



Acceleration Agenda 2009–2014

**A five-year strategic direction
to transform the
Boston Public Schools**

May 2010





The City of Boston

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Boston School Committee

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*Pictured on cover: Reginald Alouidor, BPS Class of 2005;
Northeastern University Class of 2010*

Boston Public Schools

Acceleration Agenda, 2009–2014

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Boston Public Schools

Acceleration Agenda, 2009–2014

O V E R V I E W

Mission

As the birthplace of public education in this nation, the Boston Public Schools is committed to transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools. We partner with the community, families and students to develop within every learner the knowledge, skill, and character to excel in college, career, and life.

Goals

- ▶ Ensure all students achieve **MCAS proficiency**
- ▶ Close **access and achievement gaps**
- ▶ Graduate all students from high school prepared for **college completion and career success**

Academic Targets

- ▶ Reading by the end of Grade 1
- ▶ Reading to learn in Grade 3
- ▶ Skillful, analytical writing in Grades 4-12
- ▶ Algebra 1 in Grade 8
- ▶ English Language Learners acquire academic language mastery and fluency
- ▶ *Significant* academic growth for students with disabilities
- ▶ “On-track” to graduate by the end of Grade 10
- ▶ High school graduation
- ▶ College-ready and success-bound

Key Strategies

- ▶ Strengthen **teaching** and school **leadership**
- ▶ Replicate **success** and **turn around** low-performing schools
- ▶ Deepen partnerships with **parents, students, and the community**
- ▶ Redesign district services for **effectiveness, efficiency, and equity**

Introduction

IN TODAY'S GLOBAL ECONOMY, the demands on our students – and the opportunities before them – are greater than ever before. The high school graduate from Mattapan no longer competes only with graduates from Milton and Miami for college admission or a job. Instead, she also must compete with high school graduates from places like Munich and Mumbai.

To meet the challenges of successfully educating the next generation of workers and leaders, we must embrace bold new approaches to school reform. We cannot be satisfied with “business as usual” if we are truly committed to creating bright futures for all of our students. Where there is success, we must celebrate and replicate. Where we are falling short, we must take swift and decisive action for dramatic improvement.

The community entrusts in its public schools the awesome responsibility of educating and guiding children to become the successful men and women of tomorrow. We take that responsibility very seriously and settle for nothing less than the best for every child who walks through our doors.

In all that we do, we must learn from the past and aspire to a greater future. With the presentation of this five-year roadmap for the Boston Public Schools, let us first recall where we started, take stock of where we are today, and candidly acknowledge and rigorously prepare for the work that lies ahead.

WHERE WE STARTED

The transformation of the Boston Public Schools began in earnest in the early 1990s, with the passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act that brought standards-based education to school districts throughout the Commonwealth. Boston seized the opportunity to launch a new era for the city's public schools, adopting higher learning standards and a shared commitment to establishing a true system of excellent schools. The sustained leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the appointed School Committee, and Superintendents Thomas W. Payzant and Michael G. Contompasis provided the school district with much-needed continuity and stability that led to steady academic progress. The City invested heavily in schools – people, programs, and facilities – to restore public confidence in the Boston Public Schools.

Guided by two five-year reform plans, “Focus On Children,” Boston emphasized improved classroom instruction to raise student achievement. The Dimensions of Effective Teaching (Appendix B) and the Seven Essentials for Whole School Improvement (Appendix C) established citywide expectations for ambitious school reform and outstanding instruction. The district embarked on innovative practices in teaching and learning, expanded early childhood programs, and adopted new governance structures through pilot and

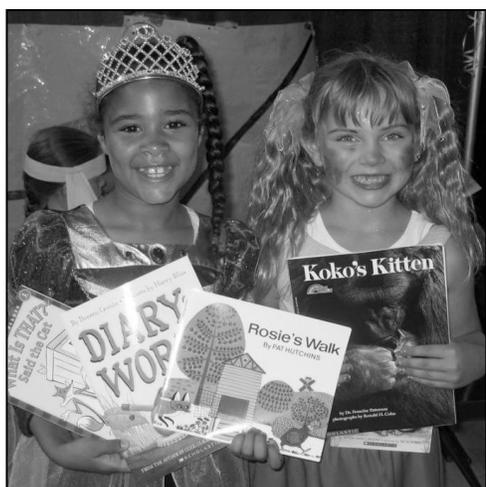
“Today, Boston Public Schools offers the best education possible for *some* of our students. We have the capacity to offer the best education possible for *all* of our students.”

— Superintendent Carol R. Johnson



Horace Mann charter schools. As a result, more students moved from “warning and failing” to “passing” categories on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). These innovative approaches and promising results were nationally recognized in 2006 when, after four years as a finalist, Boston Public Schools received the distinguished Broad Prize for Urban Education as the best city school district in the country.

At the same time, the federal No Child Left Behind law placed education reform at the forefront of the American agenda, with greater expectations for measurement and accountability, and a new sense of urgency to effect significant improvement for students and schools with the lowest performance. Greater attention to student outcomes underscored persistent achievement gaps across race, ethnicity, gender, educational program, and socio-economic background. Despite significant investments in high school reform, dropout rates remained too high, and graduation rates too low. However, Boston had successfully moved from a school district in decline to an emerging system of schools poised to reach the next level of achievement.



With the arrival of a new superintendent in the fall of 2007, Dr. Carol R. Johnson, the district prioritized listening to the voices of the community to chart a course for improvement. During a 100-day “listening tour,” many students, parents, staff, and community members expressed gratitude for the progress made to date, but others asserted that persistent achievement gaps, dropout and graduation rates, and the demands of the future would require new approaches to the challenges facing students and staff.

Dr. Johnson responded to the community feedback and input from teachers, support staff, and experts by launching the Acceleration Agenda, an ambitious plan seeking to prioritize academic achievement, address access and achievement gaps, and improve alignment with operations and finance. An underlying principle included an increased connection with families and engaging a broader group of stakeholders to own the agenda of accelerating learning among *all* students.

The Superintendent reorganized the structure of the district to acknowledge that elementary, middle, and high schools face similar challenges but also may require different approaches and more specialized expertise. By organizing central office supervision and support by level, the district is becoming more focused on the changing needs of children and families at different transition points in their educational development.

The Acceleration Agenda was and continues to be informed by studies commissioned by the district and other community and higher education partners (See Appendix F). These reports document uneven access to high-quality course offerings across the district, and the need for more differentiated responses for students who arrive having had interruption in their schooling experience, having had multiple school transitions, or needing additional time and supports to succeed. The Acceleration Agenda emphasizes that every student must have full access to quality teaching and educational opportunities, and that resources must be distributed equitably to address inequities. This five-year strategic direction integrates these efforts and moves the district toward a multi-year set of aggressive and accountable targets focused on achieving high school graduation and college readiness for all.

Despite encouraging progress, much work remains to be done to achieve our goals. Although we have made extraordinary gains in improving MCAS passing rates over the past decade, too few of our students are proficient. Even though we have narrowed the achievement gap at some levels, stark performance disparities remain among student groups. And while Boston can be proud to have one of the highest college enrollment rates in the country, too few of our students complete college. Only when we directly confront these challenges, commit to addressing them, and hold ourselves and others accountable for results will we overcome them. As a district and as a community, we must not be satisfied until *all* students possess the “knowledge, skill, and confidence to succeed in college, career, and life.”

WHERE WE ARE GOING

This five-year strategic direction lays out the key goals, targets, strategies, and initiatives that will mobilize the Boston Public Schools to achieve our mission. It is motivated by a strong sense of urgency – that every child has only one opportunity to receive a high-quality education. It is informed by ongoing conversations with the communities of our city. And it seeks to take advantage of this unique moment in history, when the environment for education reform is enabling changes that only years ago may have seemed unfeasible, if not impossible.

While the political environment favors reform, the financial environment – a nation emerging from recession, a state facing continued billion dollar revenue shortfalls and uncertain prospects for future growth – requires the district to pursue a reform agenda without anticipating many new resources, and in some cases, fewer resources than have been available in the past. The critical and urgent need to move the academic agenda forward, amid the reality of limited

funds, will require the district to review current investments and expenditures, discontinue some investments, and better align and target our academic priorities with the resources available. This plan recognizes that these aggressive goals will not be achieved overnight or in a single year. Rather, the work will be well-planned and sequenced over a five-year period, 2009 to 2014, with an aligned strategy that connects academic initiatives and fiscal resources.

“Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men – the balance-wheel of the social machinery.”

— *Horace Mann*

Our work must move ahead. In some cases, we will need to make very difficult choices to reallocate resources to where they are needed most. We are seeking partners who will make strategic investments that are catalytic and maximize the impact of our work. Ultimately, we will make use of every resource – human, fiscal, and time – to provide every child in Boston with the best education possible.

Our students and our schools are performing across the full spectrum of achievement levels. Just as we have students at high risk of dropping out, we have students earning Adams Scholarships for scoring advanced and proficient on MCAS. While there are students who need tutoring after school to keep pace with their classmates, there are also students seeking after-school opportunities to practice the violin or excel in robotics. Similarly, we have schools in need of immediate intervention, schools considered some of the finest in the nation, and schools at every point in between. Our work is designed to raise the bar across the board – from those in need of remediation to those performing at the highest levels. This plan is about continuous improvement for *all* schools and *all* students. Everyone has room to grow.

As John Dewey wrote at the turn of the last century, “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children.”

I. Mission

THE LAUNCH OF A NEW FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC DIRECTION for the Boston Public Schools provides a valuable opportunity to revisit and update the school district's mission statement to reflect our values and purpose. While we must continue to "focus on children," putting their needs first and foremost in all of our decision-making, we must also be more explicit about the expected and

promised outcomes of that focus. The mission statement must proudly state the unique strengths of our school system and challenge all of us to reach to new heights.

Therefore, we propose for the consideration of the Boston School Committee and the community the following revised mission statement to serve as our mantra moving forward:

Boston Public Schools Mission Statement

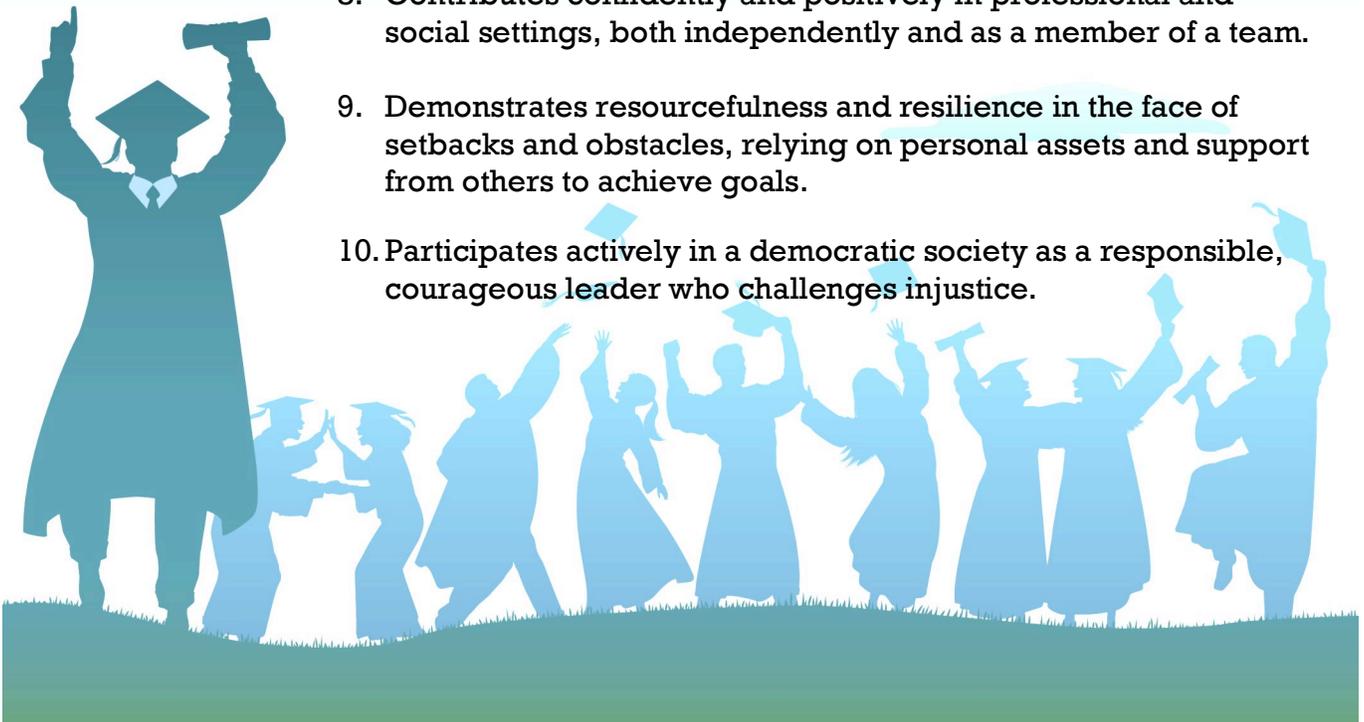
As the birthplace of public education in the nation, the Boston Public Schools is committed to transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools. We partner with families and the community to develop in every student the knowledge, skill, and character to excel in college, career, and life.

