



The Boston Opportunity Agenda

Fourth Annual Report Card

January 2015

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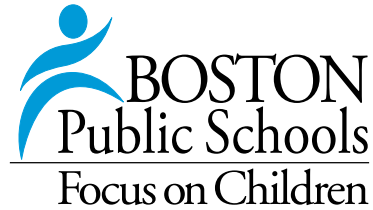


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Introduction

Dear Friends,

This report card marks a new chapter for the Boston Opportunity Agenda. For the first time, we are reporting student outcomes across Boston Public Schools and Catholic and charter schools. This provides a comprehensive baseline view of the education pipeline for the city's K-12 students. This report card is also the final update on the first four goals of our ambitious 5-year plan: that all students are ready for kindergarten, are reading proficiently by 3rd grade, have access to 8th-grade algebra courses, and are proficient on the 10th-grade MCAS. Data on the remaining four—fewer high-school dropouts, more students completing high school in four years, more students earning a college degree, and a larger percentage of adults obtaining the postsecondary credentials needed to earn a living wage—will be available in our next report. While much has been achieved, there is still plenty of work left to do.

Of the approximately 77,000 school-age children who live in Boston, 57,000 attend Boston Public Schools (BPS), 7,500 attend Catholic schools and 7,100 attend charter public schools. These three sectors reach nearly 93% of the city's school-age population—the remaining students are in METCO, homeschooled, in high-support special education settings or are attending other private schools—and provide a more comprehensive picture of how Boston's students are doing as a group. Another reason it's important to report on all three

sectors is that many students begin their educational career in one system and later move to another. Indeed, some students attend public, charter and parochial schools over the course of their academic careers. It is also common for families to place different children in different systems.

While it is possible to look at student outcomes in individual schools across all three sectors, it is much harder to gain an understanding of each one's overall student performance, much less to discern at a deeper level what is driving that performance or lack thereof. This report card is the beginning of a longer conversation about common metrics and goals across all three systems. In some areas the comparisons are easily made, in others there is not a common assessment available and we have created proxies, and in still others the measures are under development. While the work is not complete, this report offers an initial snapshot of how our learners are doing across the multiple education sectors that serve them and can serve as a blueprint for our work moving forward.

The Boston Public Schools' current status on each of the goals will become the new baseline for our report moving forward. We will also set new objectives based on what we have learned over the past five years. While the news is generally positive—we have made steady progress on every metric—our public-school

students still lag behind their suburban peers. Sadly, our 3rd graders remain woefully behind in grade-level reading proficiency. But we're incredibly close to our goal of a less-than 3 percent high-school dropout rate. All told, we are only about halfway to the finish line we initially set.

During the coming year, we look forward to working with the School Committee and new superintendent of the Boston Public Schools to establish the next set of 5-year goals and to align them as closely as possible to the outcomes that we are tracking for Catholic and charter schools. In some areas, we will do a deeper analysis for Boston Public Schools or add additional measures. This is important because the vast majority of our school-age children are enrolled in the Boston Public Schools.

Regardless of what school they attend, each student in our city needs and deserves a world-class education. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that they receive it and enter the world ready for college and career. Understanding where we are delivering on our obligation and where we must improve is just the beginning. There is a great deal of work to do. Let's keep moving.

