only. Parents report that they are not informed of their rights and have difficulty communicating with the special education department. Parents report opting out of IEP meetings because they feel isolated and intimidated by the rest of the team. Some even report being treated with outright antagonism: being threatened with referral to the Department of Social Services for not signing the IEP or being blamed for their child's condition.
- Finally, those who represent children are concerned that a Supreme Court decision in 2002 has led Boston to needlessly delay resolution of cases that used to settle in a matter of weeks (and some that were resolved informally without litigation); cases can now go on for months or more than a year before settlement, while the child remains without necessary services. These delays have led to a more adversarial environment, with money wasted on litigation that could be put into services.

In creating and maintaining this system to control access to services, special education has become a department unto itself within BPS, with little accountability or transparency.

Underlying some of these administrative barriers and the lack of integration into standards-based reform is Boston's system of separate special education classrooms. Boston has the highest percentage of special education students in separate classrooms of any Massachusetts city or town: 44%, as opposed to a statewide average 16.5%. Separate classrooms create a two-tiered system in each school, with gaps in instructional quality and the marginalization of special education students, parents, and teachers from the mainstream of the school.

The inclusion of children with disabilities into the educational mainstream has been at the philosophical core of special education law since its outset. Inclusion does not mean "dumping" children with disabilities into a regular classroom

The only classroom that can legitimately be designated "inclusive" is one in which teachers are properly trained and children with disabilities are being given the supports they need.



Boston's Successful Inclusive Schools

Greater inclusion is best achieved on a school-by-school basis, with support and technical assistance provided by the school system. When successfully implemented, inclusion naturally fosters a more positive school climate, increases individualized attention and high expectations for all students, and strengthens parent involvement and teacher collaboration. Over the past decade, a number of individual

without adequate supports. To do so would be not only illegal but also educationally inadequate and morally indefensible. The only classroom that can legitimately be designated “inclusive” is one in which teachers are properly trained and children with disabilities are being given the supports they need.

It is understood that some children with severe disabilities will need a separate setting, whether in district or out; this report is not a call to abandon those educational options. Students are more likely to need the intensive supports of a separate classroom when, as noted earlier, they are left without services and supports in the regular classroom until their behaviors and learning problems become extreme. In all cases, the individual needs of each child should dictate the appropriateness of the placement, and reforms must be made to improve instructional quality and minimize the social effects of separate placements. However, there is concern that BPS currently has no plan to provide the intensive supports children need to be mainstreamed into inclusive classrooms, which might significantly reduce the percentage of children in separate classrooms.

schools in Boston, through the visionary leadership of their principals, have either transformed themselves into inclusive schools or are in the midst of doing so. The O’Hearn and the Mason Schools (both K-5) and the Mary Lyon School (K-8) are highly regarded inclusion schools. They have strong parent and community support and have achieved high test scores. The Murphy School (K-8) and a few pilot high schools are transforming themselves into inclusive schools, guided by the following key elements:

- ***Belief that all children can learn to high standards.*** This commitment must be shared by the principal, teachers, and staff, who must work collaboratively and flexibly during the transformation to inclusion.
- ***Willingness to comply with federal and state special education laws.*** The IEP must remain the central tool in developing individualized instruction plans and supports for each child, and parental rights under the law must be upheld.



All students can benefit, socially and academically, when children with disabilities learn and play alongside their nondisabled peers

- **Commitment to parent involvement.** The principal must invite parents of all students to join with the staff in building a strong school community that supports student learning. Increased parent participation in shaping school practices will create opportunities for the principal to articulate and address concerns about change and to assure parents that all children will get the attention, supports, and services they need.
- **Practice of data-driven decision making.** Transparent data is an essential tool for tracking progress, measuring the achievement gap between regular and special education students, and enhancing motivation and accountability.
- **Redistribution of resources.** Net resources for special education must be maintained, but the way they are distributed must change. Each school must be given the power to allocate its own budget and the freedom to increase resources by forming partnerships with businesses, universities, and other community organizations.
- **Professional development and dual certification.** Regular education staff must work closely with their special education counterparts to learn how to teach a variety of learners. BPS coaches who are dual certified in regular and special education have provided useful, hands-on training to regular classroom teachers, helping them learn to work with a range of children with disabilities. These coaches also work with special education teachers, demonstrating new methods to help children with disabilities achieve at higher levels. Hiring dual-certified teachers is an effective means for ensuring strong inclusive classrooms.
- **Creation of extended-day, summer, and Saturday programs.** Many children with disabilities benefit from extra time for learning, which these programs can provide.
- **Adoption of the principle of universal design.** All students can benefit, socially and academically, when children with disabilities learn and play alongside their nondisabled peers. Policies and practices designed to help one set of children with a disability can be of benefit to all. For example: reading programs that assist children with dyslexia can aid others who are struggling with reading; behavioral strategies for autistic children can benefit all children.

Vision of Change

The superintendent and leadership of BPS will be committed to, and experienced in, designing a system in which children with disabilities will learn at high levels. The special education department will comply with federal and state laws and be fully integrated into the teaching and learning functions of the district management structure, and its director will be part of the superintendent's leadership team.

The belief that all children can learn to high standards and a commitment to develop an inclusive school will be woven into each whole-school improvement plan. Principals will be knowledgeable about and committed to inclusion, and teachers will either be dual-certified in regular and special education or will be trained in differentiated learning.

Those students who do need to be placed in substantially separate classrooms or settings will be assured of quality instruction, access to the general curriculum, and, as much as possible, interaction with nondisabled peers.

Referrals for an evaluation will be made as early as age two-and-a-half when there is a concern that a young child may have a disability or when there is a concern about development. Evaluations will be of high quality and conducted in a timely manner. Young children with IEPs will receive special education services on site (home, day care, preschool). The system will ensure that the IEP process works as required under the law. The IEP team will advocate for the child, identifying individual needs and developing plans to meet them, and it will have the power to make final placement decisions.

Individual supports in both special and regular education will factor in the role that trauma may be playing in a child's learning problems and

behaviors. Many Boston children have experienced traumatic adversities outside and inside school that impact their ability to focus, behave appropriately, and learn. All schools throughout the system will integrate trauma-sensitive approaches into their infrastructures and weave trauma-sensitive approaches throughout their school day (for details, see the chapter of this report that focuses on helping traumatized students learn).

Parents will be fully informed, in their native language, of their right to participate in the special education process. They will be treated as equal members of the IEP team and respected for the assets they bring to the team and for their contributions to their child's education. An independent, effective, and diverse Special Education Parent Advisory Council will be the parent voice in the implementation of special education and will provide mentors to parents new to the IEP process.

Recommendations for Change

The new superintendent must 1) be committed to giving children with disabilities the individual supports that will enable them to learn at high levels and 2) be experienced in developing inclusive classrooms and schools and in creating a special education system that gives children with disabilities access to the general curriculum.

The new superintendent should begin by taking these three steps:

- Hiring a special education director who has expertise in inclusion and providing that director with the authority to implement reforms. The special education director should report to the superintendent and be an integral part of the leadership team.

Ensure that children with disabilities who need a separate classroom or school have access to standards-based reform and to high expectations for academic success.

- Conducting a review to bring special education into compliance with the law, to enable it to participate in standards-based reform, and to address other concerns raised in “The Need for Change” section of this chapter.
- Developing a strategic plan to transform the special education system. This plan should be based on findings of the above review; local, state, and national best practices; and the input of parents, students, external experts, teachers, principals, and other educators.
- Establish an independent Special Education Parent Advisory Council. Ensure that it undertakes its legal responsibilities and provides independent advice and support to parents, has at its disposal information about all programs, and is given the resources to constantly survey and speak up regarding the needs of parents and the problems parents are experiencing in the system.
- Authorize IEP teams and schools to include intensive mental health and other support services in the IEPs of emotionally impaired students.

The following changes should be implemented immediately, even while the strategic planning process is under way:

- Restore to IEP teams the legal authority to make specific placement decisions.
- Eliminate denials, waiting lists, and delays of special education referrals, evaluations, placements, and services for all children, but particularly for those diagnosed with autism, emotional disturbances, and other conditions for which early intervention has been proven to increase educational and social competence.
- Develop literature that clearly and simply informs parents about the IEP process and their rights under special education law, translate this information into a variety of languages, and disseminate it widely.
- Put in place a system of periodic internal audits to assure legal compliance with all facets of special education law.
- Hire as principals those candidates who are committed to inclusion and to creating a school climate where all children are seen as effective learners.
- Ensure that children with disabilities who need a separate classroom or school have access to standards-based reform and to high expectations for academic success.
- Ensure that the district does not circumvent special education law by referring students to the court system rather than providing appropriate special education and related services. Students must continue to be provided with the special education and related services to which they are entitled when they are placed



in institutional settings (e.g., those run by the Department of Youth Services) and in their transition from the institution back to their school and community.

These steps toward greater inclusion in schools should be taken in the near future:

- Articulate a vision for inclusion, and devote time and energy to building consensus for this vision.
- Create a system of technical assistance and supports that will enable schools to plan and implement inclusive classrooms.
- Provide regular education and special education teachers with professional development that is linked to current practices in standards-based reforms. Utilize coaches dual certified in both regular and special education to train teachers in differentiated instruction.
- Accelerate the hiring of teachers who are certified in both regular and special education.
- Link the special education department closely to the teaching and learning functions of district management.

- Strengthen special education services at the high school level, and improve student outcomes through comprehensive transition planning, individualized supports, and integrating regular and special education teaching and learning.
- Develop models for inclusion for middle school extended-day programs that receive state funding.
- Utilize resources and models within BPS (principals, teachers, schools with records of success) to help accelerate change in individual schools.

The Impact of Trauma on Learning and Behavior



Introduction

“Every day, children enter their classrooms bringing backpacks, pencils, and paper—and their unique views of the world. Every child has his or her own expectations and insights, formed from experiences at home, in the community, and at school. When children witness violence between their adult caregivers or experience abuse or neglect, they can enter the classroom believing that the world is an unpredictable and threatening place.”

These are the opening words of *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*, a 2005 report by Massachusetts Advocates for Children that proposes an educational and policy agenda to enable schools to become supportive environments in which traumatized children can focus, behave appropriately, and learn. Research shows that children exposed to traumatic events can have serious learning, social, and behavior difficulties—and, according to recent data, the vast majority of children in Boston have been exposed to some form of violence. All institutional improvements and reforms recommended in this report should be informed by this issue.

Schools are significant communities in the lives of children. They can be safe havens that effectively address the impact trauma has on learning, or they can unwittingly compound the problem through punitive policies and practices that retraumatize children. A trauma-sensitive school environment can benefit all children, not only those who are traumatized but also those impacted by their traumatized classmates.

The Need for Change

A considerable body of recent psychological and neurobiological research links exposure to trauma to learning and behavior problems, including difficulties in the following areas: language, communication, and problem solving skills; understanding cause-and-effect relationships; executive functioning; regulating emotions; and peer and teacher relationships. Trauma is also linked to an increase in impulsivity and aggressiveness. A child experiencing trauma can have a difficult time concentrating, following lessons, and sitting still. Simply put, a traumatized child can have trouble behaving and learning.

The trauma reactions seen in children most typically arise from exposure to violence—in the family, in the Boston community, in the native lands from which many recent immigrants have fled—and even from a parent fighting in the Iraq war. Studies of abused children show increased academic and other school problems, including a dropout risk two-and-a-half times higher than for their nonabused peers. Trauma, if unaddressed, can lead to destructive coping strategies, such as drug abuse, in teens and adults.

A 2004 survey of Boston high school students revealed a very high rate of exposure to violence: 89% had witnessed at least one type of violence in the past year, and 44% had been victims of violence. Up to 20% of this violence was experienced in the home. The survey found that greater exposure to violence was associated with lower grades and more truancy. The recent resurgence of community violence in Boston has intensified this exposure and its associated trauma. It is important to understand that teachers and other adults in the schools who have personal connections to children impacted by this violence can develop trauma symptoms themselves.