In order to work collectively toward this shared mission for our school district, the entire community must also share a vision and commitment to our Boston Public Schools graduates. What are the characteristics we strive to instill in the young men and women who have earned a high school diploma?

We propose a portrait of the BPS graduate upon completion of high school. We believe the children educated in our schools should grow as learners and as individuals through a variety of rich experiences that prepare them to become the scholars, innovators, and leaders of tomorrow.

VISION: **The Boston Public Schools Graduate...**

1. Loves to learn, views the world as a classroom without walls, and thinks critically about the issues within it.
2. Succeeds academically in college-level courses across content areas.
3. Masters verbal and written expression in English, with emerging proficiency in a second language.
4. Uses mathematical skill, scientific inquiry, and state-of-the-art technology to invent new solutions to persistent and unanticipated problems.
5. Exhibits growth, self-discipline, and reflection through innovative expression and artistry.
6. Acknowledges and respects people with diverse backgrounds, histories, and perspectives.
7. Assumes personal responsibility for physical and emotional well-being by making healthy choices.
8. Contributes confidently and positively in professional and social settings, both independently and as a member of a team.
9. Demonstrates resourcefulness and resilience in the face of setbacks and obstacles, relying on personal assets and support from others to achieve goals.
10. Participates actively in a democratic society as a responsible, courageous leader who challenges injustice.



II. Goals

- ▶ **Ensure all students achieve MCAS proficiency**
- ▶ **Close access and achievement gaps**
- ▶ **Graduate all students from high school prepared for college completion and career success**

In order to achieve success, the entire Boston Public Schools community – school and central staff, parents, students, and partners – must work together toward a shared set of overarching goals. The success of each student must define and guide our work every day, reminding us what we seek to accomplish and why. Each of us must remain firmly committed to these goals and understand our particular and unique role in helping to achieve them.

The most important work of the Boston Public Schools takes place in classrooms, where we strive for outstanding teaching and learning so that every child performs at the highest levels and reaches his or her full potential. From pre-school through high school, teachers are at the forefront – educating, challenging, and encouraging our students to acquire new knowledge and skills. All other stakeholders in the district have a responsibility to support classroom instruction – in central offices, on school buses and athletic fields, in dance studios and cafeterias, at home and in the community. Together, we must create the conditions for rigorous learning and student growth. These goals serve as our beacon – the outcomes to which we aspire every day.

“Adult issues in our schools, in the political arena, and throughout our city, must take a back seat to our efforts to develop, educate, and in some cases, rescue the youth of our city.”

— Superintendent Carol R. Johnson

- ▶ **Ensure all students achieve MCAS proficiency**

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is administered to all public school students in Massachusetts. The tests measure performance based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework learning standards and enable the state to report on the performance of individual students, subgroups, schools, and districts. In addition, the MCAS program is used to hold schools and districts accountable for the progress they have made toward the objectives of the No Child Left Behind legislation that all students be proficient in Reading and Mathematics by 2014.

Certainly, MCAS scores are only one measure of success. We know that standardized tests tell only a portion of the story about the complex task of educating all students in every classroom, and taken alone, they paint an incomplete picture. However, MCAS exams remain one of the cornerstones of education reform in Massachusetts and provide valuable information about the state of our schools.

MCAS results play a significant role in the measurement of Adequate Yearly Progress and help determine which schools and which students are making significant gains and which schools and students are in need of improvement. MCAS results are a reminder that accountability requires evidence.

Massachusetts learning standards, and the corresponding MCAS exams to measure them, are among the most rigorous in the country. In order to earn a high school diploma, students who attend public schools in Massachusetts must pass Grade 10 MCAS exams in Math, English, and Science, in addition to meeting district graduation requirements. But to be successful in college, our students must achieve more than *passing*. In fact, to meet the State graduation requirement, students must now demonstrate *proficiency* – through higher MCAS scores or through an Educational Proficiency Plan.

Today, proficiency is the standard by which all students and schools are measured. We must insist that our children have more than a basic knowledge of subject matter; we must expect them to think, apply knowledge in new settings, and learn to express themselves in creative ways. As noted earlier, Boston has made great strides in moving students from warning and failing levels to passing levels. Now we must move all of our students even further, into the proficient and advanced categories on MCAS. Every student in every grade must reach these levels of understanding and performance in the classroom and on the exams.

► Close access and achievement gaps

Like cities across the country, Boston continues to face persistent achievement gaps among different groups of students. We cannot label ourselves a great school district when some students are performing at the highest levels while other students are not. Therefore we must redouble our efforts to prevent and eliminate achievement and access gaps.

The most notable achievement gaps are reflected in performance disparities:

- By **race and ethnicity**: between Black and Latino students and their White and Asian peers;
- By **gender**: between male and female students;
- By **program**: between students with and without disabilities; and
- By **language**: between native English speakers and English Language Learners.

The Boston School Committee adopted an Achievement Gap Policy that guides the work of schools and the district in eliminating performance disparities. We must put this policy into practice systemically and continue to identify and address achievement gaps at all levels – from the classroom to the district as a whole. Our school communities must engage in frank discussions about these gaps and take intentional steps to eliminate them. We must identify and confront the root causes of achievement gaps, always asking ourselves why some students excel when others do not. It is unacceptable to attribute these disparities to the students themselves. Rather, it is our responsibility as adults to set high expectations for every child and ensure that all students have access to rigorous curriculum, effective instruction, and the supports they need to achieve at the proficient and advanced levels, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, educational program or socio-economic background.

Similarly, we have a responsibility to eliminate access gaps. We recognize that some children have access to a full range of high-quality programs and resources, while others do not. The Acceleration

Agenda is designed to grant all students access to opportunities in rigorous academics, arts, athletics, and extra-curricular activities. We must ensure that resources of all kinds – including funding, partnerships, and programs – are distributed equitably throughout the city. Where unevenness exists, we must be intentional in redirecting resources to schools that need them most.

► **Graduate all students from high school prepared for college and career success**

In order to compete in the expanding global economy, find career success, and achieve personal fulfillment, all Boston Public Schools students must graduate well-prepared for the academic and non-academic challenges of life after high school. Today, most jobs in the Boston area require a two-year or four-year college degree – a trend that will only continue in the future. Students who earn a college degree are more likely to pursue a career that unleashes their potential and offers personal and professional fulfillment. College graduates earn almost twice the income of high school graduates over the course of their lives – giving them the power to improve the quality of their own lives and those of their families. Furthermore, America’s preeminence in the world hinges on our ability to educate all students at high levels

For our students to become college graduates, they must first become high school graduates who are well-prepared to succeed in post-secondary studies. We have the great challenge and opportunity to ensure that every child who enters the Boston Public Schools makes continuous progress on the path to earning a high school diploma and is assisted in making a smooth and successful transition to college. Like cities across the country, Boston faces unacceptable dropout and four-year graduation rates. We will work harder and smarter to ensure that every student – especially those at greatest risk of dropping out – receive the supports they need to complete high school and college.

“My math teacher is extremely vibrant. Because of him, I scored advanced on the math MCAS. He uses lively tactics to get his students involved in learning. He always pushes me to do better and tells me I can achieve anything. He would never allow me to fail. He has always believed in me.”

— *Student, Monument High School*

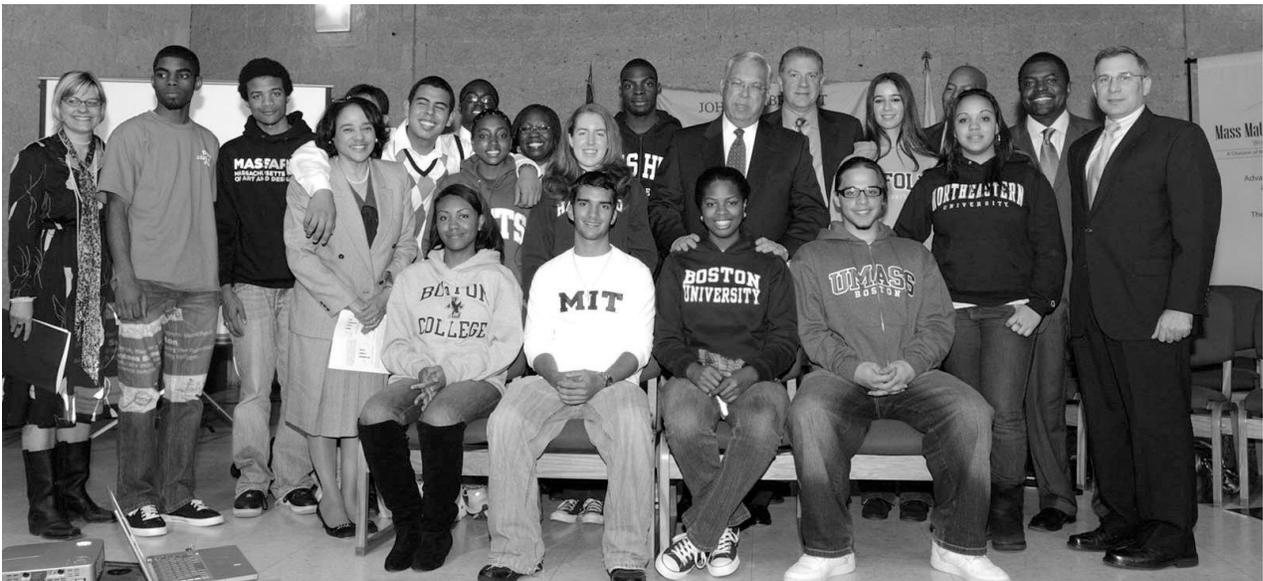
A student’s path to a successful and meaningful career cannot begin in college. Our high schools will expand efforts to introduce students to a broad range of skills and professions and help them begin exploring careers that meet their interests and abilities. In partnership with area businesses, our students engage in learning and mentorship in the workplace, during the school year and in the summer. These experiences enable our students to imagine a future for themselves – as financial analysts, lab technicians, computer programmers, or whatever their aspirations may be. A strong foundation in technical or vocational education that meets industry standards, coupled with rigorous academic preparation, will help some students transition to skill-oriented careers in the trades and other labor markets.