Ray A. Hammond

Reverend Ray Hammond
Chair

Kristin McSwain

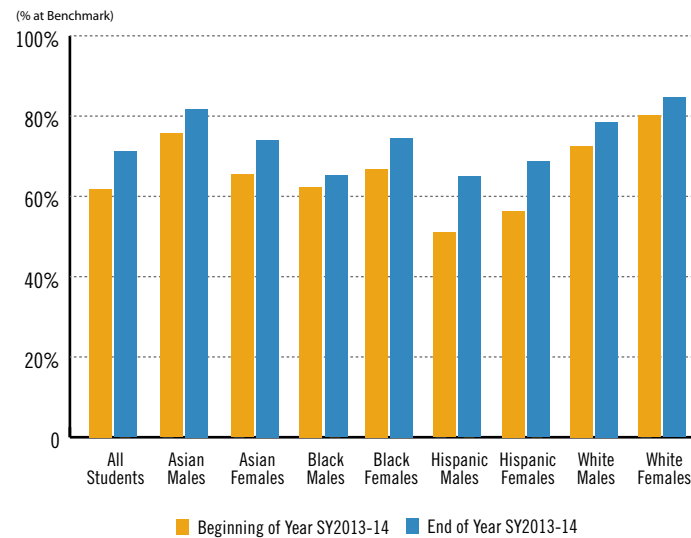
Kristin McSwain
Executive Director



A Strong Educational Foundation

Early Literacy

What's Under the Hood: DIBELS NEXT* in Kindergarten
Boston Public School Students Only



How are Boston Public Schools doing?

The DIBELS NEXT assessment is given when children enter kindergarten and when they leave. In 2013-14, 62% of incoming kindergarteners were assessed as having the necessary early learning skills—an increase of 3 percentage points. Kindergarten achievement was also strong, with 71% of pupils finishing the year at benchmark for entering 1st grade. In order to maximize the time students spend in kindergarten and improve these gains even more, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) are implementing a new K-2 curriculum that aligns with the Common Core Standards and 21st-century skills. Additionally, Mayor Martin J. Walsh is expanding the number of kindergarten seats available in BPS and is working on providing universal pre-kindergarten to all Boston 4-year-olds through a mixed delivery system.

In order to affect school readiness, it is critical to have a better understanding of the developmental progress of young children from birth to age 5. Thrive in 5 is working with partners across the early education and care community to create a school-age pipeline. The pipeline uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) to screen young children in Boston for developmental delays. Understanding children's developmental progress—individually and citywide—creates opportunities for prevention and intervention in the critical “brain-building” phase of a child's life when services are more effective and less costly. The data

*The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade.

“Why does it Matter” source: Strategies for Children, “A Report on the Cost of Universal, High Quality Early Education in Massachusetts.”



Percent of Entering Kindergarteners Achieving the DIBELS* Benchmark

	Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2013 / 2014	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Public Schools	54%	62% (71% at end of year)	↑	75%

collected through the pipeline will allow families, teachers, health providers, and the city to take a data-driven approach to early childhood, making informed, strategic decisions to tailor support and resources to the children, families, and communities who need them most. This will benefit all three sectors of schools, as the goal is to increase the number of children entering kindergarten ready to learn.

How are Boston Catholic schools doing?

Individual Catholic elementary schools in the city of Boston do measure kindergarten readiness, but no one assessment tool is used across the Archdiocese of Boston. Instead, schools utilize a variety of early literacy instruments, including DIBELS NEXT and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment. Because aggregating these assessments is unreliable, the Archdiocese will be making a recommendation to schools on a uniform readiness assessment.

How are Boston Charter schools doing?

Boston charter public schools also do not have a uniform measure across schools. In the coming year, we will be working to identify potential measures moving forward.

Why does it matter?

A child's brain develops more during the first five years of life than at any other time. Infants and preschoolers experience enormous social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth during this period. This is also the time when a child's ability to self-regulate begins to emerge. A high-quality early education program provides preschoolers with the opportunities that they need to grow and thrive, and those who participate in these programs are 40% less likely to repeat a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school and all are more than twice as likely to go to college. They develop better language skills, score higher on school readiness tests and have fewer behavioral problems once they enter school. Finally as adults, they have higher annual earnings and are more likely to be homeowners.