It is very easy to misread traumatic symptoms. Despondency can come across as shyness; an inability to concentrate can come across as laziness. Traumatized children may appear willful and defiant. The result can be a vicious cycle of disengagement from learning and escalating behavior problems that too often leads to suspension or even expulsion.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) lacks adequate resources to address this issue. As a result of the community violence that plagued Boston in the early 1990s, BPS established a number of programs to help schools and teachers deal with and lessen the impact of violence. These programs, which

have not been evaluated to measure their effectiveness, were focused mainly on training individual teachers and staff, and lacked the larger context of the trauma-sensitive whole-school change proposed in *Helping Traumatized Children Learn*.

The special education division of unified student services has been reluctant to formally diagnose emotional problems that underlie many difficult learning and behavior problems. This reluctance, coupled with limited services—most elementary schools do not have full-time student support coordinators, for example—contributes to an end result of school failure, suspension or expulsion, referral to court or DYS, and/or dropping out of school for many children and youth whose mental health problems are not recognized and addressed.

Although the mental health services of BPS leave much to be desired, the system has developed an extensive network of partnerships with health care and social service institutions in Boston (e.g., Children's Hospital Boston, Dimock Community Health Center) that provide mental health services. Innovative and entrepreneurial schools, such as the Gardner Extended Services School in Allston/Brighton, serve as role models for forging external partnerships to provide extended services to students. BPS is spreading the model to other schools through the cluster structure. The Boston Full Service Schools Roundtable is a citywide coalition of BPS, human service agencies, community-based organizations, and after-school providers whose mission is to promote integrated school-community partnerships. While it is beyond the capacity of this report to assess the effectiveness of these external partnerships, their presence clearly serves as a platform for change.

Helping Traumatized Children

Learn has been embraced by state education leaders, including the Massachusetts Department of Education, school superintendents, school committees, and special education associations, for its rich information, useful approach, and thoughtful policy agenda. Superintendent Payzant sent a copy to each principal. The report translates complex research on trauma into language accessible to educators. Most importantly, it outlines a “Flexible Framework” for a whole-school-change approach to creating a trauma-sensitive environment. Rather than advocating for one particular intervention or a one-size-fits-all methodology, it offers tools for infusing trauma-sensitive perspectives and approaches throughout the school community and for ensuring that mental health, academic, and nonacademic supports are sensitive to the needs of traumatized children. Many Boston school personnel have expressed interest in the report and learning more about adopting this framework.

Vision of Change

Every school will have an environment that gives traumatized students the stability, support, and nurturance that will enable them to succeed academically and socially. School personnel will have an understanding of the impact of trauma on relationships, learning, and appropriate behavior and will establish structures and protocols to minimize that impact.



A trauma-sensitive school environment can benefit all children, not only those who are traumatized but also those impacted by their traumatized classmates.

The principal will lead the school in weaving trauma-sensitive approaches and protocols into its whole-school improvement plan, the way it assesses professional development needs, how student support teams function, how IEP teams review cases, the formation of school policies (e.g., discipline, referring families for help, filing abuse and neglect reports), and relationships with community partners.

Staff will be trained to work with parents in situations of family violence, in identifying their own needs for mental health consultation, in pedagogical approaches to working with traumatized children, in creating a safe and supportive environment, and in responding to traumatic incidents that affect the whole school or many of its students.

Each school should re-evaluate its discipline policies and protocols to recognize the role trauma and other mental health issues may be playing in rule-abiding behavior at school.

Schools will form partnerships with mental health professionals to provide services for children and families and clinical supports and consultation for school staff. Schools will offer art, music, yoga, sports, dance, and/or drama to help counteract the physiological impact of trauma (especially at the start of the day, to help children calm down and be ready for learning).

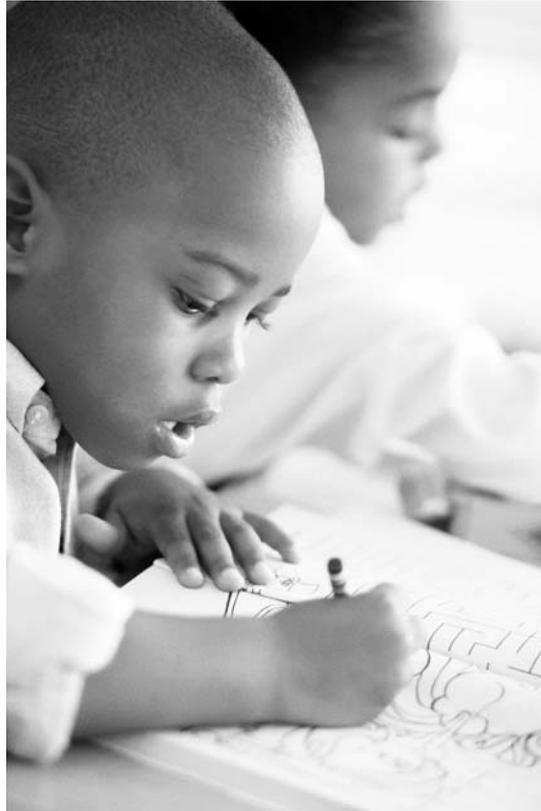
Teachers and staff will develop personal, caring relationships with the students, know and support the students' strengths, and create classrooms that are safe, predictable, and academically challenging. The psychological, behavioral, sensory, and communication needs of individual children will be promptly evaluated. For children who qualify, a special education or "504" disability plan will be developed to address problems early, enabling these children to remain in the least restrictive academic environment.

Recommendations for Change

- District leadership should develop a strategic and sustainable approach to equipping the schools with the expertise and resources necessary to respond to children's exposure to trauma.
- BPS should provide each school with the resources to develop an action plan for achieving the following:
 - an administrative infrastructure responsible for weaving trauma-sensitive approaches throughout the school day
 - professional development, skill building, and clinical supports for staff
 - approaches for partnering with parents, who themselves may be suffering from trauma
 - teaching strategies that enable traumatized students to master academic content
 - nonacademic ways to support traumatized children (e.g., a caring and supportive relationship with at least one adult, extracurricular activities, such as sports or arts)
 - individual and group supports to help children regulate their emotions and behavior
 - linkages with mental health services qualified to address trauma
 - review of policies and protocols through a trauma-sensitive lens (including discipline, communications with parents, appropriate ways to file 51As, confidentiality regarding school records and conversations, and appropriate ways to assist in enforcing court orders that protect the safety of children)
 - plans to ensure that students are physically and emotionally safe at school

—collaborations with local agencies and community organizations, including domestic violence shelters.

- These action plans should be integrated into whole-school improvement plans and linked to improvements in teaching and learning, school climate plans, critical-incident response plans, and professional development plans.
- Each school should re-evaluate its discipline policies and protocols to recognize the role trauma and other mental health issues may be playing in rule-abiding behavior at school. Schools should place a strong emphasis on reducing the number of suspensions and expulsions through the use of positive behavior supports and other trauma-sensitive approaches.
- Each school should have a full-time student support coordinator to assure that the individual mental health needs of all children are met and the use of external resources is coordinated and maximized.
- Students should have access to comprehensive health and mental health services.
- Each school should have the resources for exercise, sports and/or expressive arts (e.g., singing, dance, theater), which provide outlets for gross motor activity and a safe way for students to express their emotions.
- Full-service or extended-day models, which make it easier for schools to adopt and utilize a framework to create a “trauma-sensitive environment” (see elements in recommendation #2, above), should be replicated throughout the district.





Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners

Introduction

Over the past 25 years, there has been an upsurge in the number of immigrants living in Boston. In 2000, the U.S. Census reported that 25.7% of Boston's population was foreign born, including 11% of its children under 18. The city has a long history of harboring newcomers from Europe and Canada; today most immigrants arrive here from Latin America and Asia.

In 1971, Massachusetts recognized the challenge that the growing number of children not proficient in English posed to the educational system and, in response, approved the first transitional bilingual education (TBE) law in the U.S. TBE programs were subsequently implemented in the Commonwealth. TBE provides academic instruction in the student's native language while the student is learning English, with the percentage of academic content given in English continuing to increase during the three years of the program, after which most students transition into all-English classrooms.

Boston's TBE program was never given the resources or implemented with the rigor that would have allowed it to reach its full potential, but it did provide a sheltered educational environment for newcomer children and their parents.

In 2002, in the midst of strong anti-immigrant sentiment across the U.S., Massachusetts voted in Question Two, a ballot initiative mandating that instruction for ELLs must be conducted primarily in English through a sheltered English instruction (SEI) program, normally limited to one school year, after which ELL students are mainstreamed. An SEI teacher can use native language for clarification and should employ strategies and techniques to make content areas comprehensible to all the students. Under the provisions of Question Two, parents can apply for waivers that exempt children from SEI and allow them to enroll in TBE, literacy programs, or two-way bilingual programs. Literacy programs are designed for ELLs over age 10 who have gaps in their formal education due to little or no schooling in their country of origin. Two-way bilingual programs integrate language instruction



43% of English language learners are not receiving any specialized language services at all.

and academic instruction for native English speakers and native speakers of another language, resulting in fluency and literacy in both languages for all students (in 2003, these programs were exempted from Question Two by Massachusetts legislative amendment).

An immigrant child entering the BPS system is immediately assessed for verbal, and sometimes for literacy, proficiency in English and in the child's native language. A child who cannot do ordinary class work in English is designated an ELL, and SEI is strongly recommended. Parents have the right to choose mainstreaming for their child or to apply for an SEI waiver and request placement in a TBE program, a literacy program, or one of BPS's Spanish-language two-way bilingual education programs (at the Hurley, Hernandez, and Greenwood Schools).

Regardless of whether an immigrant child is enrolled in SEI, an alternative ELL program, or mainstreamed, the student is considered an ELL and is required to take a standardized English language proficiency test (in reading, writing, speaking, and listening) every year. If and when the student scores a four, the "transitioning" level of proficiency in all four categories, in addition to classroom performance consistent with the test results, that student is no longer counted as an ELL.

The Need for Change

Before Question 2 altered the delivery of education for ELLs, there were already significant concerns about the effectiveness and the quality of Boston's TBE programs. But since the passage of that law, concerns have only escalated. The number of students served has decreased markedly, due not to demographic changes, but to the way Boston has chosen to meet the requirements of Question 2. There are serious gaps in student assessment, program assignment, with the programs themselves, and with the training of mainstream teachers, who now have the added challenge of English language instruction in the classroom. There is a stark lack of accountability and transparency with regard to numbers, placements, and outcomes for ELLs. Perhaps the most crucial problem is the perception that, at its highest level, BPS leadership has failed to address the challenges posed by Question 2.

Of grave concern is the decrease in the number of students who are provided with appropriate language instruction. In 2002, about 9,800 ELLs were in bilingual programs in schools across the

district. Today, in spite of the documented growth in the immigrant population of the city, BPS reports a similar ELL enrollment. Of all students designated ELL, only 57% are enrolled in a program that pays attention to their language needs (53% in SEI and 4% in either TBE or a two-way bilingual program). Put another way, 43% of ELLs are not receiving any specialized language services at all.

The dramatic decrease in the percentage of ELL students receiving specialized language services is a result of the way BPS chose to comply with the legal requirements of Question 2. BPS designated some schools English Language Learner Centers (where TBE and native-language literacy programs can be offered for those granted waivers from SEI), created SEI programs at 38 schools, and retained its three two-way bilingual programs. But the compliance strategy that affected the largest number of ELLs was to move a large number of TBE students into mainstream classes before they reached level four on the English

proficiency test. According to BPS statistics, of the 9,800 students in bilingual programs, 3,054 (31%) were mainstreamed, almost half of whom were only at level 3 of English proficiency—that is, not yet able to do ordinary class work in English. As these students were integrated into mainstream classrooms, teachers were called upon to provide academic instruction comprehensible to all students, a significant number of whom required English language development. School districts were mandated to support the process of mainstreaming with a brisk process of professional development. The Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) required a total of 70 hours of training in second language acquisition, sheltered English instruction, assessment, and teaching reading to ELLs. Due to insufficient funds, BPS was not able to provide the required training, leaving teachers in mainstream programs without the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively with ELLs.