These dreams will only become reality if students first earn a high school diploma. Boston has emerged as a national leader in taking a data-driven approach to dropout prevention and recovery. Several years ago, the district commissioned a landmark study by the Parthenon Group to provide unprecedented data about students who had dropped out, in order to identify trends and devise a series of strategies to reduce the dropout rate. The study revealed important information about students who did not complete high school and highlighted warning signs to identify and support these students before they drop out. The result is “Graduation for All,” a comprehensive strategy for keeping young men and women in school and reclaiming those who have left, putting them back on track.

At the heart of the strategy to graduate all students is a commitment to redesigning every Boston public high school into a rigorous college preparatory school, where every student is challenged and supported

in and out of the classroom. Schools must offer a wide range of academic and enrichment opportunities that help students grow as scholars, artists, leaders, athletes, and citizens. We must see our schools as a bridge, not a barrier, to college success. We must tear down the divide of a two-tiered system that recognizes the talents in some students while leaving others behind. In its place, we must build a system of high schools in which all students are valued, celebrated, and given the tools and resources to excel in their areas of strength. We must also recognize that not every BPS graduate will complete this standard in a traditional four-year sequence. Differentiation in time, course delivery, and customized supports are essential components to receiving a meaningful and useful high school diploma. The graduates of Boston Public Schools will leave our schools ready to shape a brighter future for themselves, for our city, and for the global community they will inherit.

**II
I.**



Recent Boston Public Schools graduates now attending area colleges and universities join officials to announce the expansion of Advanced Placement programs citywide.

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The following table outlines the five-year targets to be achieved by 2014. For additional detail, including annual targets for each school year, see Appendix E.

Academic Goal	Target by 2014
Reading by the end of Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of 1st Graders reading at or above grade level on DIBELS assessment
Reading to learn in Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of 3rd Graders pass MCAS English 85% score proficient or advanced Racial achievement gap fewer than 5 percentage points
Skillful, analytic writing in Grades 4-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 point increase (compared to 2009-10 baseline) in the percentage of students scoring Level 3 or 4 across all content areas
Algebra I in Grade 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of Math 8 students receive a “B” or better on the final exam 40% of non-exam school students take Algebra I in Grade 8
English Language Learners acquire academic language mastery and fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of ELLs improve two or more steps on the MEPA within the same grade span, or one or more steps between grade spans
Significant academic growth for students with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% of special education students demonstrate “high” or “very high” growth on MCAS English and Math
“On-track” to graduate by the end of Grade 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 90% of 10th graders pass Math and ELA MCAS exams required for graduation 75% of 10th graders also will pass Science MCAS exams required for graduation 100% of students not proficient in ELA or Math fulfill an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP)
High school graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual dropout rate 3% or lower 80% four-year graduation rate 70% four-year graduation rate for ELLs and special education students 85% five-year graduation rate 75% five-year graduation rate for ELLs and special education students
College-ready and success-bound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average combined SAT score of 1650 or better 100% of students take at least one college-level course (Advanced Placement, Honors, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment) during high school

IV. Key Strategies

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT THE WORK required to achieve our vision of the knowledgeable, skillful, confident BPS graduate, we know that our efforts must be customized based on the needs of specific schools, classrooms, and students. However, even these highly individualized plans for improvement must be guided by a set of high standards and district-wide strategies for success. These should be shared by the entire system, and should shape our decision-making and priorities, not only from a fiscal perspective, but also in terms of our core beliefs about what is required to create a world-class system of schools. It is easy to point to individual schools of excellence in our community. What we seek is a community where all schools excel.

While our academic goals and targets are clear, and our vision for the college-ready BPS graduate defined, we recognize that we must have a road map to get there. We need a set of strategies that, when executed effectively, will propel every school forward to serve all students.

We have identified four key strategies designed to close achievement gaps and reach proficiency for all. These strategies are truly interdependent – our success in achieving our goals depends on our ability to implement each strategy successfully. If, for example, we have **great teachers and leaders** but offer ineffective **district services**, educators will be distracted from the core work in the classroom by administrative and operational problems. Similarly, if we **replicate successful practices** in schools but do not have **strong partnerships**, students may not have the social and emotional

supports they need to be ready to learn, and academic gains made during the school year may be lost during the summer. Our ability to achieve our goals is only as strong as our ability to work as a team and collectively implement all of the key strategies in an aligned fashion.

We believe the four strategies are powerful levers and include key objectives that delineate our priorities, under which are listed the programs and initiatives that will achieve these objectives and our mission. We know that the need is urgent, and our time is limited. Therefore we have not waited. Some of the initiatives in this document are already well underway. Others will be implemented over the coming months and years, with the help of our community and business partners, our families, and the educators in our schools, who will be asked to change, innovate, and be flexible in ways that are far from business as usual.

While it is critical to have a clear direction and long term plan for improvement, we must also remain responsive to the changing needs of our students and community. Over the next five years, programs and initiatives will evolve. However, we are committed to the belief that in order to have strong schools all across the city, we need the **best teaching and leadership**, an intentional focus on **replicating success and turning around our lowest performing schools**, a commitment to **effectiveness, efficiency, and equity** in all of our district services, and a **true partnership** with all of the stakeholders in our efforts to build a better Boston for our children and our collective futures.

Overview of key strategies

- ▶ Strengthen **teaching** and school **leadership**
 - Emphasize rigorous instruction.
 - Eliminate access and achievement gaps.
 - Use data to improve instruction.
 - Hire, support, and reward only the best people.
 - Replace ineffective teachers and leaders.
 - Provide multiple paths to graduation.

- ▶ Replicate **success** and **turn around** low-performing schools
 - Adopt a district-wide accountability system to ensure the success of all schools.
 - Expand successful schools, programs, and practices.
 - Hold low-performing schools accountable for dramatic improvement.

- ▶ Deepen partnerships with **parents, students** and the **community**
 - Engage families and students.
 - Expand and align community partnerships.
 - Extend learning time.

- ▶ Redesign district services for **effectiveness, efficiency** and **equity**
 - Improve service while reducing costs.
 - Hold central offices accountable for school results.
 - Ensure resource equity.
 - Prepare for the future.

Key strategy: Strengthen teaching and school leadership

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT begins and ends with outstanding classroom teaching. Students must be challenged and inspired every day by master teachers and dedicated paraprofessionals who adapt instruction to the needs of each learner, so that all children reach their full potential – from struggling students in need of additional support to students performing at the most advanced levels in need of additional challenge.

We must ensure that teachers hold students and themselves to high expectations. We are working to prepare teachers and all staff to be culturally competent, and specifically, we are training staff with additional strategies to address the needs of English Language Learners and students with Individualized Education Plans. We will identify teaching practices that offer the highest leverage for learning, and provide teachers with the tools and curricula that will help them prepare our students for the rigor of college work.

“The teacher is the real soldier of democracy. Others can defend it, but only (s)he can make it work.”

— General Omar Bradley

These goals can only be achieved by creating a system that will recruit, retain, and continue to support the strongest educators while replacing those who are ineffective. Evaluations must be

tied to student achievement; excellent teachers and leaders should be rewarded for their transformative work in our schools. We also have an obligation to develop those educators committed to improvement but requiring guidance to go from good to great. We expect to work in partnership with the Boston Teachers Union to create a flexible and responsive system of staffing assignment, use of instructional and professional development time, and school autonomy and accountability that will result in the kind of high performance that is both recognized and rewarded.

In order for teachers and leaders to work together to close achievement gaps and move schools forward, we must make data-driven decisions that put the needs of children before adults. We must provide schools with timely information that allows them to measure student progress on an ongoing basis and respond with appropriate interventions.

The key to school transformation is improved teaching and learning – particularly by strengthening educators’ skills to accelerate students’ academic growth. However, it takes more than great instruction to change the character of a school. Principals, teachers, parents, and students also must focus on the culture and climate of the school community. A truly exemplary school must offer rigorous classroom learning, but it must also create a welcoming environment, with high expectations for students and staff performance and relationships. A deep sense of mutual respect and support must permeate the school. When families and visitors walk through the front door, they will know instantly that this is a school that values children and is truly committed to their personal and academic success.

Programs and initiatives to support key strategy:

Strengthen teaching and school leadership

Emphasize rigorous instruction.

- Dimensions of Effective Teaching
- Cultural Competence Training
- Revamped Professional Development
- Multi-tiered Interventions

Eliminate access and achievement gaps.

- ELL Program Expansion
- Special Education Program Expansion
- Dual Certifications
- Early Childhood Expansion and Accreditation
- Elementary Reading Program
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) College Preparation Program
- Advanced Work Class (AWC)
- Algebra in Grade 8
- College-Level Courses
- On-line learning
- Ten Boys Initiative
- Newcomer Assessment & Counseling Center

Use data to transform instruction.

- Individual Student Profiles (Leading and Lagging Indicators)
- Formative Assessments
- School-Based Data Teams (AI²)
- Instructional Rounds (Classroom Observations)
- MyDATA Student Information System
- MCAS Growth Data (district, school, classroom, student)
- Student Constructive Feedback Survey

Hire, support, and reward only the best people.

- Recruitment and Hiring of a Qualified and Diverse Teaching Force
- Evaluation and Compensation Linked to Student Achievement
- Retention of the Strongest Teachers
- Principal Development Program

Replace ineffective teachers and leaders.

- Termination of Underperforming Staff
- Expedited Dispute Resolution

Provide multiple paths to graduation.

- Credit Recovery
- Re-Engagement Center
- Newcomers Academy
- Alternative / GED Programs

Emphasize rigorous instruction.

- **Dimensions of Effective Teaching** – The district adopted a set of skills, characteristics, and behaviors that describe effective educators who propel students to achieve at high levels (see Appendix B). These principles of instruction, beginning with high expectations for all students, will not just live in the teacher evaluation document, but will inform and shape the professional development of our teachers across all levels and content areas.
- **Cultural Competence Training** – BPS will implement a “train the trainer” model to bring cultural proficiency tools and strategies to every school, through both school-based and external resources. We will provide all schools with professional development and guidance to identify achievement gaps and assess beliefs and attitudes in order to implement strategies to eliminate these gaps. We will work more intensively with a select group of schools with persistently large performance disparities.
- **Revamped Professional Development** – Given the unique challenges each school faces and the unique strengths and development needs each teacher brings, it is critical that professional development is of high quality, results-oriented, and customized to individual schools and teachers. A cross-functional task force of Boston Public Schools staff is examining the best ways to align and integrate professional development offerings to improve teacher effectiveness and make significant gains in student achievement.
- **Multi-tiered Interventions** – BPS will establish a Response to Intervention (RTI) service delivery model in all schools, which uses a multi-tiered approach to literacy instruction, coupled with a problem-solving philosophy. This model will provide safety nets for struggling readers and writers, establish support for students with behavior-related issues (PBIS), and significantly reduce the number of students referred to special education.

SPOTLIGHT: Teacher Quality

Outstanding classroom instruction is at the core of student and school improvement. Our children will achieve success only if they are educated by first-class teachers with the commitment, skill and beliefs to help every child reach his or her full potential.

Therefore, in order to ensure that our children are taught by the very best, we must prioritize the recruitment, hiring, and development of top-notch teachers – and have both the means and the will to evaluate and remove ineffective teachers.

BPS has earned national recognition for its investments in human capital, particularly programs to help educators hone the skills needed to advance their careers. To accelerate progress, we must reassess and strengthen programs to attract and develop the best teachers and leaders. We will expand efforts to recruit, hire and retain a more diverse workforce that reflects the population of the students we serve, particularly teachers of color. We must also groom teachers from within our own ranks, by strengthening programs to help our paraprofessionals, high school students, and others to become the great teachers of tomorrow.