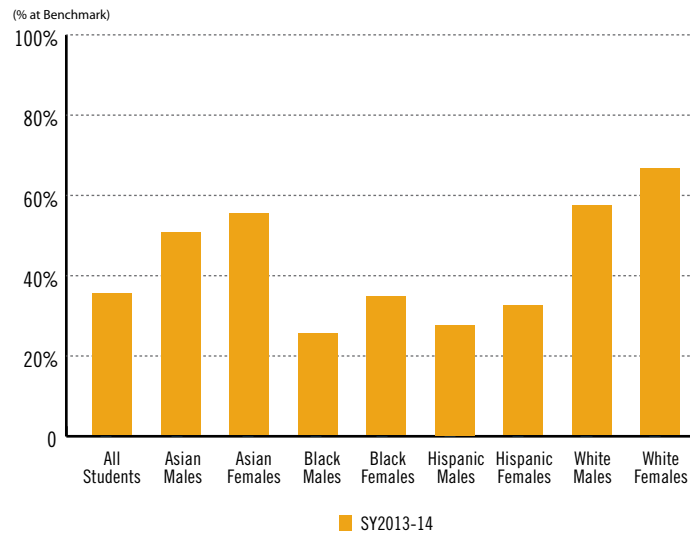
Children who participate in high-quality early education programs have higher annual earnings as adults and are more likely to be homeowners.

A Strong Educational Foundation

Reading Proficiency

What's Under the Hood:

Proficiency for 3rd-Grade MCAS ELA by Race and Gender
Boston Public School Students Only



How are Boston Public Schools doing?

Third-grade English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS proficiency scores rose this year in Boston by four points to 36%. The gains come after three consecutive years of decline and outpace the state in MCAS ELA score growth. Boston's growth was steady for English Language Learners and students with disabilities, but the biggest gains in reading proficiency were made by Black and Hispanic boys. These cohorts moved from 18 percent to 25 percent and 21 percent to 27 percent proficiency, respectively.

These results may be attributed to a renewed focus on professional development for educators, based on updated standards aimed at improving literacy in students from pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade. They may also reflect the enrollment of more than 500 K-3 students in summer learning programs. In addition to improvements in the aggregate, three BPS schools were named Commendation Schools for narrowing proficiency gaps. They are the Hurley K-8 School in the South End, the George H. Conley Elementary School in Roslindale, and UP Academy in South Boston.

How are Boston Catholic schools doing?

Catholic schools in Boston do not use the MCAS. Instead, they administer a national norm-referenced standardized assessment, the Stanford 10. Currently 52% of Boston Catholic

"Why does it Matter" source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation."



Percent of 3rd-Graders Reading Proficiently

	Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2013 / 2014	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Public Schools (MCAS)	31%	36%	↑	75%
	Base 2013 / 2014	Current 2013 / 2014	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Catholic schools (Stanford 10)	52%	52%	n/a	in process
Boston Charter schools (MCAS)	61.2%	61.2%	n/a	in process

school 3rd graders score above the national average (50th percentile). Boston Catholic schools will transition to new formative and summative assessments during the 2015-16 school year. This assessment, aligned to rigorous state and national standards, will better assess teaching and learning. A process for the selection and implementation of this assessment is underway.

How are Boston Charter schools doing?

Students in Boston public charter schools perform better than their BPS peers at 61.2% in the aggregate, with a high of 90.0% and a low of 36.4%. This figure includes Boston Renaissance, Brooke Charter School Mattapan, Brooke Charter School Roslindale, Conservatory Lab, MATCH Community Day, and Neighborhood House.

Why does it matter?

In the first three grades, students are learning to read and from 4th grade on they must be able to read to learn. In grades one through three, pupils are building skills and interest in reading. The habits that they develop become deeply ingrained. With this foundation set, reading interventions are seldom as effective past the 3rd grade. “One in six children not reading proficiently in 3rd grade fail to graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than that for proficient readers,” according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Black and Hispanic children who are not reading proficiently in 3rd grade are about twice as likely as similar white children not to graduate from high school. Only 4 percent of white students who read well in third grade fail to graduate from high school compared to 6 percent of Black students and 9 percent of Hispanics, differences that are not statistically significant. So the graduation rate gap closes when children reach proficiency in 3rd grade.”

“...the graduation rate gap closes when children reach proficiency in 3rd grade.”