MCAS Scores, BPS Grade 10, 2000-2005

Figure 1: ELA

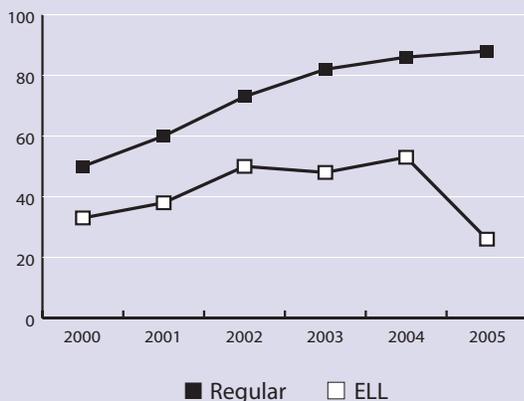
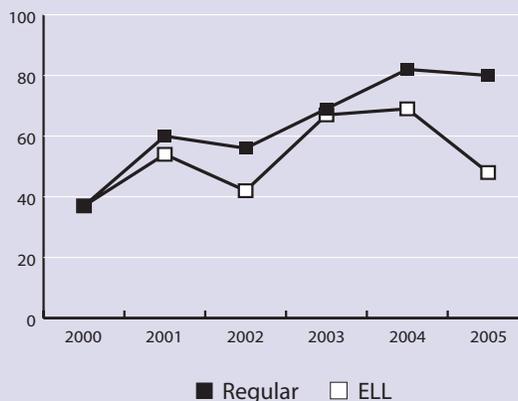


Figure 2: MATH



In 2005, the performance of Boston's ELL's on the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives for English Language Learners was the fourth lowest in the state.

The mainstreaming of large number of students designated as ELLs continues, and training of school staff is still painfully slow and underfunded. In 2005, BPS was cited for noncompliance by the Massachusetts DOE for having an insufficient number of certified ESL teachers (66 in the entire district).

Educational Outcomes

The educational outcomes of Boston's ELLs are a major cause for alarm. In 2005, their performance in the Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives for English Language Learners was the fourth lowest in the state.¹ After three years in the system, only 34% of Boston's ELLs scored at level four (able to do ordinary class work in English) on the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment, again among the lowest percentages in the state.

The trends in MCAS scores are also worrisome. After improving gradually but steadily between 2001 to 2003, English language arts (ELA) scores for ELL 10th graders were at a plateau for three years, then declined sharply in 2005 (Figure 1). In math, scores improved from 2002 to 2004, then plunged in 2005 (Figure 2).

Areas of Deficiency

Poor assessment. The poor quality and accuracy of initial English proficiency assessments of immigrant children result in less-than-optimal student placements. Assessors are not all adequately trained. There is concern that students whose primary barrier is lack of English

proficiency are being mistakenly diagnosed as learning disabled. (The establishment of the Newcomer Assessment Center at Madison Park High has improved the assessment situation for new-to-Boston high school students.)

Poor teacher training. Because of inadequate professional development, many mainstream teachers who have ELLs in their classrooms and many teachers in literacy programs are not able to properly address the needs of their students. BPS's Collaborative Coaching and Learning professional-development program does not have a sufficient number of coaches trained in English language acquisition and literacy development strategies. A lack of training in cross-cultural competence has resulted in teachers and administrators who do not have the tools to deal effectively with racial/cultural content and/or conflict in the classroom, leading to tension and mistrust among students.

Inadequate preparation for high-stakes testing. In addition to English language instruction, ELLs should be receiving content instruction of high quality to allow them to pass the MCAS. There are significant gaps in the preparation of ELL students in both math and ELA, including, for example, lack of instruction in academic writing, a skill needed both to pass the MCAS and to do well in postsecondary education. These content-area deficits stem from inadequate training for mainstream teachers who work with ELLs.

Lack of support for literacy programs. BPS's literacy programs are for ELLs who have had limited or no formal schooling in their home countries. Although these programs have proven to be highly successful in improving literacy and math skills, district support for them varies from year to year, staffing is often inadequate, and there is a shortage of appropriate materials. In addition, there is too often a "culture of low expectations" for these programs on the part of individual school administrators, despite the proven success of the model. The impression among respondents is that literacy programs exist only in response to legal mandates, leaving their success dependent on individual teachers committed to the model but often operating with neither school nor district support.

Lack of accountability. ELL programs have long been plagued by the lack of data on assessments, placements, and educational outcomes. Even data on MCAS results for ELLs (most of whom are now required to take the test) have been both highly unreliable and only sporadically available. Because of the reporting requirements of No Child Left Behind, more data is available, but not enough is provided by BPS to achieve transparency.

What are the criteria for mainstreaming and for placement in SEI and other programs? How do outcomes in English language acquisition and academic content compare between mainstreamed ELLs and those in ELL programs? These and other critical questions can be answered only by increased accountability.



Lack of support for parents. A strong parent voice for limited-English-speaking parents and ELL students essentially disappeared in 2002, when the School Committee cut off funding for the Master Parents Advisory Council, an elected group of parents representing the interests of BPS's ELL students and families. Immigrant families are now asked to voice concerns regarding ELL programs through the general, English-speaking parent groups, a situation that deprives immigrant families of support, advocacy, opportunities for parental involvement, and the clout to influence ELL policy.

Inadequate waiver process. Parents are not given enough information about the waiver process, alternative programs, and their right to apply for a waiver. Parents who do apply and are granted waivers too often find that their children are placed in SEI anyway, rather than in the alternative ELL program to which they are entitled. This is an especially difficult situation for immigrant parents to resolve. The waiver process opens the door for school systems to expand and create alternative ELL programs to meet the diverse needs of ELL students, but Boston has not taken advantage of this opportunity.

Lack of high-level leadership.

One of the most urgent concerns is the lack of high-level leadership in addressing the challenges posed by Question 2. The perception is that ELL program policies are driven almost exclusively by compliance issues, with the needs of students taking second place. Apart from the office of language learning and support services, the needs of ELLs are not well understood and are not taken into account in program design and implementation. No strong, expert voice within BPS is afforded the opportunity to guide the district on ELL policy and programs. The experiences of other districts in the Commonwealth has shown that committed, effective, and expert leadership with the support of top level administration is critical if the requirements of Question 2 are to be successfully adapted.

**Areas of Progress**

Progress in meeting the needs of ELLs has been made in certain areas. These accomplishments include:

- The design and implementation of the International High School for ELLs in Jamaica Plain, modeled after a strong program in New York City.
- The continuation of the successful two-way bilingual programs at the Hernandez and Hurley Schools and the schoolwide Spanish enrichment program at the Sarah Greenwood School. BPS has initiated a study on two-way bilingual programs and is seeking funding to nurture and support their expansion.
- The continuation of the successful Haitian literacy program in Hyde Park High, the Somali literacy program in English High, and the Spanish literacy program in East Boston High (note, though, that these programs are neither consistently monitored nor given adequate resources from year to year).
- The establishment of the Newcomer Assessment Center, which offers high-school-age immigrants language testing in English and in the student's native language, education and career counseling, orientation to BPS, and information for parents and families.
- The hiring of 15 (17 as of fall 2006) full-time family and community outreach coordinators working in 17 schools. These coordinators, many of them with bilingual abilities, are responsible for facilitating the development of strong parent, community, and school connections that support and promote student achievement. Initial evaluations of the FCOC program have been positive. BPS has also approved three new bilingual outreach specialist positions.

Vision of Change

BPS will embrace the view that, in our global economy, immigrant children are an asset to Boston. They come to us culturally competent in another culture and sometimes (although not always) fluent and literate in another language. BPS will be committed to teaching these students English while valuing and fostering the language and other abilities they have when they arrive.

Those at the highest levels of district administration will have brought about a radical shift in vision, priorities, and accountability regarding the educational outcomes of ELLs. There will be a variety of flexible, student-centered programs that take into account the broad range of prior educational experience among ELLs, including the needs of those who have had limited formal education and those with disabilities. A system of monitoring and evaluation will ensure that ELLs are receiving the supports and services to which they are entitled. Accurate data will allow analysis of program effectiveness across different ELL populations, helping us learn what works well, what needs improvement, and what has yet to be done.

Each immigrant child will follow a seamless path from initial assessment through graduation, and each school will have a vibrant culture, with ELLs fully absorbed into their school's general life and activities. An ongoing comprehensive improvement plan will ensure that the needs and

assets of ELLs are incorporated into whole-school change and professional development, that parent engagement is actively fostered, and that immigrant students are guaranteed the supportive services essential to their success.

Recommendations for Change

BPS must transform its approach to educating ELLs. The narrow focus on minimal compliance with regulations must be replaced with a pervasive and lasting commitment to ensuring that ELLs—wherever they are in the system and whatever their needs—are educated to their fullest potential. Our belief that every child can achieve at a high level, given appropriate instruction and support, can become a reality if faculty, administrators, and staff take ownership of the academic and social development of *all* BPS students. To achieve that goal, we make the following recommendations:

- The needs of ELLs must be included in all policy and program decisions and their implementation. For this to happen, it is essential that administrators at every level of BPS have expertise in second language learning issues, programs, and curriculum.
- A link should be established between the departments of language learning and support and special education to ensure appropriate services for students who are both ELL and special education students.

The narrow focus on minimal compliance with regulations must be replaced with a pervasive and lasting commitment to ensuring that ELLs—wherever they are in the system and whatever their needs—are educated to their fullest potential.



- The specialized language and academic needs of ELLs should be fully taken into account while developing and implementing any reform, and all reforms should reflect best practices in the field of ELL education. For example, a comprehensive, full-service program for ELLs must be included in high school restructuring. Programs for ELLs should not be eliminated or diluted in the effort to minimize school size and concentrate resources.
- Sufficient resources must be provided to ensure that every teacher whose classroom includes an ELL is trained in English language development and in delivering content instruction understandable to the ELL student.
- A comprehensive, districtwide system should be developed for identifying each and every ELL, for placing them in appropriate programs with all necessary services, and for assessing their progress in English in an accurate and timely manner.
- The Newcomer Assessment Center, currently serving only high school students and families, should be expanded to include all grade levels and moved to a larger, more central location.
- Full-time family and community outreach coordinators with bilingual skills should be placed in schools with large ELL populations, and bilingual outreach specialists should be placed in all schools with ELL programs.
- BPS should strengthen and expand its literacy programs, which have proven successful for students who have had little or no formal schooling in their native countries.
- Appropriate ELL materials and curriculum guidelines and standards, including differentiated benchmarks for grade progression, must be developed and put into practice. It must be recognized that mainstream educational curriculum materials (e.g., grade-level basal readers) may not be appropriate tools for building academic competence among ELLs. BPS must ensure that teachers in SEI classrooms are taking advantage of the policy that allows for native-language clarification of academic content.
- BPS must provide full information to parents about their right to apply for waivers from SEI for students who would be better served in other alternative ELL programs, including bilingual education. BPS also must create a streamlined system for processing and implementing waiver requests. Parents who are granted waivers from SEI often find that

their children are not actually placed in the alternative program they are entitled to, but simply remain in SEI. Other cities in Massachusetts, such as Framingham and Brockton, have creatively taken advantage of the waiver provision of the law to create new and alternative ELL programs where there is parent demand. Boston should follow suit.

- Successful two-way bilingual programs must continue to be supported and be expanded to more schools and languages.
- A parent group along the lines of the defunct Master Parents Advisory Council should be reestablished and funding restored.
- BPS should institute afterschool and weekend programs to assist ELLs who are substantially behind in their language or academic development.
- BPS should continue to support collaborations with schools of education, such as the TAG and ALERTA programs at UMass Boston, among others.²

¹ AMAO measures annual growth in English language development, reflecting the percent of ELLs in grades 3-12 whose performance increased two or more steps on the Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment from fall to spring.

² The Project ALERTA and TAG (Talented and Gifted) Latino enrichment programs for BPS Latino students are based in the Institute for Learning and Teaching at UMass Boston and are supported by BPS, UMass, and private foundations. Project ALERTA prepares third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students for entry into Boston's competitive exam schools. TAG partners with several middle and high schools to provide holistic services for approximately 250 students during the school year and 320 during the summer.