Above all, we cannot settle for mediocre instruction in any classroom. Teachers who cannot improve students' academic growth must be properly evaluated and dismissed. We will work with the teachers' union and others to ensure that only the most skilled and accomplished teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of educating our children.

We will continue to use Boston Teacher Residency (BTR), Teach for America, and other innovative teacher quality research and development programs, and work with institutions of higher education to improve the quality of teacher preparation programs. We will also negotiate contracts with the Boston Teachers Union to revisit teacher performance compensation and evaluation with a greater emphasis on student outcomes. Excellent teachers should be rewarded for improving their students' academic performance, teachers with significant potential should be nurtured, and teachers whose students fail to make gains must be held accountable for those results.

Eliminate access and achievement gaps.

- **English Language Learners Program Expansion** – BPS will develop, create, and sustain new and existing research-based, high-quality programs that address the needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) and Special Education students. For ELLs, these include Sheltered English Instruction – Language Specific, Sheltered English Instruction (SEI), Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), and Two-Way Bilingual, or “dual immersion” programs. The School Committee’s ELL Task Force will help guide this transformational work, convening regularly and providing quarterly reports to help accelerate the achievement of students learning English. We have embarked upon a national search for the first Assistant Superintendent for Special Education. Informed by the recommendations of the Council of the Great City Schools review, the new leader will expand efforts to ensure all students with disabilities perform at higher levels.
- **Restructuring Special Education and Student Services** - After conducting a national search, we have hired the first Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Student Services. Informed by the recommendations of the Council of the Great City Schools review, the new leader will expand efforts to ensure all students with disabilities achieve at higher levels. Starting in September 2010 and continuing into the future, we will strengthen the continuum of settings and array of services for all students, expand the availability of inclusive settings and services for students with disabilities, improve and increase the options for students on the autism spectrum, and develop more effective approaches to transition planning and service delivery.
- **Dual Certifications** – BPS will increase the number of teachers who are dual certified in their content area and Special Education or English as a Second Language (ESL) through new teacher hiring, SPED and ESL Pathways Programs, and other professional development opportunities, with the goal of 80% of our teachers being certified in SPED or ESL by 2014.
- **Early Childhood Expansion and Accreditation** – Boston’s early childhood programs are among the best in the country. They are content-rich in science, literacy, arts and math. Over the past five years, BPS has expanded to serve more than 2,500 children in pre-kindergarten classrooms, with demand increasing every year. BPS will continue to strengthen and expand programs, particularly full-day K1 classrooms for four-year-olds. Seven BPS elementary schools have earned accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), affirming that these programs offer high-quality, state-of-the-art education to help get children off to a successful start. Mayor Menino and Superintendent Johnson have established a goal of every Boston elementary school achieving this distinction within 10 years.
- **Elementary Reading Program** – To ensure a consistent, rigorous program of study that prepares all students to read and write proficiently, BPS has instituted professional development along with Pearson’s *Reading Street*, a district-wide reading program for students in kindergarten through grade 5. Additional materials (*Sidewalks*) are designed to support struggling readers.
- **Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)** – BPS continues to train 4th, 5th, and 6th grade teachers to implement the AVID elementary program, which is a nationally-recognized curriculum designed to prepare “students in the middle” for college through skill-building and college exposure.



- **Advanced Work Class (AWC)** – So that every qualified student will have access to an accelerated curriculum in the intermediate and middle grades, BPS will review our AWC offerings, and strategically expand or revamp programs to meet the demand across the city.
- **Algebra in Grade 8** – To ensure that our students are prepared for college level math by graduation, it is critical that we increase the number of Grade 8 students taking and passing Algebra 1. While eighth grade Algebra has traditionally been a course for exam school students, Algebra 1 will be a standard course at every middle and K-8 school by 2014.
- **College-Level Courses in High School** – We know that students who are exposed to college level work in high school are more successful when they graduate. This is why we have set the target that 100% of our high school students take at least one Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Honors, or Dual Enrollment course before completing Grade 12. BPS has received a \$2.4 million federal grant to expand AP access and increase achievement in these courses.
- **Online Learning** – In our global society, it is imperative that every student develops the ability to access and critically evaluate information with a mastery of tools and skills that allow for 21st century communication, collaboration, and learning. Online learning provides opportunities for students to engage actively with rigorous content, extending learning beyond the traditional classroom. In an online experience, students interact with the teacher and one another in a more collaborative way, affording students control

over their learning and empowering them to set the pace at which they progress through their education. BPS has been awarded a two-year federal grant through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARR) to support online learning for high schools students. The grant enables BPS teachers to design core content course curricula and deliver instruction in a student-driven online learning management system.

- **Ten Boys Initiative** – Fifty Boston Public Schools are taking an innovative new approach to closing the achievement gap with programs specifically geared to Black and Latino boys. The schools have created “Ten Boys” clubs, primarily comprised of boys of color who performed in the “needs improvement” category on the MCAS exams last year, in an effort to help them move to the “proficient” or “advanced” levels on the state tests and to help them reach their potential through mentoring and collaboration. The program is designed to provide the boys with additional support to support their academic, social, and emotional growth into successful young men.
- **Newcomer Assessment & Counseling Center** – The redesigned center ensures that when a family whose home language is not English registers with the Boston Public Schools, the child is tested and the family provided counseling about appropriate program and placement options. Multilingual staff are trained to assess students, K2 through high school, in reading, writing, listening and speaking, and help families understand the school choices to meet their children’s academic and linguistic needs.

Hire, support, and reward only the best people.

- **Recruitment and Preparation of a Qualified and Diverse Teaching Force** – See Spotlight on page 16.
- **Evaluation and Compensation Linked to Student Achievement** – Rewards should be based on results, and BPS seeks to revise the

evaluation process and compensation structure for school-based and central office staff to focus on performance and outcomes. This includes a rigorous, data-driven review for teachers being considered for tenure, which is a critical gateway into a BPS teaching career.

- **Retention of the Strongest Teachers** – While the Boston Teacher Residency remains a nationally acclaimed, innovative model of in-house teacher development for those entering the profession, we will expand opportunities for “second-stage teachers” to further elevate their craft, creating a cadre of master teachers in the district.
- **Principal Development Program** – For the past several years, the Boston Principal Fellowship has served as our primary model to identify and train the future leaders of our

schools. In partnership with the Springfield Public Schools and the Wallace Foundation, the district established new leadership standards. With these standards, coupled with the best practices from the existing program, we will create a redesigned intensive learning experience for beginning and veteran principals and headmasters, in order to equip our schools with the transformational leadership required to develop the intensive team improvement work around instruction, as well as school climate and culture.

Replace ineffective teachers and leader

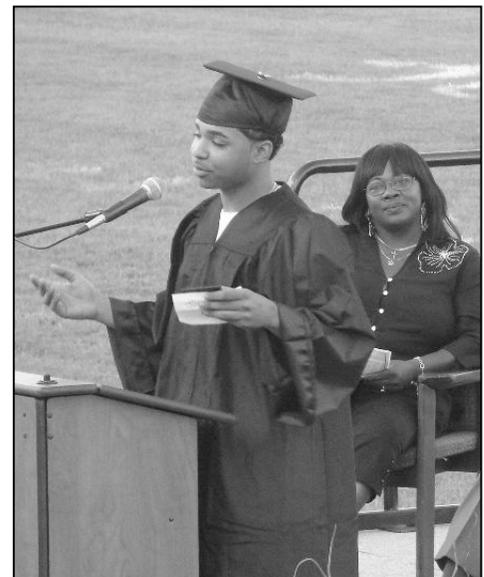
- **Termination of Underperforming Staff** – In our urgent effort to accelerate student achievement, we must ensure that the most qualified adults are providing services to our students. BPS will work with the Boston Teachers Union to redesign the teacher performance review process. We also will provide principals with the necessary intensive assistance required as they conduct evaluations of teachers who are not generating significant student achievement in their classrooms. Principals and central office staff will be held to the highest standards, through school

performance reviews and other measures such as the balanced scorecard. A pattern of underperformance will result in staff dismissal.

- **Expedited Dispute Resolutions** – Labor disputes can often drag on over time, becoming costly and pulling time, resources and attention away from the teaching and learning in our schools. BPS will work with the BTU to develop an expedited dispute resolution process that will seek to settle these matters in a fair, timely, cost-effective manner for everyone.

Provide multiple paths to graduation.

- **Credit Recovery** – A thorough study of the BPS dropout challenge confirmed that many of the students who dropped out of high school were just a few course credits short of graduation. BPS has instituted a robust credit recovery program, where students can take courses for credit online, allowing them to make up additional classes during the school year and summer. This program, in combination with night school courses and Summer Review courses, have helped us achieve our lowest dropout rate in two decades. Two years ago, the district instituted a new Summer Commencement Ceremony, which provides students and their families the opportunity to celebrate high school completion in August. We will request that the State offer MCAS retests to students in grades 11 and 12 in the summer. We will also request that the State continue to add administrations of ELA, Math, and Science MCAS exams so that students have more opportunities to fulfill graduation requirements.



- **Re-Engagement Center** – As we engage in the work of reclaiming our students who have dropped out of our schools, we must provide them with personalized supports for a successful transition. The new Re-Engagement Center allows students to make up classes, work with specialists who will find the best educational match for their unique circumstances, and customize support for them until they earn their high school diploma. In its first year, the center served more than 500 students.
- **Newcomers Academy** – To address the low graduation rate for English Language Learners, BPS created Newcomers Academy, a transition program for students ages 14-18 who recently arrived to the United States with limited English proficiency. The program provides short-term academic, linguistic, and social support to prepare students for successful entry to a diploma-granting high school. This

program, combined with Boston International High School and other ELL supports, provide the needed safety net for late arriving English Language Learners with interruptions in their education.

- **Alternative/GED Programs** – Alternative schools and programs are an important component in the system of supports for dropouts and “off-track” youth. These programs exist both within the district and with community partners who serve our students. The district will conduct School Quality Reviews (SQRs), reconfigure, and realign the network of alternative education and GED providers – both BPS and community-based – to the recommendations from the Parthenon Study, which suggests that the district should move towards an Educational Options Model that ensures high quality educational settings for all students.

Use data to transform instruction.

- **Individual Student Profiles (Leading and Lagging Indicators)** – Every school is provided with a report containing profiles of its new incoming students. Summary information on key “leading and lagging” indicators includes demographic characteristics, engagement in school, learning outcomes in core subjects, MCAS performance, and history of off-track status since Grade 6. The report allows school leaders and teachers to proactively address the needs of individual students who are at greater risk of dropping out and may need extra support from the moment that they arrive at school.
- **Formative Assessments** – BPS launched formative assessments for students in Grades 3-12 to provide useful data to teachers, school leaders, and staff in order to improve instruction. Every six weeks, teachers will use these formative assessments to assess student progress, diagnose areas of difficulty, and identify students not predicted to pass upcoming MCAS exams. Teachers will use

this data to design targeted, appropriate instructional strategies.

- **School-Based Data Teams (AI²)** – A joint initiative of BPS, Boston Plan for Excellence, and Boston Teacher Residency, with funding from the Carnegie Corporation, Accelerating Improvement through Inquiry (AI²) aims to accelerate gains in student learning while building the capacity of teacher leaders and administrators to systematically lead school improvement efforts. School teams track each student’s progress toward graduation using a structured inquiry method to identify and refine strategies that improve student outcomes.
- **Instructional Rounds** – Inspired by medical rounds, this model for educators has emerged from Harvard University’s Public Education Leadership Project with Dr. Richard Elmore. All BPS Academic Superintendents and principals are beginning to use this model for assessing performance in classrooms, diagnosing instructional and school climate

problems, and aligning data elements to guide interventions.