On Track for High School Graduation

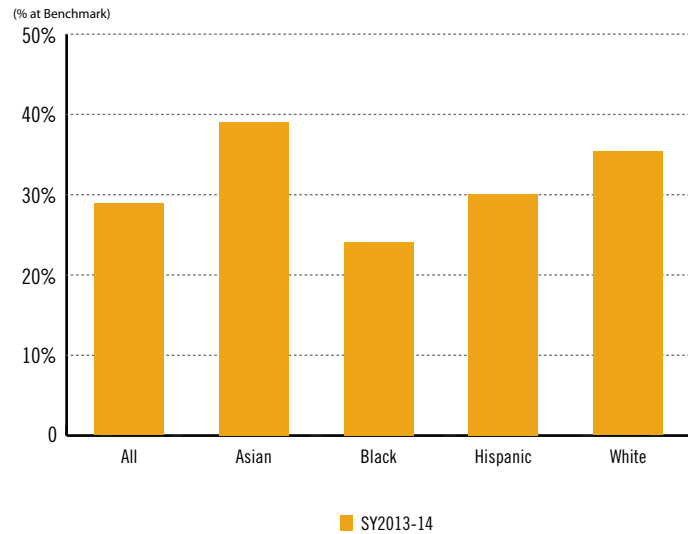
Algebra I



8

What's Under the Hood:

Percent of Non-Exam School 8th Graders Who Took Algebra I
Boston Public School Students Only



“Why does it Matter” source: U.S. Department of Education, “Answers in the Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns and Bachelors Degree Attainment.”

How are Boston Public Schools doing?

Boston Public Schools has made solid progress in expanding access to 8th-grade algebra for all students since 2008, but some of those gains were erased in 2013-14. From a baseline of 4% in 2008-09, BPS expanded access to algebra to a high of 38% of non-exam-school students in 2012-13. This was a dramatic 25% increase that can be attributed to a joint effort between EdVestors and BPS to provide wraparound supports that prepared both students and teachers for a rigorous mathematics curriculum. During the last school year, 65% of those enrolled in 8th-grade algebra achieved a C or better on the final exam, allowing them to enroll in Geometry or algebra II in 9th grade. This is an annual increase of three percentage points.

This year, however, there was a 9% drop in the number of students with access to algebra in the 8th grade. This can be attributed to a number of factors that will influence the availability of algebra in 8th grade moving forward:

- 🔄 In some schools—particularly small schools—budget constraints meant that all 8th graders were enrolled in Algebra I because it was cost-prohibitive to offer both Algebra I and 8th-grade math. But the resulting academic outcomes showed that not all students had been properly prepared to perform well in Algebra I and were entering high school with a failing grade in the subject. Given this

Percent of Non-Exam 8th Graders Who Are Enrolled in Algebra I

	Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2013 / 2014	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Public Schools	4%	29%	↓	40%

reality, some middle and K-8 principals adjusted their offerings accordingly.

- 🔄 The new Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks substantially raise expectations for what all 8th graders should be able to do in mathematics. Therefore, it is important to continue to provide access and opportunities for non-exam students to take Algebra I in 8th grade, but BPS must also raise the rigor of the regular 8th-grade math curriculum.

The lessons that we have learned are being reviewed as BPS moves forward in implementing the higher math standards and helping small schools offer Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes. New approaches include using technology for online and blended-learning environments so that a wider variety of content can be delivered to smaller groups or individuals. Regardless of the implementation strategy, close attention is being paid to positioning students for success in their initial higher-level math class and beyond.

How are Boston Catholic and Charter schools doing?

Because Common Core math standards are still being rolled out, we do not anticipate including 8th-grade algebra in future reports and do not have the Catholic and charter school numbers for 2013-14. We intend to work with the Boston Public Schools as well as the other two sectors to identify a meaningful measure that will allow comparisons across all three types of schools and will include that in subsequent reports.

Why does it matter?

Frequently referred to as a “gateway” or “gatekeeper” course, algebra is the first in a series of higher-level math courses required for success in work and life. Offering Algebra in the 8th grade increases academic rigor and allows students to pursue higher levels of mathematics coursework throughout their high-school career. Research has shown that with each additional level of math completed in high school, students increase the likelihood that they will complete a Bachelor’s degree. In Boston’s knowledge economy, a postsecondary credential is critical for future success in life and work.