The Dropout Crisis and High School Reform



Introduction

Educating all our children for the 21st century must be as compelling a task for the city as keeping them safe from harm. The violence that plagues Boston's young people is of great concern to everyone. The fact that up to one-third of our students drop out over the course of their high school years should be just as grave a concern.

To succeed in today's economy, it is necessary to have, at the very least, a high school degree. Dropouts face severe limitations in earning potential, life expectancy, and life opportunities. Society as a whole is affected by the increased poverty, community and family conflict, and other social costs incurred by dropouts.

High dropout rates are the bitter fruit of the failures to engage and teach students that are documented in the other chapters of this report. Responsibility for the dropout crisis is most

often laid at the doorstep of high schools. In truth, the whole K-12 system shares the responsibility. That young people begin dropping out in the ninth grade is as much of an indictment of the elementary and middle schools as it is of the high schools.

The impact of the dropout crisis is particularly serious in Boston. According to the 2006 report, *Too Big To Be Seen: The Invisible Dropout Crisis in Boston and America*, by the Boston Youth Transitions Task Force, dropouts fare far worse in Boston than in almost all other large U.S. cities. In contrast, Boston's high school graduates are more likely to be successful in the labor market than their peers across the nation. The Youth Transitions Task Force report concludes: "In Boston—more than anywhere else—a high school diploma marks the dramatic divide between the prospect for success on one side and isolation from opportunity on the other."

High dropout rates are the bitter fruit of the failures to engage and teach students that are documented in the other chapters of this report.



In response to the dropout crisis, Mayor Thomas M. Menino convened the Boston Youth Transitions Task Force in 2004 and charged it with assessing, documenting, and addressing the problem in a strategic way.

BPS has been working since 2001 to improve student performance and lower the dropout rate by revitalizing the city's high school system. The district has created several pilot high schools: Boston Arts Academy, Another Course to College, Fenway High School, and TechBoston Academy, among others. These are promising models, but even taken together, they enroll a relatively small percentage of Boston's high school students.

BPS's most far-reaching initiative, High School Renewal, is focused on transforming the large comprehensive district high schools into small schools and small learning communities (SLCs).

Funded by the Gates and Carnegie foundations, Boston's High School Renewal initiative aims to address the major challenges of large high schools—high dropout rates; low student performance, especially in literacy; and pervasive student alienation—by creating learning communities small enough to provide each student with individualized attention and support and high-quality instruction. Small schools and SLCs can each adopt a distinctive theme to support more flexible and engaging curricula and create a sense of community among students and staff.

The Need for Change

High School Renewal

Boston education reform under Superintendent Payzant began with a concentration on literacy, and later math, in elementary and middle schools. BPS began addressing the issue of high school reform in 2001, with support from the Carnegie Foundation and, in 2003, from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Carnegie Foundation has helped divide existing high schools into semiautonomous SLCs under a single headmaster. The Gates Foundation has promoted the development of small schools: in this model, comprehensive high schools are divided into three or four autonomous units, each with its own school leader.

Now, some five years after High School Renewal began, a recent report by independent evaluators Education Matters has raised serious concerns about the implementation of the initiative.

Their October 2005 report, *High School Renewal in the Boston Public Schools: Focus on Organization and Leadership*, was based on two years of data gathered from two small schools and four SLCs. Although this is a relatively small sample of the

One unfortunate result of the siloed organizational structure and lack of clear leadership has been an inadequate focus on improving instruction.

total number of SLCs and small schools, the issues the study raises are relevant to all of High School Renewal's efforts.

Education Matters held focus-group discussions with students in the small schools and SLCs in the study. Given the high hopes that small environments would foster positive teacher-student relationships and overcome alienation, the results of these discussions with students are particularly disappointing. Most of the students interviewed did not find their small school or SLC to be a nurturing and supportive environment, nor did they feel that the curricula were particularly connected to the distinctive theme of their SLC or small school. Most interviewees reported being minimally engaged in the majority of their classes and felt that their classes were not demanding.

Education Matters posits that the main reason high school renewal efforts have not yet delivered on their promise is because "the organization and leadership of high school renewal are not adequate for achieving the initiative's goals." The report highlights systemic problems that continue to beset BPS: lack of programmatic and organizational clarity, poor coordination with external partners, failure to successfully translate intentions into practice, and little or no accountability at any level.

The disjointed organization of the High School Renewal effort has hindered successful implementation. An assistant superintendent for high school renewal spearheads the initiative, but

this small office has no direct authority over the schools themselves or the central staff that is needed to support them. Supervision of the restructured schools is in the hands of three deputy superintendents, each of whom is responsible for 40 to 50 other schools. Curriculum and professional development assistance are in two other divisions that are under the deputy superintendent for teaching and learning.

BPS has four external partners for High School Renewal: the Boston Plan for Excellence, Jobs for the Future, the Center for Collaborative Education, and the Private Industry Council. BPS and all four of its partners acknowledged to Education Matters that the organizational and leadership structure of High School Renewal is fragmented, that the different partners are pursuing competing goals, and that they have no common understanding of how to share responsibility for student outcomes. The result, according to the report, is that no one "truly leads or monitors the work of high school renewal in a focused fashion that allows the district a) to be sure it is pursuing a common set of goals, and b) to determine whether its actions are getting the schools closer to their goals."

One unfortunate result of the siloed organizational structure and lack of clear leadership has been an inadequate focus on improving instruction. According to Education Matters, "instruction is not currently on the agenda" of the High School Renewal Working Group, the leadership team of partners coordinating the

High School Renewal initiative. Without an intensive focus on improving both instructional practice and curricula, the high school reform effort has relied too heavily on structural changes alone as a strategy for delivering results.

When the High School Renewal initiative began, headmasters were directed to divide their schools into smaller units in existing buildings, develop distinctive themes for those units, and devise new humanities courses combining English and social studies. All this had to occur with the existing teachers. The teachers had not voted for the new structures, and some were resistant to the changes being demanded of them. But because many of the teachers had “attachment rights” to the buildings, they could not be replaced with teachers who supported the renewal initiative.

The schools first targeted for restructuring had a disproportionate number of both students with disabilities and students returning from juvenile justice facilities. Staff assignments did not allow for the high number of special education teachers these students needed. This meant that, overall, there simply were not enough teachers. It was reported that, in some cases, there actually were no classes for students to take! In short, the conditions and support for the reforms were simply not in place.

Family and community engagement has been a weakness of BPS as a whole and is a particular

problem in high schools. Various efforts to improve family and community engagement in small schools and SLCs have not been successful, in part because they have not been school based. Parent involvement is an important strategy for improving student outcomes, and meaningful parent involvement happens at the school level. An initial analysis of the work of school-based family and community outreach coordinators in 17 schools has been very positive. School-based FCOCs create partnerships with community-based organizations and institutions, reach out to families, and coordinate volunteer programs, among many other things. Through these school-based efforts, parents learn how to advocate for their children, develop leadership skills, and make their voices heard. Currently, a small number of SLCs and small schools have FCOCs; that number should be expanded to include all SLCs and small schools. School-based FCOCs, in conjunction with independently funded outside advocacy groups, are the ingredients needed for invigorating the family and community engagement side of High School Renewal.

The Dropout Crisis

The Youth Transitions Task Force reports, “In any given year, over the past five years, 1,400 to 1,600 students are dropping out of school in Boston. This compares with the approximately 3,000 students who graduate each year.”

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The dropout rate is higher among certain populations than others: students with disabilities and English language learners are more likely to drop out than are regular education students, males are more likely to drop out than females, and Black and Latino students are more likely to drop out than white and Asian students. Teens who are in foster care, involved with the Department of Youth Services (DYS), pregnant, or parenting have higher dropout rates than students who are not in these situations.

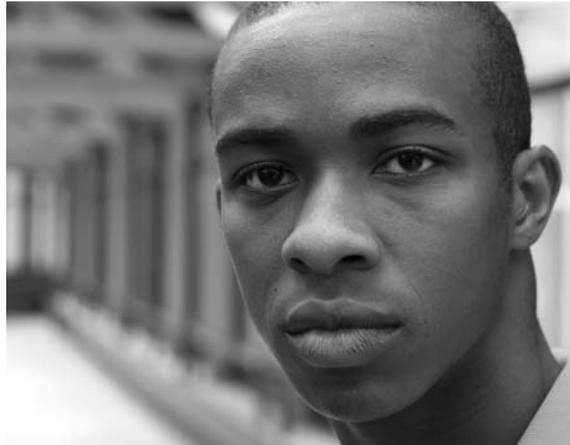
Black males are at greatest risk of dropping out. And, for them, the consequences of dropping out are worse than for any other group. In Boston, Black dropouts earn 32% less than other dropouts. An astounding 26% of Black male dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24 are incarcerated in DYS facilities or prison.

The difference in dropout rates between the three exam high schools and the 12 district high schools is a stark illustration of Boston's two-tiered high school system. The exam schools had an annual dropout rate in 2003–2004 of less than 1%, compared to the district average of 8.3%.

Task Force Data on Youth, Parent, and Teacher Perceptions

The Youth Transitions Task Force collected data from students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in an effort to better understand how to prevent students from dropping out and how to reconnect those who do drop out with educational programs.

The task force reported that “adults and youth alike stressed the pivotal role of relationships in the lives of young people.” In particular, they found that “young people need a connection with caring adults to succeed in an educational program” and that “caring teachers are essential



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to their sense of connection to school.” Parents who participated in focus groups felt that “if school staff were more aware of the daily life and individual emotional challenges facing students, they would be more supportive, and students would feel less alienated.”

A survey of teachers from 16 high schools conducted as part of the High School Renewal effort found that many teachers feel powerless to prevent students from dropping out. Of the 353 teachers who responded to the survey, 89% agreed that most teachers in their school are committed to developing strong relationships with their students. Yet, many felt that the pacing of instruction limits their ability to tailor instruction to the needs of individual students. They also felt that social and emotional problems are important factors in students' decisions to drop out, but they did not feel able to address those needs. Over two-thirds of teachers surveyed felt

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Students interviewed by the Youth Transitions Task Force reported that disruptive peers, violence, and a lack of safety are problems at school. The impact of disruptive students on others' ability to learn and feel safe in the classroom is real, but punitive measures—suspensions, expulsions, court referrals, and transfers to alternative settings—should be last resorts. The rush in recent years toward zero tolerance policies has led not toward safer schools but to more and more students being excluded from school. These policies only increase student mobility, which is a prime risk factor for dropping out, and they fuel the likelihood that students will become disconnected. Implementation of best practices, such as school-wide positive behavioral supports, can decrease problem behavior, increase time spent in academic instruction, and improve academic outcomes.

Dropout Recovery

In examining Boston's options for reconnecting dropouts to education, the Youth Transitions Task Force found Boston to be a "cradle of innovation" in second-chance education and employment programs. Nevertheless, dropout recovery is hampered by the following:

- There are only enough seats in youth GED or adult education programs for 15% of the dropout population between ages 16 and 24.

- Students' potential for success in these programs is imperiled by weak academic skills.
- Dropout recovery programs are small and chronically underfunded.
- There is no system to coordinate these programs, making information about them difficult to access.
- Outreach to dropouts is virtually nonexistent.

Vision of Change

A committed and able BPS superintendent and leadership will ensure that all students receive a quality education and that they are academically successful, regardless of the personal obstacles in students' lives. BPS will offer struggling students a range of supports to help them connect or reconnect to school. Students at risk of dropping out will be identified early and their areas of need will be targeted and addressed. Programs for students who have dropped out will be coordinated and will no longer work at cross-purposes, as they sometimes now do.

Social and emotional supports will be available to any student who needs them. Students will be respected as members of their school community and will have opportunities to participate in decision making. Students will take responsibility for their social relationships, classroom behavior, and academic performance. Parents and families will be welcomed and respected as partners in school governance and in the education of their children.