- **MyDATA Student Information System** – Timely and accurate data are the backbone of the district’s accountability strategy. BPS will launch a new student information system called MyDATA, a comprehensive suite of tools that provides cohesiveness among key educational stakeholders such as school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and our community partners to ensure and improve student success.
- **MCAS Growth Data** – The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released the first year of growth data this past fall, which measures the rate of improvement for individual students as compared to their peers with similar academic history, from one year of MCAS administration to the next. This allows us to

assess how fast we are accelerating student progress at the district, school, classroom, and single student level, and analyze the factors that contribute to very high growth. The new measure also provides a more nuanced assessment of school progress, given that some schools performing at low levels may demonstrate considerable growth.

- **Student Constructive Feedback Survey** – The Boston Student Advisory Council presented a proposal to the School Committee that would enable students to complete a survey twice per year to provide teachers with “constructive feedback” on their classroom practices. The tool would be used not for evaluation purposes but to give teachers robust information about students’ own experiences in class so teachers may reflect upon and improve their practice. In May 2010, the Boston School Committee approved this proposal.

Key strategy: Replicate success and turn around low-performing schools

ALTHOUGH THE SPECIFIC INTERESTS and needs of each family may vary, all families are alike in their desire for outstanding schools. In every community, the people of Boston have articulated their urgent need for more high-quality options. Boston Public Schools offers access to award-winning, nationally-recognized schools whose results are heralded and whose practices are researched and shared across the country. Our families demand – and every student deserves – nothing less than the best we have to offer.

A strong accountability system is essential to ensuring that every school provides students with the best education possible. We have developed a new accountability framework to ensure that each school receives the supports and interventions it needs to accelerate progress. New school progress reports will equip parents and community partners with the information they need to support school improvement and hold staff accountable.

The accountability system also shines a spotlight on successful schools, programs, and practices that are advancing students to higher levels of performance and academic achievement. Where there are schools that have proven successful through improved outcomes, we will continue to expand capacity so that more students can benefit. Where successful programs have increased student achievement elsewhere, such as International Baccalaureate, we will offer new opportunities and expand access. And where teachers generate outstanding results, we will identify, document, and replicate their promising practices.

While the accountability system highlights best practices, it also focuses attention on areas of underperformance. When schools don't educate students well or meet the high expectations of our community, we must work to improve the quality of those schools. In schools that require substantial improvements, such as the Commonwealth designated "Level 4" turnaround schools, we must take swift action to put them on a new path to excellence. In extreme cases, schools that are deemed unable to make the fundamental changes necessary for improvement may not reopen in their current form. Instead, the existing program would be replaced by one with a proven record of success in order to meet the needs of students and families in that building.

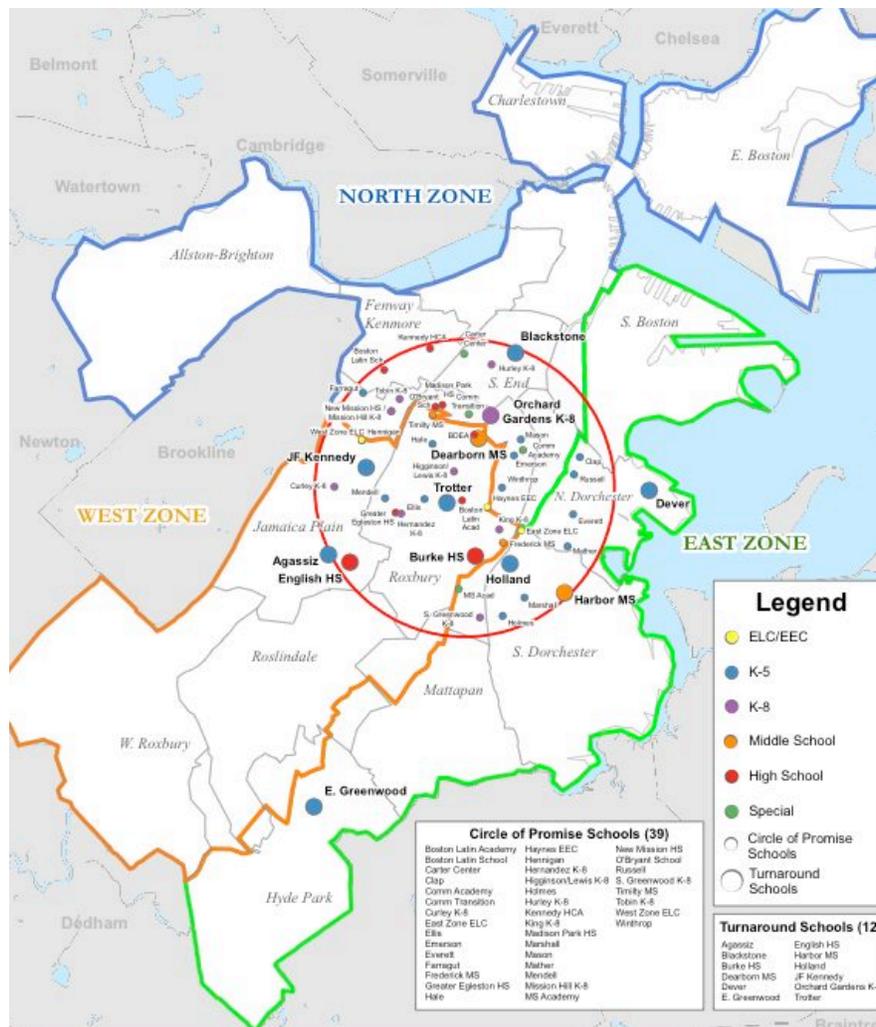
Expanding what works and significantly altering what doesn't require innovative approaches that challenge the status quo. The new education reform law passed by the Massachusetts legislature in January 2010 provides us the ability to create at least four Horace Mann in-district charter schools. These new schools will surely replicate best practices from our portfolio of successful programs, but they also allow us to establish new methods of reaching excellence. For Level 4 schools, we must take dramatically different approaches to turning around underperformance through innovative use of time, resources, and human capital.

The accountability system is built on the premise that every school and every child – from the most struggling to the most advanced – has the potential to improve. As a district, we must put the structures and innovative practices in place to build a culture of accountability across all schools.

The “Circle of Promise”

There are highly chosen, successful schools in every neighborhood of the city. However, when we identify groups of schools in greatest need of improvement, we cannot overlook a disproportionate representation of struggling schools in particular areas – most notably the center of the city, including Roxbury, North Dorchester, and sections of Jamaica Plain and the South End. That is not to suggest that all of the schools in this area are underperforming; in fact, some of the most successful and sought-after schools in Boston are in these communities. However, given the higher concentration of low-performing schools, we must take a strategic approach to address disparities in these communities.

We are referring to this area of high need and even higher potential as the “**Circle of Promise.**” The students and families in these communities are often faced with challenges that extend beyond the classroom and require the collective support of our entire community. We envision a community of stakeholders creating a circle of support around these families and students that is connected to schools, but also addresses the broader array of needs that become barriers to student success. We will need our faith-based, business, and non-profit partners to concentrate strategic resources and time in support of the schools, students, and families within this circle. We must do all that we can to ensure that the promise that this community and its children hold is fully realized.



Programs and initiatives to support key strategy:

Replicate success and turn around low-performing schools

Adopt a district-wide accountability system to ensure the success of all schools.

- School Performance Index
- School Supports and Interventions Framework
- School Progress Reports

Expand successful programs and practices.

- Pathways to Excellence
- School Autonomies
- International Baccalaureate and Montessori
- Teacher Leaders and Teams
- School Exemplars
- Revamped Professional Development

Hold low-performing schools accountable for dramatic improvement.

- High Expectations for Immediate Results
- Timely, Targeted Use of New Legislative Flexibilities
- Intensive Monitoring, Support, and Intervention
- Serious Consequences for Failure to Meet Targets

Adopt a district-wide accountability system to ensure the success of all schools.

- **School Performance Index** – The Office of Accountability is developing a sophisticated tool that will enable the district to measure school performance more accurately. Factors to be considered include student absolute performance, student growth, the quality of the school climate, and the number of families that choose a school.
- **School Supports and Interventions Framework** – Boston Public Schools seeks to ensure that all schools are on a path of continuous improvement. Based on the results of the performance index, the Office of Accountability is developing a framework to ensure that each school receives appropriate

supports and interventions. This framework will enable the district to provide a transparent and equitable means of accelerating school progress.

- **School Progress Reports** – In the fall of 2010, Boston Public Schools will release a new School Progress Report, aligned to the district targets, that publicly reports school results and provides families and community groups with the meaningful information they need to understand their school's performance. This report will empower families to be more informed and engaged in school improvement efforts.

Expand successful programs and practices.

- **Pathways to Excellence** – See Spotlight on page 25.
- **School Autonomies** – Pilot schools were designed to serve as laboratories of innovation from which much could be learned district wide. Our schools with increased flexibility around staffing, governance, budget, scheduling, and curriculum will be held to strong results, and will be expected to share their innovative practices with schools throughout the district. In cases where increased autonomy at the school level would provide the best results for our students, we will expand the network of pilot schools, Discovery schools, and Horace Mann in-district charters.
- **International Baccalaureate and Montessori** – While Boston is known across the country as an innovator in education, we continue to look for programs that have demonstrated extraordinary success. We will adopt some of these nationally and internationally recognized programs in our schools, beginning with the Montessori program in the East Boston Early Education Center and the International Baccalaureate program at the Quincy Upper School and Snowden International High School.

- **Teacher Leaders and Teams** – From MCAS and Advanced Placement performance data to National Board Certification to nominations from inspired students, there is quantitative and qualitative data to identify the expert practitioners who can serve as an incredible resource in our design and delivery of professional development for all teachers. It is imperative that we build structured opportunities for these exemplary teacher leaders to open their classrooms and model their practice to other teachers. We also know that in our highest performing schools, educators work together as a collective team to learn from one another and address students' needs.
- **School Exemplars** – From internal measures and accolades such as school climate survey data and EdVestors' School on the Move Prize to external assessments such as the Gaston Institute's study and Harvard/Boston University's data on Special Education, we have a wide array of schools in our district whose programs can serve as models for replication. We must formalize relationships among school leaders to learn best practices from other principals.

Hold low-performing schools accountable for dramatic improvement.

- **High Expectations for Immediate Results** – After an initial diagnostic assessment, each school identified as a turnaround school is expected to demonstrate gains of 10 points or more on its English Language Arts or Math MCAS Composite Performance Index – a measure that shows the extent to which students are progressing toward proficiency.
- **Timely, Targeted Use of New Legislative Flexibilities** – In January 2010, the Massachusetts legislature passed An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap, a historic education reform law that provides Boston Public Schools with additional tools to turn around its lowest performing schools. Boston is the only district in the state to utilize the expedited turnaround process that allows the district to make changes in school staff, programs, and schedules to accelerate student achievement.
- **Intensive Monitoring, Support, and Intervention** – The district will provide each school with supports and interventions that are proven to turn around low-performing schools. Each school will receive immediate investments that provide for additional instructional time, targeted content support for teachers, and more. Central office staff will partner with school leadership to monitor school progress, identify challenges, and adopt plans to maximize opportunities for each school to meet its performance targets.

Serious Consequences for Failure to Meet Targets – Failure to meet the performance targets requires accountability. Each school identified as a turnaround school that does not meet its performance target by 2012 or earlier will be reconstituted, including possible replacement of all staff, including the principal and teachers, with new staff.

SPOTLIGHT:

“Pathways to Excellence”

In the fall of 2008, Superintendent Johnson presented to the School Committee and the community an ambitious plan to expand, close, consolidate, relocate, and create schools. The proposals were designed to replace ineffective schools with higher performing programs proven to meet the needs of students and families, while at the same time, making better use of district resources during a time of unprecedented fiscal challenges.