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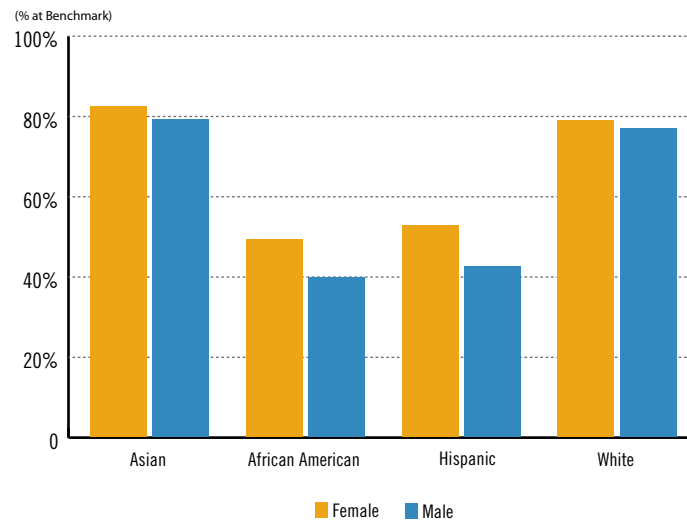
High School Completion

10th Graders Who Pass All MCAS Tests*



10

What's Under the Hood: Percentage of Grade 10 Students Scoring Proficient or Higher in ELA and Mathematics and Needs Improvement or Higher in Science By Race and Gender
Boston Public School Students Only



*It is important to note that with the graduating class of 2013, the standards for graduation increased from “needs improvement” on ELA and Math to “proficient” on ELA and Math and “needs improvement” in Science.

“Why does it Matter” source: Center for Labor Market Studies, “The College Enrollment and Graduation Experiences of BPS Graduates.”

How are Boston Public Schools doing?

To earn a high school diploma, students in Massachusetts must meet the Commonwealth’s Competency Determination in addition to all local graduation requirements. For the first time since the revised CD requirement was implemented,* more than half of students in the class of 2014 (53%) are completing the state graduation requirements by passing the ELA, Mathematics and Science tests. While the achievement gap persists, the disparity between African-American and white students continues to decrease. In ELA, the gap between African-Americans and whites dropped by 8 percentage points. In Mathematics, there was a 7 percentage point decrease. And in Science the gap closed by 4 percentage points. Notably, African-American female 10th graders are closing in on the system average. Fifty percent are proficient or higher in ELA and Mathematics and Needs Improvement or Higher in Science.

Passing rates on the individual MCAS tests continue to rise as well. Seventy-three percent of students are proficient in ELA (a 6-point gain), 65% in Math (a 3-point gain) and 45% in Science (a 6-point gain).

How are Boston Catholic schools doing?

In lieu of the MCAS, Boston Catholic school 10th-graders take the PSAT. Sixty-three percent score about the national average

10th-Grade Proficiency

	Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2012 / 2013	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Public Schools (MCAS)	44%	54%	↑	75%
	Base 2013 / 2014	Current 2013 / 2014	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Catholic schools (PSAT)	63%	63%	n/a	in process
Boston Charter schools (MCAS)	ELA 97%	ELA 97%	n/a	in process
	Math 95%	Math 95%	n/a	in process
	Science 87%	Science 87%	n/a	in process

(50th percentile) on the assessment. Boston Catholic schools are currently exploring alternative assessments for secondary students to measure both achievement and growth.

How are Boston Charter schools doing?

10th-grade MCAS results for 2013-14 are available for six Boston charter Schools: Academy of the Pacific Rim, Boston Collegiate, Boston Prep, City on A Hill, Codman Academy, and Match. In aggregate, 97.1% of students are proficient in ELA, 95.2% percent in Math and 87.1% in Science. As other charter schools add additional grades, their MCAS scores will be included here as well. Finally, we will be working with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to report on the proficiency rate of students passing all three tests for this sector.

Why does it matter?