Regular education teachers will be trained in differentiated instruction and in strategies for working with students with disabilities and with English language learners, so that inclusive classrooms can function well. When separate classrooms are needed for students with disabilities, they will be given high-quality instruction and will learn to high standards.

Elementary and middle schools will be vastly improved, and all students will enter ninth grade possessing grade-level social and academic skills.

Improving instructional practice and ensuring that all high school students have access to rigorous curricula must become a focus of High School Renewal.

Recommendations for Change

High School Renewal

- Clear goals for High School Renewal should be established and the resources to achieve them should be coordinated. The dispersion of responsibility among the various actors involved, both inside and outside BPS, has been a formula to dissipate resources, diffuse accountability, and fail to get the job done.
- The new superintendent must appoint a deputy superintendent who has the clear authority to implement High School Renewal. It is up to BPS leadership to pull together the internal components and the external partners involved to resolve the many problems inhibiting High School Renewal.
- BPS should consider reorganizing the cluster system, which currently groups schools with very different needs under a single deputy superintendent, into groups of schools with similar issues, such as underperforming schools or small-learning-community schools or pilot schools.
- Improving instructional practice and ensuring that all high school students have access to rigorous curricula must become a focus of High School Renewal. Education Matters found little workshop-based instruction and few functioning CCL teams at the high schools. Students reported that their courses were not academically demanding.
- BPS should carefully examine the results of its recent attempt to introduce a humanities curriculum combining English language arts and social studies in the small schools and SLCs. Are teachers equipped with the appropriate content knowledge and pedagogical skill to

successfully teach these new courses? Is the course content sufficiently rigorous and does it address the material required by the MCAS? Answers to questions such as these should form the basis of a districtwide evaluation, the results of which BPS should use to improve practice.

- When the responsibility for hiring and evaluating coaches shifts to individual schools this coming fall, central leadership should provide support to headmasters and school leaders to ensure that coaches are being used effectively. There should be a districtwide evaluation of the new system to gauge its success.
- More electives and extra-curricular activities should be made available to students. Focus on preparing students for the MCAS has tended to narrow course offerings, a problem that can be exacerbated in small schools and SLCs unless there is careful planning.
- The operating costs of small schools and small learning communities must be analyzed to find out if they are more expensive to run than traditional large high schools. If so, continuing to use standard allocation formulas and requiring that the small schools be budget neutral means that they will not have the resources to function effectively.
- The ability of the new high schools to provide the necessary education to different small populations of students must be examined. Can these schools deal effectively with

English language learners, students with disabilities, and students capable of advanced placement work? So far, this has not been demonstrated. On the one hand, there is the general problem of preparing regular education teachers to successfully teach special education or English language learner students in inclusive classrooms.. On the other hand, it may not be possible to fulfill the need for specialized classes in units with 400 students or fewer. This may be more feasible in the SLC model, where there is an overall administrator, than in autonomous small schools.

- The assignment of special education and former DYS students must be examined carefully. In the past there has been a disproportionate assignment of these students to certain schools. However, it must be remembered that equalization of assignment is not enough. Teachers will need specialized preparation and support to help these students.
- For family and community engagement to flourish, there must be a family and community outreach coordinator in every school, and ideally, a privately funded external group that works to develop a broad community constituency for High School Renewal.

Dropout Prevention and Recovery

The Commission believes that more attention must be given to reforms inside the schools in order to retain students before they drop out. We support the recommendations in the Youth

Increasing the capacity of alternative education does not absolve BPS of the responsibility for providing students at risk of dropping out with supportive options within the school system.

Transitions Task Force report (the full report, *Too Big To Be Seen*, is available at www.bostonpic.org), with the following additions:

- Students in alternative education should receive the supports they need in order to succeed. There should be a range of alternative programs, so that a wide variety of learning needs can be met.
- Increasing the capacity of alternative education does not absolve BPS of the responsibility for providing students at risk of dropping out with supportive options within the school system.
- Information on the full spectrum of options for dropouts should be made available to both parents and students.

Family and Community Engagement



Introduction

Family and community engagement has been neglected during Superintendent Payzant's tenure. If the new superintendent is going to take the district to the next level, parent involvement must be strengthened. To do so calls for a radical shift in the culture of the Boston Public Schools (BPS) and a reorganization of the family and community engagement system from a centralized to a school-based model. Parents must be embraced as full partners in their children's education and be given the tools and training to support their children's learning.

Studies have shown that students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher level programs, pass their classes and be promoted, show improved behavior, and graduate and go on to postsecondary education.

Gains in reading and math have been linked to teacher outreach to parents and to parent participation in workshops on helping children at

home. Schools with highly rated parent-partnership programs make greater gains on state tests than schools with lower-rated programs.

These studies point to parent involvement as an important strategy for reducing achievement gaps. With training and encouragement, it is possible for all parents—regardless of income and education level—to become engaged in supporting their children's learning.

Many challenges make it difficult for families to be involved in the public schools in Boston. Some schools are not welcoming to parents, some staff do not relate respectfully to low-income adults, and language and cultural differences often create confusion and misunderstanding. Parents are disengaged for a variety of reasons. There are parents who have so much faith in the educational system that they feel they do not need to be involved, while others disengage out of distrust. Relationships between parents and school staff are too often distant and disconnected.

These are serious challenges, but it is fair to say that the biggest barrier has been the BPS

The majority of parents do not receive the information they need in order to understand and navigate the complex BPS system or get essential training on how to help their children thrive in school.

leadership's failure to value, adequately invest in, and promote family and community engagement. The current superintendent, admitting that family engagement is not his strength, has given himself a C-minus in this area. Because of this lack of leadership, we have a floundering system. The majority of parents do not receive the information they need in order to understand and navigate the complex BPS system or get essential training on how to help their children thrive in school.

BPS's approach to family involvement has undergone many changes during the past few years. In 2002, the superintendent called for consolidating the family engagement system, a move that unfortunately included defunding the four parent advocacy groups that had been active in the city: the Citywide Parents Council, the Special Education Parent Advisory Council, the Bilingual Master Parents Advisory Council, and the Boston Parent Advisory Council for Title 1. Without funding, these groups were weakened or disappeared, and parents were left without an official advocacy voice.

Parents and community groups successfully pressured the superintendent to create a new post—Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement—to raise the profile of family involvement and to find a champion to lead the family engagement system. Family Resource Centers (FRCs), intended to offer parents one-stop shopping, were established, and new staff were hired with a mandate to:

- 1) provide training to principals and teachers in how to work in partnership with parents,
 - 2) conduct workshops that help parents learn how to help their children improve academically,
 - 3) help families gain access to services, and
 - 4) administer the student registration process.
- However, the registration process so overwhelmed the FRCs that they could not address their other three mandates.

Parents reported extreme frustration with the FRCs, citing hours-long waits, misinformation, and disrespectful treatment. The FRCs had become little more than registration centers, with very poor customer service.

Frustrated parents and community groups pushed for removing registration from the FRCs. The superintendent agreed to do so, but tried to impose a significant cutback in family engagement staff, which would have undercut the department's ability to initiate and manage family involvement activities. Community groups succeeded in preserving three special-education family engagement specialists and adding three bilingual outreach specialists.

Because of weak leadership, creation of a school-based system for family involvement has proceeded at a snail's pace. In 2000, the School Committee convened a Family and Community Engagement Task Force, which recommended placing "trained family liaisons" in the schools. It took BPS five years to create just 15 Family and

Community Outreach Coordinator (FCOC) positions in a system of 145 schools.

Amid strong community support, \$895,000 was allocated in the 2005–2006 BPS budget to staff 15 full-time family coordinator positions. Parents and outside groups partnered with the BPS to develop a job description and performance measures, and an astounding 73 schools submitted proposals, demonstrating a significant demand for help in engaging parents at the school level. (In school year 2006–2007, there will be 17 family coordinators.)

A preliminary assessment of the Family and Community Outreach Coordinator project was very positive. The external evaluator, Dr. Steven Constantino of Family Friendly Schools, stated in his report to the School Committee this March: “There is universal agreement among parents, principals, and personnel that the program should continue Parents made clear that they wanted the program to not only continue, but to expand to all schools in Boston.”

During interviews conducted during the assessment, parent satisfaction with the program was high. Here is a typical quote: “I can’t imagine schools that don’t have a parent coordinator. I feel for a child to succeed it has to be parents, school, and students. And when I tried to go to the school, I couldn’t get any help. I am glad that [an FCOC] was there to assist me. I felt so disconnected before. I was happy that she was someone I could turn to and ask for help.”



Sustaining the FCOC program and expanding it to every school must be a high priority for the new superintendent.

The Need for Change

The school-based FCOC initiative seems to be working, but the rest of the family engagement system is not functioning effectively. It should be reorganized into a school-based system in which family coordinators are supported by a strong middle-management team, with a strong, visionary deputy superintendent at the helm.

Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement

The Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement must be a passionate champion of family engagement, able to raise the “parent voice” internally, encouraging where needed and challenging where appropriate. As the lead advocate within BPS for the interests of families, the deputy superintendent must make parent engagement part of the district’s culture and take a systemic approach to meeting the needs of all families, including

limited-English-proficient families and parents of students with disabilities.

According to the recommendations drawn up when the post was created, the Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement should:

- Develop a strategy for expanding the number and improving the quality of school-based family centers.
- Develop a strategy for training principals and teachers, so that every school is able to build family and community partnerships that support student learning.
- Develop a strategy for ensuring consistent parent and community feedback about the quality of each school and the quality of district services for parents and families. This information should be made public and should be a component of the evaluations of district and school-based personnel.
- Oversee all financial resources that are designated for parent and community engagement (this includes the portions of the Annenberg and Carnegie grants, as well as Title 1, GSP, and other funds).
- Identify best practices for engaging parents and families in ways that support student learning, and develop a strategy for sharing those practices citywide.

These are good directives, but efforts to carry them out have been less than adequate. The current leadership lacks direction, initiative, follow through, and seems not to have an understanding of family and community engagement issues.



Family and Community Outreach Coordinator Project

In order for family involvement to impact student performance, it must happen at the school level. The FCOC pilot project is a step in this direction, albeit one that is very limited in size. Now just a year old, the FCOC project has placed 15 family and community outreach coordinators in 17 out of Boston's 145 schools (again, beginning in September 2006, there will be 17 coordinators). The job of the family coordinator is to build partnerships between home and school through many and varied routes, including:

- working with families, staff, and community organizations to create a welcoming school environment
- enhancing parents' capacity to support their children's learning

- advocating for parents and teaching them to advocate for themselves
- building trusting relationships between parents and staff and among parents
- increasing parent participation at school activities (open houses, parent-teacher conferences, athletic events, performances, etc.) and in school governance
- helping to bridge language and cultural barriers
- enhancing the capacity of teachers and staff to collaborate with parents
- building partnerships between the school and community organizations and institutions (businesses, colleges and universities, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, healthcare centers)

The family coordinator organizes classes and workshops to build parents' skills, makes home visits, conducts trainings for teachers and staff on family involvement, develops and coordinates a school-volunteer program, and serves as an informational resource center for families and as a liaison to community services.

The FCOC project should be sustained and expanded, and the overall family engagement structure should be reorganized to support that model.

A successfully transformed system will appreciate and affirm parent involvement and know how to build on the strengths that parents bring.

Vision of Change

Family and community engagement will flower in Boston. Teachers, school administrators, and central staff will share a deep belief that engaged families and communities improve student performance and help shrink achievement gaps. A successfully transformed system will appreciate and affirm parent involvement and know how to build on the strengths that parents bring.

Every school in Boston will have:

- *A fully funded family center staffed by a family and community outreach coordinator.* The family coordinator will support families, teachers, and the community in their efforts to assist students in achieving educational excellence and bridging the gap between home, school, and community.
- *A policy and practice of respecting parents as full partners in the education of their children.* Parents and teachers will work collaboratively to find ways to support student learning and increase student achievement. Relationships between parents and teachers will be constructive, and communication will be effective. These relationships will be nurtured and strengthened by the family coordinator, with support from the Office of Family and Community Engagement.
- *Good communication systems and strong parent outreach.* Teacher and parent communication will go beyond the book bag, and parent participation will go beyond the bake sale. Contact with parents will be initiated before problems arise. There will be phone conversations, e-mails, and home visits. BPS will be creative in finding respectful ways to communicate with parents, especially low-income parents, limited-English-proficient

parents, and parents of students with disabilities. Parents will be taught how to become better advocates for their children.