Elements of the “Pathways to Excellence” plan are now in place, with new and improved programs opened in September 2009. The reorganization included the creation of seven new or expanded kindergarten-through-grade-8 (K-8) programs, which offer families greater continuity between the elementary and middle grades. The district also created more seats in innovative pilot schools, with three new schools and the expansion of two others.

These initiatives helped set the stage for the next phase of work to transform the district’s underperforming schools into thriving learning communities. For example, two middle schools that consistently failed to make academic progress – the Wilson in Dorchester and the Lewenberg in Mattapan – have been replaced by a new TechBoston Academy Lower School and the Young Achievers K-8 Pilot Math & Science School, respectively.

Additional components of the “Pathways to Excellence” proposal will be reviewed over the coming year as part of a federally-funded study of student assignment.

In these and other turnaround schools across the city, BPS families now have greater access to excellence for their children.

Key strategy: Deepen partnerships with parents, students, and the community

SCHOOLS ALONE CANNOT ENSURE that every child achieves academic success and personal well-being. Parents and families remain our most important partners. Therefore, educators must do everything possible to develop strong, sustained relationships with families and key partners to challenge, engage, and support students in and out of school. We must forge robust home-school connections with ongoing communication among parents, teachers, principals, other adults, and students themselves, focused on academic improvement. Families must have a clear understanding of expectations for teaching and learning, as well as an active role in school decision-making, particularly through School Site and Parent Councils.



Michael Davis (East Boston High School Class of 2010, Student Representative on the Boston School Committee) with Mayor Thomas M. Menino.

Similarly, we must ensure that students have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives and their learning. At the school and district level, students must have a place at the table to express their ideas, concerns, questions, and aspirations. They know better than anyone what works and

what does not work to keep students in school, engaged, and on track to success.

Our students also must understand the effort and hard work necessary to graduate college-ready. Adults are not always able to reach the students most disaffected in our schools. Creating and sustaining a peer culture that seeks and is committed to excellence requires a peer culture that values education. Our best hope of creating that culture lies in the hands of student leaders whom we develop to be our best and most convincing translators to those who may otherwise not see education as in their long-term best interest.

We must tap into the rich resources in Boston – the world-class colleges and universities, health care providers, cultural institutions, non-profits, community based organizations, and businesses large and small – to expand access to high-quality programs that address students’ academic, social, and emotional needs and help students to see the connection between school work and career possibilities. We must also better acknowledge and appreciate the service of volunteers who give their time and expertise to assist our teachers and mentor our students.

And we must rethink our use of time. The current traditional school day is not sufficient to achieve our ambitious goals. We must expand learning time – and change the way we use the school day – to help students advance to higher levels and afford teachers time to have the collegial conversations that enhance teamwork and shared accountability. We cannot increase time without the joint efforts of our community partners. Together, we will create a strong system of supports that help equip all of our students for success in college, career, and life.

Programs and initiatives to support key strategy:

Deepen partnerships with parents, students, and the community

Engage families and students.

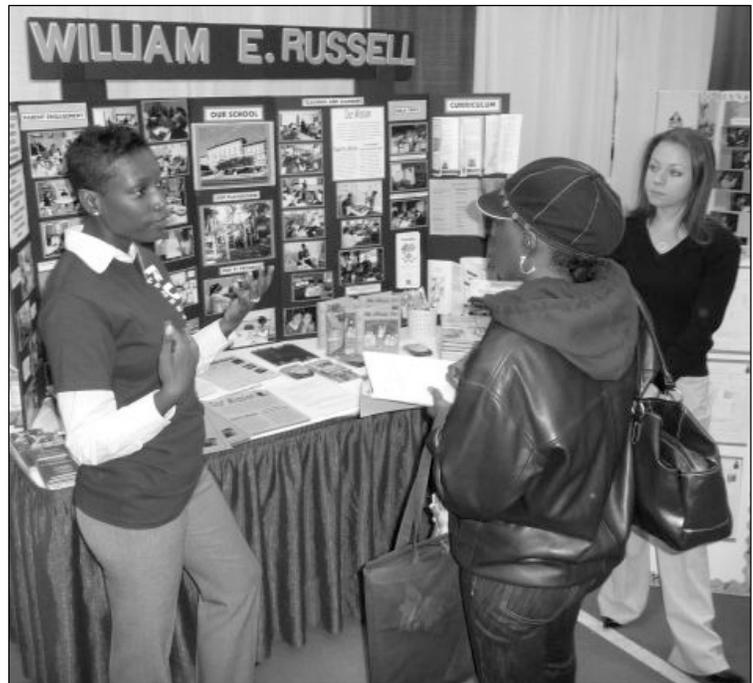
- Parent University
- Student Leadership and Peer Culture
- Whole School Improvement Plans
- Family-Friendly Schools Certification
- Family and Community Outreach
- School Choice

Expand and align community partnerships.

- Community Partnership Coordination
- Institutional Advancement
- Arts Expansion
- Athletics and Enrichment
- Student Health and Wellness
- Thrive in Five
- Higher Education Partnerships
- Career Explorations

Extend learning time.

- Extended Day
- Community Learning Initiative



Engage families and students.

- **Parent University** – See Spotlight on this page.
- **Student Leadership and Peer Culture** – All high schools are expected to have an active system of student governance that empowers students to play an active role in decision-making at their schools. Two students from each school serve on the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC), the vehicle for student leadership and voice at the district level. These student engagement systems are being expanded to middle schools, so that younger students can develop leadership capabilities and contribute to school improvement efforts. In addition to these formal mechanisms for engaging student leaders, schools also must adopt ongoing means of ensuring student voice is encouraged, heard, and addressed both in decision making and in classroom instruction.
- **Whole School Improvement Plans (WSIP)** – Every school has a Family and Student Engagement plan embedded into its WSIP, the school-based strategic plan for improvement, based on student data and input from staff and the community. The plans must emphasize and hold school communities accountable for meaningful parent involvement, particularly in supporting the instructional needs of children.
- **Family-Friendly Schools Certification** – BPS will identify “Family-Friendly Schools” that have exemplary family engagement practices linked to student learning. Using the BPS Family Engagement Standards rubric and feedback from school climate surveys, schools will assess their family engagement practice, plan programs, and implement successful strategies to improve their efforts. Schools with exemplary practices in engaging families will be used as models for other schools.
- **Family and Community Outreach** – The district will continue to strengthen and expand communication with families about policies and procedures, as well as the major issues, challenges, and opportunities in the Boston Public Schools. BPS will find new ways to seek input and support from families, including developing a diverse cadre of parents to serve as advisors and ambassadors on critical issues.
- **School Choice** – The Office of Welcome Services was created in December 2008 to support Boston families with the information they need to choose, enroll, and transition successfully at all grade levels. Working in partnership with Enrollment Services and Family and Student Engagement, the district launched Middle O!, a summer celebratory event to support families as students move into middle school. Principals and counselors now engage in district-wide professional development sessions so that they can best support their students around middle and high school options. This year, we will provide every eighth grade student with a school choice manual and host a Freshman Forum in June to prepare students for high school.

SPOTLIGHT: Parent University

In the fall of 2009, BPS launched Parent University, a year-long training and education program to help Boston parents support their children’s personal and academic growth. The program offers parents and other caregivers a free series of workshops, including several full-day Saturday sessions, to become more active partners in teaching and learning.

Funded in part through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), Parent University is designed to help families increase their understanding of:

- how children learn and develop;
- what their children should be learning;
- how to help their children get what they need to succeed; and
- how to bring other parents together to work for school improvement.

Participants who earn a minimum number of credits participate in a graduation ceremony for Parent University at the end of the year.



Expand and align community partnerships.

- **Community Partnerships Coordination** – BPS is fortunate to have strong partnerships with a wide range of local organizations at the school and district level. Partners from business, arts and culture, higher education, health and human services, volunteer organizations, and other sectors provide immeasurable support to students in and out of the classroom, during and after the school day. The adoption of this five-year strategic direction presents a valuable opportunity to conduct a comprehensive inventory of partnerships and develop strategies to ensure full alignment with the goals and priorities of the Boston Public Schools. Our partners have sometimes found it difficult to connect with district priorities in a systematic way. We must establish a central point of contact for communicating with our partners, harnessing resources, and ensuring maximum impact for children. We must be sure to hold accountable those who operate before- and after-school programs in our schools, to ensure that student learning and enrichment opportunities are equitably distributed throughout the city.
- **Institutional Advancement** – The district secured external resources to support the establishment of the Institutional Advancement Office to align and enhance our development and fundraising efforts. This newly established office will direct and expand the district’s fundraising and serve as the liaison between many of the external partners and district priorities.
- **Arts Expansion** – BPS, in partnership with EdVestors, is working to expand students’ access to high-quality experiences in arts and music through a \$2.5 million fundraising effort and strategic implementation plan. The Wallace Foundation awarded an additional \$750,000 to enable the BPS to develop the long-term plan necessary to achieve the goal of all students in kindergarten through Grade 8 receiving arts instruction at least once weekly throughout the school year.
- **Athletics and Enrichment** – BPS has partnered with the Mayor’s Office and Suffolk Construction’s Red & Blue Foundation to create the Boston Scholar Athlete program, an initiative that aims to raise \$7.5 million in funding and equipment to link academics and athletics, and establish or improve the quality of high school men’s and women’s sports teams through 2012. Additional fundraising of \$3 million per year thereafter will help establish training programs for all coaches, and implement tutoring and mentoring programs for all athletes. The Play Ball! Foundation has partnered with our middle schools to create the first Middle School Football League, with plans to expand the program in the years ahead. Athletics remain a powerful tool for engaging students in constructive after-school activities. Additional opportunities in urban debate, science and technology exploration, and the arts offer students a broad range of extra-curricular activities.
- **Student Health and Wellness** – Family and community partners also have a valuable role to play in promoting the health and wellness of our students. As we strive to prevent childhood obesity and ensure that our children understand the importance of health, nutrition, and exercise, we rely on parents and other partners in the community to help students make healthy choices in and out of school. Moreover, we seek to strengthen and expand relationships with the Boston Public Health Commission and health providers, including mental health professionals, to provide additional support to students with particular social and emotional issues that interfere with their education. We must continue to build on Boston Connects and other models that establish ongoing relationships between school staff and community providers to address the full range of students’ academic and non-academic needs.

“After raising three children in Boston Public Schools, I finally feel like the district is living up to being a real team player. I finally feel heard and valued, and most of all, my family feels part of the process of change – for better schools, families, and communities.”

— *BPS Parent*

- **Thrive in Five** – A new city initiative led by Mayor Menino and the United Way helps ensure that all children arrive at school ready to learn. This comprehensive approach focuses on strengthening programs across the city that support families and children from birth to age five. BPS plays an active leadership role in helping families and communities promote, define, and measure school readiness, and serves more than 2,000 students ages three and four through early childhood programs in six early education centers and many elementary and K-8 schools.
- **Higher Education Partnerships** – BPS is a lead partner in Mayor Menino’s Success Boston initiative to ensure that all BPS graduates earn a college degree. In partnership with local colleges, businesses, and nonprofits, BPS is committed to every student “Getting Ready, Getting In, and Getting Through.” This initiative expands work throughout the district that teams premier higher education institutions with our schools, in an effort to bridge the transition from high school to college entrance. Another example of these ongoing relationships is Step UP, where Boston College, Boston University, Harvard, Northeastern, and Tufts have partnered deeply and collaboratively with ten Boston Public Schools in order to raise student achievement and support the whole student.
- **Career Explorations** – It is imperative that our students are exposed to opportunities that nurture their future career goals and interests, and prepare them for a 21st century workforce. The Mayor’s commitment to this effort is evidenced through Boston’s summer jobs program for teens, which employs thousands of our students across our city. Our theme-based high schools, along with our partners in business, industry, and service, also provide internships and integrated academic experiences during and after the school day. We plan to strengthen the career and technical/vocational offerings to ensure that these programs meet industry standards and lead students to post-secondary and trade certifications.



Extend learning time.

- **Extended Day** – Recognizing that the traditional school day does not afford ample time to meet the full range of students’ academic and non-academic needs, many pilot schools and several non-pilot middle schools now offer an extended school day for all students. We recognize that the early childhood and middle grades are a particularly critical time to ensure that students are engaged and on-track. Extra time daily allows for additional academic support in literacy, math, and science for students who have demonstrated a need in these content areas. It also allows for enrichment activities that serve to provide students a larger world view. With limited resources, we will need to design innovative strategies and work with partners to create the time our students need.
- **Community Learning** – BPS is a lead partner in the Mayor’s Community Learning initiative to coordinate and align youth programming in public schools, libraries and community centers. BPS is collaborating with colleagues in the Boston Public Library (BPL) and Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF) to establish high-performing models in selected sites, with plans to replicate them in every neighborhood citywide.

Key strategy: Redesign district services for effectiveness, efficiency, and equity

IN ORDER TO IMPROVE student achievement, we must prioritize outstanding instruction, and bring to bear all available resources to support schools in the daily work of teaching and learning. The leadership and central offices of the Boston Public Schools exist to provide top-notch services to schools and families. The operational and instructional support functions must work in concert to advance the goals and priorities of the Acceleration Agenda, so that schools can devote their full attention to improving classroom instruction.

In an age of heightened accountability and limited resources, we must be more diligent than ever in designing and delivering services that are effective, efficient, and equitable. We recognize that our most valuable assets are people – the men and women who work in and for our schools. We must invest in human capital to ensure that we recruit, hire, develop, support, and evaluate a diverse and talented workforce. We will continue to invest in technology to improve and streamline

processes and to use data for improved goal-setting and decision-making. In all that we do, we must hold ourselves and others accountable for results – with a firm commitment to transparency that enables the community to understand and support our efforts.

The economic realities we face cannot be overstated. While we strive to deliver better services, we do so in the challenging context of steadily rising costs coupled with extremely limited public and private funding. This fiscal environment requires us to re-examine all of the services we provide and determine where we can achieve better results with fewer dollars. It requires us to address complex, structural problems – such as the number of empty seats in schools – to position the district to be able to reinvest in classrooms. Only by addressing these challenges can we ensure that we have the resources we need to provide a high quality education to all students.

Programs and initiatives to support key strategy:

Redesign district services for effectiveness, efficiency, and equity

Improve service while reducing costs.

- Transportation Optimization
- Healthy Meals
- Management Development
- Collective Bargaining Reform

Hold central offices accountable for school results.

- Balanced Scorecard
- Link Evaluations and Pay to School Success
- User-Friendly Reports

Ensure resource equity.

- New School Allocation Methodology

Prepare for the future.

- Multi-year Budgeting
- Environmental Stewardship
- Building Modernization

Improve service while reducing costs.

- **Transportation Optimization** – Using the latest automated bus routing software, beginning this year, will enable BPS to find ways to reduce costs with minimal impact on families. In addition, academic investments to improve school quality will provide families with more high-quality choices in every neighborhood, creating further opportunities to reduce transportation costs and redirect resources to the classroom.
- **Healthy Meals** – Research shows that food quality is critical to children’s health and readiness to learn. Food and Nutrition Services is partnering with third party food experts to reduce its budget deficit and offer healthier meals to students.
- **Management Development** – See Spotlight on this page.
- **Collective Bargaining Reform** – BPS seeks to build productive working relationships with its labor unions to negotiate contracts that increase learning time for students and adults, tie evaluations to student achievement, create additional staff and scheduling flexibilities that schools need to increase the pace of their progress, and reward excellence.

Hold central offices accountable for school results and teamwork.

- **Balanced Scorecard** – All central departments are implementing the Balanced Scorecard to promote accountability and establish a process for continuous improvement. Managers will set clear performance targets linked to the core strategies. When targets are not met, administrators will seek to understand root causes and adapt programs, initiatives, and staffing accordingly.
- **Evaluations and Pay Linked to School Success** (a.k.a. Aligned Incentives) – Conducting regular performance evaluations is important not only at the school level but at the central office as well. To align central office administrators’ incentives with school success, BPS will create evaluations that link managers’ performance with school and student outcomes. This data will impact pay and promotion decisions, providing greater accountability among central office staff.
- **User-Friendly Reports** – While BPS has a significant amount of data, getting data quickly to staff in order to inform decisions can be challenging. BPS will create a cross-functional team to dramatically improve reporting. With the click of a mouse, teachers, principals, and district staff will be able to download user-friendly reports that provide the information they need to inform important decisions.

SPOTLIGHT: Management Development

In partnership with the District Management Council, BPS has launched the Management Institute to provide professional development and establish performance goals for senior and mid-level operations and finance managers.

The program is designed to develop management skills among central office staff, and to apply those skills in defining and achieving operational efficiency. Professional development sessions cover a range of subjects, such as strategy, human capital, marketing, and operational effectiveness.

The Superintendent has insisted that just as schools have performance targets they must reach, so too must central offices be held accountable for their progress in achieving particular outcomes. Therefore, each participant in the Management Institute establishes a specific, measurable “performance challenge,” aligned with the district’s goals, to be completed during a 12-week period. For example:

- Reduce per-diem substitute costs by 10%
- Reduce calls to the IT Help Desk by 10% by improving and promoting self-service sites
- Decrease food costs by 10% in two full-service elementary cafeterias in 12 weeks
- Reduce safety officer absenteeism by 10% in each of the next three months

Participants apply classroom learning to achieve their performance challenges with the help of one-on-one and small group meetings with an executive coach.

Since September 2009, cohorts of 25 managers have participated in an intensive three-month program, funded by a private donor. The first year of the program involves managers from the district’s operations and finance divisions, with plans to expand the program to other departments in future years.

Ensure resource equity.

- **New School Allocation Methodology** – The difficult financial climate requires a new approach to funding schools. BPS will adopt a school funding system, like weighted student

funding, that is solidly based on student need. This new approach will be more equitable, transparent, and predictable, enabling schools to make greater academic progress.

Prepare for the future.

- **Multi-Year Budgeting** – BPS requires a longer-term planning cycle than the current annual budget process allows. To that end, BPS will implement a multi-year budgeting framework, beginning this year, that prepares the district for potential changes in revenues, costs, and investment requirements. Education Resource Strategies provided a systematic review of the budget to support the district in better aligning resource use with its key strategies. Refining the multi-year budget in future years will increase the district's capacity to fund core priorities and to identify resources for strategic investments that advance Acceleration Agenda goals.
- **Environmental Stewardship** – From introducing energy efficient lighting in all schools to identifying opportunities to recycle and reduce waste, BPS is using its resources to protect and preserve Boston's environment and make the school system greener. At the same time, we are expanding environmental

education at all levels to help students learn how to become more environmentally-conscious and creative in protecting the earth's natural resources.

- **Building Modernization** – To ensure that all students attend school in facilities that are conducive to learning, BPS is strategically using its capital budget to modernize school buildings and provide all students access to 21st century, state-of-the-art technology. The district partners with the Schoolyard Initiative to enhance out-of-school science learning space and prepares requests to the Massachusetts School Building Authority for approval of major building projects. The district will review the long-term facilities needs aligned with enrollment projections, capacity, parent choice patterns, and areas of the city with inadequate space or excess capacity.

Conclusion

TODAY, OUR NATION HAS MADE SCHOOLS A TOP PRIORITY – with parents, employers, elected officials, opinion leaders and other citizens calling for dramatic improvements in the American educational system. The very fate of our country rests largely on our ability to deliver remarkable results. As President John F. Kennedy said in 1961, “Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. Our requirements for world leadership, our hopes for economic growth, and the demands of citizenship itself in an era such as this all require the maximum development of every young American’s capacity. The human mind is our fundamental resource.”

And yet today, we find ourselves at a crossroads in public education. More than ever, we are reminded that public school districts are not the only game in town. We operate in a far more competitive environment, as parents have greater access to other affordable schooling options for their children, each striving to deliver better programs and services. At this crossroads are two paths: one, the status quo, the other, a new beginning. The path paved with business-as-usual, and the resulting performance disparities, is surely a dead end – for our children and for the school systems that allow their failure. The other path, paved with innovation, can lead to radically different outcomes. It requires us to take an unprecedented look at the policies and practices that have created a two-tiered system – in which some students excel and others fall through the cracks – and insist that we can *and will* do much better.

The Acceleration Agenda challenges all of us in the Boston Public Schools to embark upon an exciting journey along the latter path. The goals, targets, programs, and initiatives outlined on these pages serve as a roadmap for the most important enterprise of our time: providing a first-rate public

education to every child. In order to succeed, we must recommit ourselves to turning these words into daily actions that make a meaningful difference in the lives of the families we serve.

We undertake this urgent and critical work while facing serious challenges. As our country slowly emerges from a crippling economic recession, we cannot ignore the sobering fiscal realities at the city, state, and national levels. The public schools, like nearly all sectors, must confront how to do more with less. In the past few years, we have weathered the economic storm – not without great hardship and sacrifice – and we must continue to find ways to accelerate our work by directing as many resources as possible to the work that matters most. The fiscal climate requires us to prioritize our investments and to spend our limited dollars more wisely than ever before.

“The source of America’s prosperity has never been merely how ably we accumulate wealth, but how well we educate our people. This has never been more true than it is today. In a 21st century world, education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it is a prerequisite.”

— President Barack Obama

We believe that this document serves as a sound blueprint for moving our schools and students to new levels of excellence. However, faced with declining public and private funding, we also know that we cannot implement all of the activities described in this document with the resources available today. As a community, we must work together to devise a coherent set of strategies to

support these ambitious plans with adequate funding – and be held accountable for their results. The Acceleration Agenda provides a framework to guide the discussions, deliberations, and decision-making. Let there be no mistake that we will have to make difficult decisions. However, we are better equipped to make those decisions if we have agreement about our core goals and priorities moving forward.

The Acceleration Agenda cannot belong to the Boston Public Schools alone. District leaders, principals, teachers, and other staff surely have the ultimate responsibility of ensuring its successful implementation. But success will require full ownership from the entire community – including parents, students, partner organizations, and countless others. For schools identified for turnaround, the communities in the Circle of Promise, and for every school across the city, even our highest performers, we must stand up together as a city and declare that we have both the will and the means to turn ideas into results. We must seek out and fight for the resources we need to execute these plans. And we must continuously measure our progress and hold ourselves and one another accountable for significant gains in student achievement.



Finally, we recognize that the strategic direction outlined here is not a finished product but rather a starting point. We must have the foresight and flexibility to adapt our plans as needed with input from families, students, staff, and the community, without compromising on the ultimate goal of graduating generations of students who are well-prepared for college, career, and personal success.

All of us in the Boston Public Schools are grateful to be an integral part of a community that cares deeply about its children, and we pledge nothing less than our very best to ensure a bright future for every single child who walks through our doors. ❖

SCHOOLS

There are 135 schools in the BPS:

- 6 early learning centers (K–grade 1)
- 53 elementary schools (K–5)
- 23 elementary & middle schools (K–8)
- 10 middle schools (6–8)
- 2 middle and high schools (6–12)
- 29 high schools (9–12)
- 1 elementary through high school (K–12)
- 3 exam schools (7–12)
- 6 special education schools (K–12)
- 2 alternative (at-risk) programs

Of these, 21 are pilot schools, two are Horace Mann charter schools, and one is a Commonwealth pilot school.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Student enrollment is 56,340 students, including:

- 26,540 students in kindergarten–grade 5
- 11,460 students in grades 6–8
- 18,340 students in grades 9–12

Student demographics:

- 39% Hispanic
- 37% Black
- 13% White
- 9% Asian
- 2% Other/Multiracial

74% of BPS students are eligible to receive free and reduced-price meals in school (65% free, 9% reduced).