- *Training for parents.* There will be training for parents on such topics as leadership skills, making parent-teacher conferences effective, supporting math and literacy skills, facilitating meetings, and developing and implementing the whole-school improvement plan. Each school will offer classes to increase parents' skills (GED and ESL classes and classes in financial literacy, effective parenting, etc.).
- *A welcoming, nonthreatening, nonconfrontational environment.* Parents will be embraced as a resource for strengthening the school, rather than as a problem that needs to be dealt with. Parents will be involved in the school in many ways, including reaching out to other parents through phone calls and e-mail; attending parent support groups; participating in parent-teacher conferences; chaperoning field trips; putting together parent newsletters; participating in trainings and workshops; assisting in classrooms; organizing fundraisers; participating in school governance; and attending such school activities as athletic events, open houses, and potluck dinners.
- *An active School Parent Council and a fully functioning School Site Council.* Parents will elect the executive committee of the parent council and the parent representatives on the School Site Council; they will not be selected by the school principal, as they sometimes now are. Staff from the office of family and community engagement will provide support, training, and technical assistance to School Parent Councils and School Site Councils, especially on understanding school budgets and strengthening personnel

subcommittees. School staff will support the councils, to mutual benefit.

- *Partnerships with community and faith-based organizations, colleges and universities, local businesses, and social service agencies.* These partnerships will allow schools to garner additional resources, both financial and hands-on. Each school will be a comprehensive, full-service resource for families connecting parents to the supports that are necessary to build strong families.

Recommendations for Change

Family engagement and community mobilization are key factors in promoting reform. The school department and the family engagement system must work with others to develop an informed parent and community constituency committed to advocating for school-based and systemic improvements that offer all children the opportunity to learn at high levels.

- *School-based Approach:* Meaningful parent involvement that impacts student learning happens at the school level. The number of FCOCs must be increased each year until there is school-based family engagement staff in each school. The new superintendent should develop a strategy for implementing fully funded and staffed family centers in each school by school year 2010.
- *Infrastructure and Staffing:* Although school-based family engagement staff report directly to the school principal, they must also be responsible to the larger family engagement system. This system must be led by a strong deputy superintendent with a clear vision for strengthening family and community engagement. There needs to be a strong

The family engagement system must work with others to develop an informed parent and community constituency committed to advocating for school-based and systemic improvements that offer all children the opportunity to learn at high levels.

middle management team with adequate staffing to provide support and technical assistance to school-based staff. There must also be staff dedicated to supporting parents of children with disabilities and limited-English-proficient families.

The new superintendent must ensure that family engagement objectives are being met by the OFCE. The superintendent should reorganize current FCE staffing and infrastructure to support a school-based system. Specifically, what is the middle level structure and how does, and how should, it relate to school-based staff? Should a restructured FCE system be organized by triad? How does the system overcome its “silos”? How does, and how should, the OFCE relate to other departments in the system, such as teaching and learning, and to the deputies who supervise schools?

- **Professional Development:** Family engagement staff, principals, teachers, and other school personnel must be trained in how to develop respectful strategies for working with families. Professional development should not be limited to internal BPS trainings and should take advantage of trainings offered by partnering organizations.
- **Training for Parents:** BPS must build the capacity of parents to support their children’s learning through trainings and workshops that

run the gamut from effective parent-teacher conferences, school budget, personnel sub-committee, supporting students literacy and math skills, to how to help develop and implement whole-school improvement plans.

- **Improved Home-School Communication Systems:** Many parents are unaware of available services and supports and do not have sufficient knowledge of school and district policies. Parents and advocates have complained about the lack of information regarding MCAS prep support, advanced-work placement, new



The new superintendent must support advocacy both inside and outside the system.

residency requirements, the bilingual waiver process, special education rights, etc. Parents often don't even know their child is in danger of failing a class until much too late. Systems need to be created to ensure that parents are equipped to make informed decisions about their children's education and that they receive information on supports and services.

Special attention needs to be paid to non-English-speaking parents and new immigrant communities. There is a growing demand for better translation and interpreter services. The next superintendent must increase OFCE's capacity to work with and better serve limited-English-proficient families.

- *Training for School Site Councils:* All members of School Site Councils must receive training in developing and implementing whole-school improvement plans, school budgets, and hiring.
- *Partnerships with External Parent Groups and Community Organizations:* BPS must fully grasp the importance of collaborating with community-based organizations and regard strong parent and community constituencies as assets. The new superintendent should view the participation of external parent and community groups as a strategy for improving schools.

- *Evaluation:* Principals must work with FCE staff, parents, and the community to develop family engagement plans for their schools, and clear outcome measures for evaluating principals must be developed and used.

The entire family engagement system needs to be assessed, from performance measures for staff, to the FCE infrastructure, to the effectiveness of family engagement programs.

The new superintendent should develop an accountability system that includes mechanisms for receiving feedback from parents, the community, and a variety of independent sources both outside and inside the system.

- *Advocacy:* The new superintendent must support advocacy both inside and outside the system. Advocacy helps parents know their rights and navigate the school system. FCE staff should advocate for parents and the community, and parents and the community should advocate for improvements in the system.



Human Resources: Hiring, Supporting, and Retaining Teachers and Principals

Introduction

Education researchers agree on one thing: the primary importance of excellent teachers and principals. Outstanding teaching is vital for reducing the achievement gaps between white and minority students, between native speakers and English language learners, and between special education students and those without disabilities. Nevertheless, BPS has not given these issues the priority they deserve. The new superintendent should place the creation of a comprehensive human resources (HR) development plan at the top of the agenda for action. Nothing will improve the education of students in Boston more than recruiting, hiring, developing, evaluating, and retaining the highest quality classroom teachers and school leaders.

The major responsibility for the recruitment, hiring, development, and retention of teachers should belong to each school's principal or headmaster, who is in the best position to build a team of teachers that fits a school's student body and particular needs. Skilled teachers are more essential than ever because of the increasing

inclusion of students with disabilities and English language learners into regular education classrooms.

One senior administrator has called the hiring of teachers BPS's "central systemic issue." However, neither the superintendent nor the system's leading partner organizations (such as the Boston Plan for Excellence) include it in "The Six Essentials of Whole School Improvement," the keys to BPS's reform strategy. Consequently, the deputy superintendents who supervise and evaluate school leaders pay little attention to stimulating or monitoring hiring efforts among principals and headmasters. Superintendent Payzant has made major strides in focusing BPS principals and headmasters on teaching and learning and instructional leadership, but the development of their operational and management skills has been neglected.

A top priority for the new superintendent should be the design of a comprehensive HR strategy that encompasses recruiting, hiring, supporting, developing, retaining, and evaluating a diverse cadre of teachers. In addition, the new

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superintendent must have the ability and expertise to attract an exceptional managerial leadership team to Court Street and to bring strong leaders to individual schools. It is critical that the new superintendent have the skill to recruit and mold a strong and committed leadership team.

Historically, recruitment has been the province of BPS's HR department. Despite the recent introduction of the automated Kenexa applicant tracking system and other significant innovations, HR still does not command the respect that it should. An earlier School Committee task force on HR noted the need to overcome the "silos" into which personnel and other departments get pigeonholed. There has been little progress in overcoming this bureaucratic compartmentalization as far as personnel issues are concerned. BPS must transform its culture to recognize that the recruitment and hiring of teachers and principals needs everyone's attention across all departments, including the department of teaching and learning.

A recent major study of urban teachers union contracts concluded that urban schools are forced to hire large numbers of teachers they do not want and who may not be a good fit for their specific job or in their specific school. The study also noted that poor performers are passed around from school to school instead of being terminated and that new teacher applicants, including the best, are lost to late hiring. To make matters worse, teacher evaluations tend to

be long and laborious and are often subject to complex and lengthy grievance procedures and arbitration. Chapter 9 of this report deals more directly with the way BPS contracts with teachers. But even within the existing contract, much more could be done to recruit and hire teachers early.

The Need for Change

Teacher Recruitment

BPS has over 9,500 employees, including nearly 5,400 teachers and 1,300 paraprofessionals. Of teachers, 26% are Black, 9% are Latino, 60% are white, and 5% are Asian. In comparison, the student body is 46% Black, 31% Latino, 14% white, and 9% Asian. There has been little improvement in the diversity of the teaching staff in the last decade (the situation is better among principals; nearly half are Black and 16% are Latino).

Boston hires an average of more than 300 teachers per year, and that number is expected to rise to more than 400 in the foreseeable future. BPS estimates that nearly half its teachers will retire in the next five years, although the actual number will depend on the state of the economy. Compounding the problem, nearly half (47%) of all new teachers leave the system within three years.

Boston has adopted a "grow our own" recruitment strategy. The Boston Teacher Residency program, founded in 2003, is a creative attempt to find

and prepare new BPS teachers. Teacher-residents take academic classwork in education, spend a year in a classroom under the tutelage of a mentor-teacher, and are offered financial incentives to remain in the system. Currently, there are about 60 teacher-residents, three-quarters of whom are persons of color. Projections call for the program to prepare about 30% of Boston's new teachers by the 2008-2009 school year. Even if this ambitious goal is met, BPS will still need to attract two-thirds of its new teachers from other sources.

An effort is under way to involve BPS teachers of color in recruiting diverse applicants. In addition, the HR department now has a three-person recruiting team instead of a single recruiter. The team attends recruitment fairs at historically Black colleges and elsewhere in an effort to attract a more diverse teacher corps. However, the team members are relatively inexperienced, and it is unclear if they are adequately trained to understand what kind of teachers Boston needs.

Despite these recruitment initiatives, the percent of teachers of color has remained relatively constant since the 1970s. The lack of teachers of color in BPS is not solely a recruitment problem. Schools of education are not attracting males or students of color. It appears likely that white, middle-class women will be teaching inner city children of color for the foreseeable future. This situation has profound implications for the subject matter taught in schools of education and for the focus of BPS professional development.



Teacher Hiring and Timing

BPS needs to make hiring more timely. Studies indicate that teachers want to work in urban school systems but that cumbersome and late hiring practices cause cities to lose candidates to suburban districts. In Boston, some of the delay is attributable to the transfer and excess pool requirements in the BTU-BPS contract. However, BPS has consistently failed to take advantage of the opportunities for early hiring that have existed since the current contract was negotiated in 2000, such as open posting, a procedure that allows principals to hire without waiting for the transfer and excess pool processes to be completed. Principals have been making more use of this option—over 300 of the spring 2006 vacancies are open posted—but principals are not actually hiring teachers as early as they could. The three deputy superintendents responsible for overseeing principals do not monitor hiring practices, and management information on the dates and types of hires is woefully inadequate. It is said that Kenexa, the new automated, on-line applicant-tracking system, will provide this data, but it has yet to be used effectively.

Engaging principals fully in teacher recruitment and hiring is essential. There are principals in

Boston who devote significant time and energy to networking, finding candidates, and interviewing, but they appear to be exceptions. In the words of a thoughtful insider, most principals don't "have the wherewithal" to attract good candidates or to spot them when they see them. They put hiring on the back-burner until school is about to start, when they have no choice but to hire whomever is still available. Later, these same principals spend time and energy trying to get rid of their weak hires.



Training Personnel Subcommittees of School Site Councils

Each school's School Site Council is required to have a personnel subcommittee—made up of one parent, two teachers, and the principal—which is mandated to review all new hires and transfers. The reality is that the vast majority of schools have either an untrained, ineffective personnel subcommittee or none at all.

No teachers should be hired without someone first observing their work in the classroom, either in person or on video. Serious reference checks of candidates are not being done. Without training in evaluative hiring skills, parents, teachers, and principals cannot carry out these necessary tasks effectively.

Retention

BPS is losing new teachers at an alarming rate, with 47% of all new teachers leaving in three years. For teachers of color, the three-year attrition rate is 53%. Black teachers have the highest attrition rate—58%, compared to 38%

for Latinos. It is estimated that replacing these lost teachers would cost \$3.3 million, not to mention the cost of learning lost to teacher turnover.

Some administrators say that "immediate and practical support" of new teachers would improve retention. BPS has developed a set of recommendations that would give new teachers an extended orientation, professional development tailored to individual needs, and in-class mentors. These recommendations should be implemented by the new superintendent.

Professional Development

One of the most significant initiatives of the Payzant years has been a major investment in professional development, which now amounts to nearly \$42 million, or 5% of the annual BPS budget. Much of this money is allocated to school-based coaching in instructional practices in literacy and math, to the Collaborative Coaching and Learning strategy, and to the Readers' and Writers' Workshop approach to instruction. However, these programs have not been monitored or evaluated effectively.

To successfully teach children from diverse backgrounds, professional development in the areas of racism, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competency is critical, and issues of class and culture need to be faced directly. In addition, teachers need to build skills in working with English language learners and students with disabilities. These challenges have not been addressed. Professional development needs better alignment, continuity, coherence, and coordination across the system. The new position of assistant superintendent overseeing the Institute of Professional Development is a major step in that direction.

Coaches for literacy and math will be hired by principals for the first time in the coming school year. Who will train the principals in hiring coaches? Who will train the coaches? Who will monitor the coaches' effectiveness?

School principals state that their most important personnel need is for additional in-school professional development time, but the BTU has voiced criticism that much of the allotted training hours are ineffective and wasted. There is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of school-based professional development.

Evaluation

Many say that there are too many weak teachers in the system, but there is no effective evaluation and support system to help teachers improve or

help them move on to work for which they are better suited. Simplifying and implementing effective evaluations may be one of the most significant ways to improve teaching and learning.

BPS's recent statement, "Dimensions of Effective Teaching," should be used as a basis for the development of a new, simplified evaluation instrument. Then the BTU must be persuaded to allow BPS to use this new approach. This will require great negotiating skill and tenacity.

BPS management has also proposed the establishment of a Peer Assistance and Review program, in which teacher-consultants would coach and counsel teachers in need of improvement. If embraced by the BTU, PAR will be a valuable addition to BPS's professional development strategies.

Principal Recruitment and Development

BPS has implemented an innovative and successful Boston Principal Fellowship program to grow school leaders from within. This 12-month intensive experience combines academic coursework with a residency with an effective BPS principal. Fellows receive a full-time salary in exchange for a three-year commitment to BPS upon completion of the program. It is a good program, but it is still small, providing fewer than half the candidates for the approximately 20 principalships that have opened up each year.

BPS is losing new teachers at an alarming rate, with 47% of all new teachers leaving in three years. For teachers of color, the three-year attrition rate is 53%. Black teachers have the highest attrition rate—58%.

BPS is also developing a program to put interested assistant principals, directors of instruction, and others in middle management positions on a career track that will lead to principalships. It is too early to evaluate this program, which is just getting underway, but even if it is successful, it is doubtful that it would eliminate the need for outside recruitment.

BPS has hired an executive recruiter to attract school leaders to the system. To date, there has been no evaluation of how effective the recruitment has been.

BPS's creative and important New Principal Support program provides structured support to all first- and second-year principals. However, the program does not pay sufficient attention to training principals in teacher recruitment, hiring, development, and evaluation and needs to put a higher priority on personnel management issues.

Experienced BPS principals get short shrift in staff development. Senior BPS managers have suggested that Boston should immediately implement 360-degree performance evaluations of all current principals and headmasters (in a 360-degree evaluation, feedback is solicited from coworkers and other constituencies and is used to help an employee understand how others see them).

Career Ladders

Key to retaining teachers and to developing administrators are clearly defined career ladders, with appropriate professional development, evaluation, and advancement opportunities at each level.

- Mentors or new-teacher developers would provide first year teachers with in-class help,

focusing on classroom management, lesson planning, and BPS instructional strategies.

- Second year teacher support would focus on building strong teaching competencies aligned with BPS's newly developed "Dimensions of Effective Teaching."
- Third year teachers would be rigorously evaluated and carefully observed before being granted permanent status.
- Permanent teachers would be encouraged to achieve National Board certification.
- Permanent teachers could become lead teachers or mentor teachers.
- Teachers could enter administrative ranks through internships or management courses.

The current BTU-BPS contract calls for a Career in Teaching panel to produce a career in teaching plan, but to date no plan has been developed.

Senior Staff Recruitment

Boston anticipates significant turnover in senior positions in the coming years. The superintendent must decide on an appropriate organizational structure and then recruit a team of strong senior management, academic, and research leaders. Recruiting the best team possible will require focused attention, an investment of resources, and a strategic plan. The process cannot just be left to informal networks and chance.

Technology and Management Information

Automation has come to the BPS's HR department in the form of the Kenexa applicant tracking system, which gives the department the ability to manage large numbers of applicants, hires, and transfers. BPS must make sure that the

system is continually upgraded, not just maintained and allowed to become outdated. The city should also move forward in thinking about automating personnel and financial data, but BPS must also try to ensure that any citywide technology is adapted to the specific needs of our school system.

BPS still lacks an adequate Management Information System, which would allow senior managers to know who is hired and when, to identify problems, and to analyze this information over time.

Vision of Change

The HR department will create programs and discover avenues to recruit more teachers of color. Principals will devote significant energy to creating their own recruiting networks and to hiring teachers who will form effective education teams in their schools. Other departments in BPS, such as teaching and learning, as well as the deputies who supervise principals, will regard recruitment and hiring concerns as integral parts of their jobs.

Hiring will be timely, making BPS competitive with suburban systems. Principals will regularly take advantage of open posted positions to move quickly on hiring. State-of-the-art automated applicant and employee tracking systems will be constantly updated, and data the system produces will be regularly analyzed and used to make improvements in personnel practices.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of a school leader will be creating an education team that best fits the school's goals and student body. Principals who do not meet an early hiring timetable will receive negative evaluations.



Key to retaining teachers and to developing administrators are clearly defined career ladders.

The personnel subcommittees of School Site Councils will be active in every school. The members of the subcommittee will receive training in resume reading, interviewing, reference checking, and the evaluation of applicants. Every teacher who is hired will have been observed in the classroom, whether in person or on video. References will be carefully and thoroughly checked before hiring takes place.

The retention rate for teachers will be increased through new-teacher support and professional



development, including an extensive orientation and use of in-class mentors.

Professional development will continue to grow and will be monitored for effectiveness. Issues of race, class, and cultural competency will be openly addressed, and teachers will be trained to teach English language learners and students with disabilities. The assistant superintendent overseeing the Institute for Professional Development will ensure the quality, continuity, and coordination of all professional development activities.

Issues of race, class and cultural competency will be openly addressed, and teachers will be trained to teach English language learners and students with disabilities.

The instruments for teacher performance evaluation will be simplified, and teacher-improvement systems, such as PAR, will be in place for coaching and counseling teachers who need improvement.

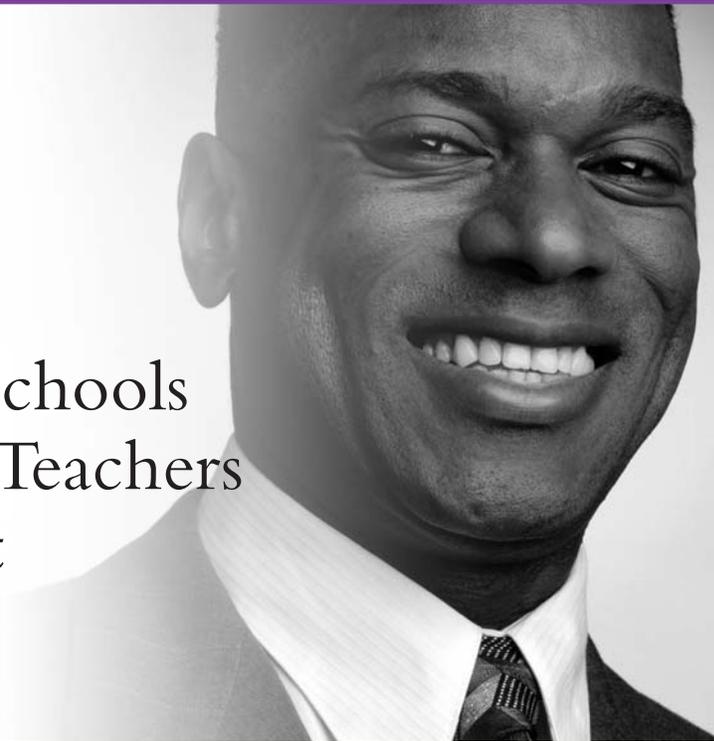
Recommendations for Change

- Recruiting and hiring should be added to “The Six Essentials for Whole School Improvement.”
- Principals should have primary responsibility for building their schools’ education teams.
- HR must be a shared responsibility across all BPS departments. Teacher and other staff recruitment, hiring, development, and evaluation needs to be recognized as everyone’s concern.
- BPS must strengthen and energize recruitment at all levels, and use innovative approaches to promote diversity and to eliminate staff shortages in special education, math, and science. The Boston Principal Fellowship and the Teacher in Residency programs should be expanded, and there should be an increased focus on networking and advertising to attract school leaders and senior administrative staff.
- Teachers must be hired earlier, so BPS can compete with suburban districts. Principals must take advantage of open postings to hire early. The timetable for hiring should moved

up, and principals of all schools, including pilot schools, should be held to that timetable.

- Principals and the personnel subcommittees of School Site Councils need to be trained in recruiting, screening, interviewing, and doing background checks on applicants.
- Teacher retention must be improved through more effective in-class support and mentoring and by including issues of cultural competence, race, and class into professional development. Teachers must be trained to teach English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Evaluation and monitoring must be instituted throughout the system. The performance evaluation process needs simplification, principals and personnel subcommittees must be trained in evaluation skills, each school must be monitored to ensure that hiring is timely, professional development must be monitored for effectiveness, and principals should be evaluated on their hiring and team building performance. BPS should work with the BTU to institute a Peer Assistance Review program.
- HR technology must be kept current, and BPS must ensure that any citywide systems are adapted to the specific needs of the school system.

Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union Contract



Introduction

The current contract between the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and the management of the Boston Public Schools (BPS) expires on August 31, 2006. It is imperative that a new contract be consummated and in place prior to the start date for the new superintendent. If not, a smooth, effective transition to new school leadership will be put in jeopardy. If the contract is not settled, negotiations will distract the new superintendent from focusing on building a new senior leadership team and setting the direction for transformational change.

It is understood that BTU is responsible for advocating for compensation and working conditions that are fair and that honor the professional contributions of its membership. It is also understood that BPS management must insist on having the managerial authority required to hold BTU personnel accountable for high levels of performance and results. The overriding responsibility of both parties is to form a collaborative alliance, united in its commitment to the delivery of excellent instruction and the

achievement of academic success for all students. This is the bottom line!

Without a collaborative alliance, radical, transformational change is not possible. A review of urban public school systems throughout the nation confirms this judgment. Therefore, the next superintendent, in collaboration with the mayor, must work to end the longstanding adversarial and contentious relationship between the union and management. Otherwise, the BPS and its students will be doomed to slow and incremental change, an absolutely unacceptable situation. Let us be clear: the provisions of the BTU-BPS contract are what create the operational context and culture of our school system.

The Need for Change

Excellent classroom teaching must be the foremost goal of the new contract. This section focuses on that goal in the following domains: timely hiring of teachers, teacher transfer practices, excessing practices, performance evaluation, professional development, whole-school

improvement plans, underperforming schools, and pilot schools.

Hiring of Teachers

The contract should stipulate that BPS management must be informed of teacher transfer requests, teacher preferences for the next school year, and excessing projections by February 15 of each year. Receiving this information in a timely manner will allow management to move swiftly to recruit and hire new teachers. Every reasonable adjustment should be made in the contract to make the BPS system competitive with its suburban counterparts. Teachers who do not adhere to the timetable for making their choices known should lose consideration for placement changes the following year.