EMPLOYEES

The 2009–2010 BPS budget (all funds) includes 9,023 staff positions (FTE), including:

- 4,671 teachers
- 694 administrators
- 474 support personnel
- 1,174 aides and monitors
- 344 secretaries and clerical staff
- 1,173 custodial/safety/technical
- 493 part-time and summer staff

SPECIAL EDUCATION

About 11,520 students with disabilities (21% of total) are enrolled in special education programs, including:

- 5,530 students with mild to moderate disabilities served in general education settings
- 5,200 students with moderate to severe disabilities who attend special BPS schools and self-contained programs
- 390 students with severe disabilities who attend private day and residential schools
- 400 students ages 3–4 in early childhood programs

In addition, about 310 students enrolled in non-BPS schools receive some special education services in BPS.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

For 24,140 BPS students (38%), English is not their first language:

10,040 (19%) are English-language proficient
3,260 are Former Limited English Proficient (FLEP)
11,840 are Limited English Proficient (LEP) or English Language Learners (ELL)

The five most common home languages of ELL students are:

6,590	Spanish
920	Chinese
900	Cape Verdean creole
860	Haitian creole
770	Vietnamese

BPS English language learners come from more than 40 different countries.

NON-BPS STUDENTS

Of the 75,400 school-age children living in Boston, about 18,850 (25%) do not attend Boston Public Schools.

Among these students:

- 6,420 go to parochial schools
- 3,770 go to private schools
- 3,150 go to suburban schools through METCO
- 4,820 go to public Commonwealth charter schools
- 440 are special education students in non-BPS schools and programs
- 250 are home schooled

Appendix B: Dimensions of Effective Teaching

Adopted by the Boston School Committee ■ February 1, 2006

THE DIMENSIONS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING reflect the shared vision of the Boston Public Schools that is critical to creating school cultures characterized by high expectations for achievement, equal access to high levels of instruction, the achievement of academic proficiency for all students, and the closing of the achievement gap among subgroups within the schools.

The Dimensions outline the universal principles of instruction that encompass the teaching and learning process and will be used as a guide to inform future hiring, professional development, and the supervision of teachers. The Dimensions will also be used to align the system's resources to support the skill development of teachers in areas required to be successful with the BPS student population.

- **Equity and High Expectations:** Demonstrate a commitment to excellence, equity, and high expectations for all students with an emphasis on building on the strengths that students bring to the teaching/learning process and closing the achievement gap between subgroups within the school.
- **Professionalism:** Model professional behavior that addresses job responsibilities, district policies and procedures, and the expectations of professionals working in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and economically diverse community.
- **Safe, Respectful, and Culturally Sensitive and Responsive Learning Communities:** Build and maintain safe, fair, and respectful learning environments that celebrate the diversity of the student population.
- **Partnerships with Family and Community:** Initiate and maintain consistent communication and develop constructive partnerships with families, community members, and agencies, building on their strengths and recognizing them as co-educators.
- **Instructional Planning and Implementation:** Plan instruction and employ strategies that address the wide range of learning, behavioral, and communication styles of the student population.
- **Content Knowledge:** Have extensive knowledge of the content including, but not limited to, key concepts and facts, relevant research, methods of inquiry, and communication styles specific to the respective discipline(s).
- **Monitoring and Assessment of Progress:** Use a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather data to monitor student mastery of instructional content, to improve instruction, and to assess the comparative performance of subgroups within the classroom.
- **Reflection, Collaboration, and Personal Growth:** Reflect on practice in collaboration with administrators and colleagues, monitor personal and professional growth, and pursue professional development in needed areas.

Appendix C: The Seven Essentials of Whole-School Improvement

BOSTON'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS are engaged in an ongoing effort to improve instruction in *every* classroom and to support *every* student to reach proficiency. That effort, **Whole-School Improvement**, is organized around **Seven Essentials**, which provide a framework for the work.

Schools and the district continue to be guided by these core principles for transforming schools. With the adoption of a new five-year strategic direction for the Boston Public Schools, these Seven Essentials should be reviewed and updated as needed to reflect the current environment.

The Bottom Line: Closing the Achievement Gap

In every grade, every student will reach Proficiency on MCAS: regular education students, special education students, and English language learners.

The Core Essential – Effective Instruction

Use effective and culturally relevant instructional practices and create a collaborative school climate that improves student learning, promotes student engagement, and builds on prior knowledge and experiences.

Essential Two – Student Work & Data

Examine student work and data to drive instruction and professional development.

Essential Three – Professional Development

Invest in professional development to improve instruction.

Essential Four – Shared Leadership

Share leadership to sustain instructional improvement.

Essential Five – Resources

Focus resources to support instructional improvement and improved student learning.

Essential Six – Families & Community

Partner with families and community to support student learning and engagement.

Essential Seven – Operational Excellence

Maintain high levels of effectiveness, efficiency and equity in operations.

Appendix D: Achievement Gap Policy

The following is the introductory statement to the Achievement Gap Policy adopted by the Boston School Committee:

THE BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS is strongly committed to maintaining high expectations for all students and to eliminating persistent disparities in achievement and performance among subgroups based on race, ethnicity, language or disability. The School Committee and the Superintendent firmly believe that these disparities are unacceptable. Therefore the Boston Public Schools is resolved to eliminating disparities in achievement and performance between subgroups and achieving academic proficiency for all students.

All policies and practices will reflect the goals of eliminating achievement gaps and achieving academic proficiency, explicitly and emphatically. By purpose and design, the district will advance these goals by developing cultural competence, ensuring uniformly high expectations, promoting rigorous curricula, differentiating instruction, and maximizing access for all students to high-level

educational opportunities. Given the urgency of this mission, the district is committed to developing a diverse cadre of educators and administrators, ensuring proper emphasis on culturally responsive service delivery, and rigorously examining and monitoring policies, programs, practices, and written documents to ensure that these goals are implemented.

All staff must understand how their positions contribute directly or indirectly to these goals, develop the knowledge and skills needed in their areas of influence to serve diverse students and families, and be accountable for implementing a plan that will achieve these goals. It is expected that the district and the entire school community will engage students and families, the private sector, faith-based groups, community-based organizations, and higher education institutions to work in concert to support all of our youth in achieving academic proficiency.

Appendix E: Annual Academic Targets, 2009-2014

	Fall, 2009	2009-10 target	2010-11 target	2011-12 target	2012-13 target	2013-14 target
Reading by Grade 1						
% of 1 st graders meeting DIBELS benchmark	57%	65%	75%	80%	80%	80%
Reading to learn by Grade 3						
% passing Grade 3 ELA MCAS	77%	88%	94%	100%	100%	100%
% proficient Grade 3 ELA MCAS	31%	59%	72%	85%	85%	85%
Gap between highest and lowest racial subgroups	30 points	Fewer than 25	Fewer than 20	Fewer than 15	Fewer than 10	Fewer than 5
Skillful, analytical writing in Grades 4-12						
Implement common writing assignment	3 content areas (ELA, Science, History)	3 content areas	4 content areas (add Math)	5 content areas (add World Languages)	6 content areas (add Arts)	All 6 content areas
% students scoring Level 3 or 4 on writing assignment	N/A	Establish baseline	5 points higher than 2009-2010	10 points higher than 2009-2010	15 points higher than 2009-2010	20 points higher than 2009-2010
Algebra I in Grade 8						
% Math 8 students receive B or better on final exam	10%	45%	62%	80%	80%	80%
% non-exam school students enrolled in Algebra I	4%	10%	20%	30%	35%	40%
English Language Learners acquire academic language mastery and fluency						
% of ELLs who move two or more MEPA steps within the same grade span, or one or more steps between grade spans, across all levels (elementary, middle, high)	64%	80%	85%	90%	90%	90%

Appendix E: Annual Academic Targets, 2009-2014

	Fall, 2009	2009-10 target	2010-11 target	2011-12 target	2012-13 target	2013-14 target
Academic growth for students with disabilities						
% special education students in the “high” or “very high” growth categories for MCAS Math	30%	32%	34%	36%	38%	40%
% special education students in the “high” or “very high” growth categories for MCAS English	29%	32%	34%	36%	38%	40%
On-track to graduate by the end of Grade 10						
% 10 th Graders passing ELA and Math MCAS	75%	80%	85%	90%	90%	90%
% 10 th Graders passing ELA, Math and Science MCAS	65%	66%	70%	75%	75%	75%
% students not at proficient level who fulfill EPP	TBD	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
High school graduation *						
4-year graduation rate, all students	59.9%	66%	73%	80%	80%	80%
4-year graduation rate, ELL students	45%	50%	60%	70%	70%	70%
4-year graduation rate, special education students	36.9%	50%	60%	70%	70%	70%
5-year graduation rate, all students**	65.4%	71%	78%	85%	85%	85%
5-year graduation rate, ELL students**	48%	55%	65%	75%	75%	75%
5-year graduation rate, special education students**	45%	55%	65%	75%	75%	75%
Annual dropout rate	7.2%	5% or lower	4% or lower	3% or lower	3% or lower	3% or lower
College-ready and success-bound						
Combined SAT I scores	1321	1480	1565	1650	1650	1650
% students enrolled in at least one AP, IB, Honors, dual enrollment course during high school	71%	76%	88%	100%	100%	100%

* Graduation and dropout rates are reported with a one-year lag.

** Based on previous year's cohort.

*** Dual enrollment is not yet reported centrally and therefore not included in this count.

Appendix F: Additional Resources

Sample of Recent Reports and Studies About the Boston Public Schools

See also: www.bostonpublicschools.org/reports

Aspen Institute, Case Study on BPS: “Strong Foundation, Evolving Challenges,” 2006

The Boston Foundation, “The Arts Advantage: Expanding Arts Education in the Boston Public Schools,” 2009

The Boston Foundation, “Boston’s Education Pipeline: A Report Card,” 2008

The Boston Foundation, “Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston’s Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools,” 2009

The Boston Foundation, “Out of the Debate and Into the Schools: Comparing Practices and Strategies in Traditional, Pilot, and Charter Schools in Boston”, 2010

Broad Prize for Urban Education: Case Study, Boston Public Schools, 2006

Center for Collaborative Education, “Family and Student Choices in Boston Public Schools,” 2008

Center for Collaborative Education, “Strong Results, High Demand: A Four-Year Study of Boston’s Pilot High Schools,” 2007

Center for Labor Market Studies, “Getting to the Finish Line: A Seven Year Longitudinal Study of the BPS Class of 2000,” 2007

The Citizen Commission on the Academic Success of Boston Children, 2006

Council of the Great City Schools Strategic Support Team Report on Special Education, 2009

Mauricio Gastón Institute, “English Learners in Boston Public Schools: Enrollment, Engagement and Academic Outcomes,” 2009

Mauricio Gastón Institute, “If Our Students Fail, We Fail. If They Succeed, We Succeed: Case Studies of Boston Schools Where Latino Students Succeed,” 2008

National Council on Teacher Quality, “Human Capital in Boston Public Schools: Rethinking How to Attract, Develop and Retain Effective Teachers, 2010”

The Parthenon Group, “Strategic Planning to Serve Off-Track Youth,” 2007

Rennie Center for Education and Policy Research, *A Decade of Urban School Reform: Persistence and Progress in the Boston Public Schools*, 2006