Transfer Practices

As currently agreed, teachers with unsatisfactory teaching evaluations should not be able to transfer into another school. Principals should not have to adhere to strict seniority policy when making decisions about teacher transfers. Rather, the fit of the transferring teacher and the educational needs of the school should be the paramount factors in a principal's decision. That said, BPS management should work with effective teachers who wish to transfer to a school where their effectiveness would be maximized. In the 2004–2005 school year, there were 200 applicants for transfer, with 47 teachers succeeding. Thus far in the 2005–2006 school year, there have been 150 applicants, with 40 receiving transfers.

Due to historical practice, permanent teachers have “attachment rights” to their school building, meaning that they cannot be involuntarily transferred to another school. This practice is not stated in the current contract. These “rights” are lost if a permanent teacher is on leave, on assignment, or excessed more than one year. This practice deprives BPS management of the reasonable authority it should possess to deploy teaching personnel based on the educational and organizational needs of the school system. Therefore, the practice of attachment rights should be ended.

Excessing and the Excess Pool

When administrative decisions terminate a tenured position in a school, the teacher who holds that position is placed in an excess pool (excessed) and remains there until given a position in another school. Placement out of the excess pool is guaranteed by contract.

In the 2004–2005 school year, 225 teachers were excessed; the number so far for the 2005–2006 school year is 140. If it is clear that a teacher is not likely to be placed in a classroom, that teacher should enter a reserve pool for one year, during which time the teacher would be paid, would retain benefits, and be assigned to substitute teaching or non-classroom work. At the end of a year in the reserve pool, the teacher would be either placed in a classroom or terminated from the system. The financial costs of this new system would be considerable, but the educational costs to children would be eliminated.

The overriding responsibility of both parties is to form a collaborative alliance, united in its commitment to the delivery of excellent instruction and the achievement of academic success for all students. This is the bottom line!

Performance Evaluation

BPS management has proposed a new teacher performance evaluation form for provisional and permanent teachers. The form's performance indicators are excellent, and the inclusion of a narrative evaluation is a good addition. BTU should accept this document for inclusion in the final contract. These evaluations would be used to determine the level and type of mandatory professional development work a teacher requires. The clear linkage of evaluation outcomes to corrective prescriptions is an important advance.



Professional Development

In the Collaborative Coaching and Learning program, a skilled educator involves teachers in discussions and classroom demonstrations of pedagogical practices; there are required readings, and teachers must submit a final paper. Under the more rigorous provisions for this program that have been proposed by BPS, teachers would have to meet higher standards than they currently do to receive professional development points for recertification purposes and to gain in-service credit toward salary enhancement. These changes should be included in the new contract.

BPS management has also proposed the establishment of a Peer Assistance and Review program, in which teacher-consultants would coach and counsel teachers in need of improvement. PAR teacher-consultant positions would be full time and limited to three years, after which reasonable consideration would be given for returning consultants to their previous

teaching assignment. Each teacher-consultant would work with 10 to 12 teachers at a time. The proposal includes a very-well-thought-out process by which teachers who need improvement could access PAR's help. If embraced by the BTU, PAR will be a valuable addition to BPS's professional development strategies.

Whole-School Improvement Plans

An important provision of the current contract is whole-school improvement planning. Under this provision, each school must produce a written plan detailing strategies for instructional improvement and laying out programmatic options for students. A whole-school improvement plan provides the basis for increased accountability and wiser investment decisions.

Underperforming Schools

The superintendent should be able to designate as underperforming all schools that deserve this designation, and not be limited to just five per year, as specified in the current contract. The contract should give the superintendent the



sweeping powers needed to swiftly improve underperforming schools.

Pilot Schools

In an important breakthrough, the BTU and BPS management have agreed to create a minimum of seven new pilot schools under the new contract. One of these schools will be designed and led by the union. This agreement sets new compensation requirements for overtime work by BTU teachers in pilot schools (currently, pilot school teachers do not receive overtime compensation). Under the new provisions, pilot school teachers will be uncompensated for 105 hours of overtime during a school year, will be compensated by BPS for overtime between 106 and 155 hours, and will be paid out of the school's budget for overtime of more than 155 hours. Pilot school budgets are tight; in those

schools whose teachers reach the 155-hour-plus level, having to pay compensation will likely necessitate major personnel changes.

This concession to the union could lead to efforts by the BTU to erode the “autonomy” feature of pilot schools that is essential for effective schooling. The new superintendent should guard against such erosion.

A Vision of Change

The Existing Platform for Change

A thorough review of the current BTU-BPS contract reveals an array of policies, procedures, and mechanisms that give the superintendent and management the authority and leverage to operate a school system in which all students can achieve academic success. One of the planks in the platform for transformational change that the current contract has set in place is the provision for School Site Councils, which are composed of management, teachers, and parents. The contract stipulates that each School Site Council have a personnel subcommittee, and it lays out a teacher-hiring process that could achieve good results and would be embraced by key elements of the school community.

A one-page side agreement to the current contract permits principals to create open postings for teacher positions through a vote of the faculty or by attaching a \$1,000 stipend to a job. Open postings allow principals to hire teachers without waiting for the completion of the transfer and excess pool processes. This managerial prerogative gives principals enormous leverage in keeping teachers whose performance is unsatisfactory out of the classroom.

If the contractual changes recommended in this report are grafted onto existing operational

An authentic “focus on children” is one that recognizes that having three or four inadequate teachers in a row places a child in educational jeopardy and deprives that child of decent life chances.

policy and to the procedural assets provided by previous contracts, the platform for radical, transformational change will be solidly in place. However, a contract is only as good as its implementation. To succeed in rebuilding our school system on that platform, the new superintendent and management team must skillfully and swiftly enact recommended strategies and programs.

Vision for Transformative Change

The explicit policies and practices contained in the BTU–BPS contract exemplify the school system’s priorities. The new contract must put the educational and developmental needs of students first. While recognizing the vital rights and needs of teaching personnel, the contract must put those in a clearly secondary position.

In the 2004–2005 school year, more than 125 teachers received one or more unsatisfactory evaluations; in the 2005–2006 school year, 200 teachers have thus far been so evaluated. Teachers who have been evaluated as unsatisfactory performers should be removed from the school system through fair but expeditious procedures and processes. Although programs to assist unsatisfactory performers are laudatory and humane, they should not be used, wittingly or unwittingly, to keep in the classroom teachers whose poor instruction would disadvantage or harm students. To the credit of BPS management, increased professional development opportunities and coaching have been proposed for inclusion in the new contract. However, if adopted, these interventions should not be employed as

“excuses” for not eliminating ineffective teachers from the school system. An authentic “focus on children” is one that recognizes that having three or four inadequate teachers in a row places a child in educational jeopardy and deprives that child of decent life chances. This is the condition that accounts in large measure for the achievement gap and locks it in place.

The new contract should guarantee that legitimate protections for teachers—including seniority and transfer rights—do not force a principal or headmaster to accept teachers who do not come up to the school’s standards for excellent teaching and do not fit into its whole-school improvement plan. The essential grievance and arbitration machinery should be fairly but expeditiously employed, so that the process is not a disincentive for removing unsatisfactory performers from the classroom.

The goal of the contract should be a predictable and flexible environment, focused on what must be done in the interests of student learning and healthy growth. Teachers must be free, without peer disapproval, to carry out reasonable and exceptional requirements of the educational program. Lessons learned from effective pilot schools should be applied in non-pilot schools. It is essential to understand the ways in which being unfettered by union and School Committee work rules contribute to the success of effective pilot schools. Such knowledge would be a powerful ingredient in the radical transformation of BPS.

Fight for the resources required to have effective hiring, evaluation, and retention systems for teachers, as provided by the contract.



BPS has proposed that the contract should provide the superintendent with full power and authority to correct the inadequacies of all underperforming schools. The superintendent should have the authority to quickly fill, at his or her discretion, all vacant positions in these schools; mandate that teachers participate in an increased number of professional development activities; and extend the school day and/or the school year, if deemed appropriate.

Current school-based management policies and practices should be preserved and strengthened. Effective School Site Councils, personnel committees, and other school-based organizations ensure the accountability essential to effective schooling. BPS managers should make sure that this asset is thoroughly utilized and not squandered.

Recommendations for Change

- Exploit the platform assets provided by the current and new contracts to unleash momentum toward radical, transformational change of the school system.
- Build a top-flight management team capable of implementing the contract based on an ambitious timetable.
- Fight for the resources required to have effective hiring, evaluation, and retention systems for teachers, as provided by the contract.
- Give priority to implementing the new professional development and teacher support programs, such as the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program and a renewed Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) program.
- Guarantee that a new teacher performance evaluation form is fully utilized, with follow-up professional development options actualized.
- In contract implementation, keep the focus on achieving academic success for all Boston students.

- Determine the ultimate number of pilot schools that are advisable in the school system. Learn from the sizable expansion of pilot schools in the New York City Public Schools.
- Looking forward to negotiating a new contract three years hence, review the research that is being compiled by the Boston Municipal Research Bureau on effective contract provisions in other urban school systems. Have a team of managers, teachers, union officials, and parents visit school systems with good contracts to obtain first-hand data that could inform future contract negotiations. This would be a good way to build a more collaborative alliance between BTU leadership and BPS managers.
- Work to eliminate “attachment rights” as an operational practice at BPS.
- Work to establish a reserve pool in which to place teachers in the excess pool who are not likely to receive teaching positions. After one year in the reserve pool, they would be terminated from BPS.

Conclusion

The recommendations in this roadmap report, if vigorously pursued and carried out, will take BPS to its destination: academic success for all students in a high-achieving Boston Public Schools system.

Building the organizational capacity to arrive at this destination is the main challenge facing the next superintendent. Laudatory goals and aspirations turn into empty promises in the absence of fierce internal discipline and teamwork focused on achieving results. A high-performing managerial team, strategically deployed to shape and implement sound organizational policies and innovative practices, is essential to creating and sustaining a new culture at BPS. With the correct alignment of management, School Committee, teachers, parents, community leaders, external funders, and community-based organizations, the essential conditions for transformative change will exist. Community leaders and parents must be in a state of constant mobilization, actively supporting a school-change agenda that they own. If not, the platform for change bequeathed to the city by Superintendent Thomas Payzant will be squandered.

Our Commission is convinced that only a comprehensive, integrated strategy for transformative change, energized by a value-laden vision, will achieve the academic success that our city craves and that all Boston students deserve.

Let us be clear: This report is not about the past, it is about the future. It is not about finger-pointing or casting blame. It is not so much about our grievances as it is about our high aspirations for the education of all our children. This roadmap report is a cry for skilled execution driven by a compelling vision. Therefore, there is no better way to conclude than to restate our vision, articulated in the Introduction:

Every child in the Boston Public Schools will be treated with respect and supported to succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. All students will be enthusiastically engaged in learning. The racial and cultural diversity of students will be seen as a great asset for building a vibrant school community. This diversity will be respected, honored, and celebrated through instructional practices and adult behavior. Understanding the unfortunate legacy of racism in our society, school personnel will do the deep personal work and training to achieve cultural competence. Such knowledge and skills will be viewed as indispensable to understanding the needs and perspectives of students and parents and as necessary for preparation of curriculum and effective instruction.

The educational enterprise will be driven by high quality instruction, high standards for performance, and high expectations for students, all of which will be articulated and demanded by organizational leadership. Teachers and principals will take ownership for the success or failure of their students. Principals and teachers will be given the tools

and support that they need to be successful educators. Research and evaluation data will be used to influence policy decisions and instructional practices.

Each child's family and community will be valued as critical educational partners that make unique contributions to the child's success in school. A predictable, civil, loving, and caring school climate will be pervasive and considered essential for effective learning. Parents will see clear pathways for their children to reach full potential and achieve excellence, and students themselves will follow those pathways. The outside community will be heavily invested in supporting BPS, parents, and students in a powerful transformational process to achieve academic success for all Boston children.

To this great task and great cause, individually and collectively, we pledge our enduring support and sacred honor.

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