While many understand that proficiency on the MCAS is necessary in order to graduate from high school, it also serves as an indicator of whether a student will enroll in and complete postsecondary education. According to a Center for Labor Market Studies report, “Not only are students with strong reading and math scores more likely to attend college, but they are also much more likely to enroll in 4-year colleges and graduate with a Bachelor’s degree.” These students are also less likely to enroll in developmental education courses upon postsecondary enrollment, increasing the likelihood that they will complete a college degree or other postsecondary credential.

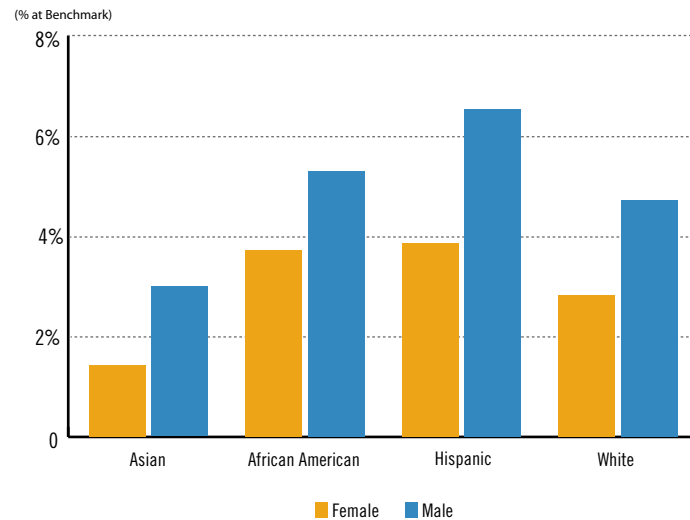
MCAS proficiency
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and complete
postsecondary
education.

High School Completion

Staying in School

What's Under the Hood:

Annual Dropout Rates by Race and Gender
Boston Public School Students Only



How are Boston Public Schools doing?

The annual dropout rate for grades 9-12 in 2012-13 was 4.5%. This represents a 1.9% decrease and 391 fewer students than the previous year. This is the lowest rate the district has ever seen in the aggregate as well as for Black and Hispanic students specifically. Dropout rates vary substantially across schools from a low of zero to a high of 30.7%. Five schools had no dropouts in 2012-13: Another Course to College, Harbor School, Margarita Muniz Academy, New Mission High, and Josiah Quincy Upper.

Dropout rates vary substantially according to where students live. The percentage varies from a low of 0.8% in West Roxbury to a high of 6.2% in Upham's Corner. It should be noted that there is considerable variation in the number of students from each neighborhood who attend BPS. Also important, low-income status appears not to be associated with dropout status. Non-low-income students are more likely to drop out of school than their peers in low-income families. The Re-Engagement Center, staffed by the Boston Public Schools and the Private Industry Council along with community partners, serves as a national model for reconnecting youth who drop out back to high school and other educational settings. This focus, as well as in-school prevention work, has led to Boston's success in this space.

"Why does it matter?" source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce, "The Ugly Truth: A State-by-State Snapshot of Education in America."



Annual Dropout Rate

	Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2012 / 2013	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Public Schools	7.3%	4.5%	↓	<3%
	Base 2013 / 2014	Current 2012 / 2013	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Catholic schools	n/a	n/a	n/a	in process
Boston Charter schools	2%	2%	n/a	in process

How are Boston Catholic schools doing?

It is not possible to quantify dropout rates for parochial schools, because once students leave a Catholic school, they often return to a public school or another private school. The Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Archdiocese of Boston will be working with us in the coming year to better understand this number as well as to help us identify district and charter students who may have entered Catholic schools but are captured as dropouts in the public data.

How are Boston Charter schools doing?

The Boston charter schools in our baseline have an annual dropout rate for 2013-14 of 2%. It should be noted that students who transition into other public school settings, whether district or charter in Boston or elsewhere, are not considered dropouts from their school of origin if they drop out at a later date.

Why does it matter?

Lost lifetime earnings for Massachusetts Class of 2010 dropouts alone will total nearly \$3.7 billion, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education. If all students who graduate were ready for college, as much as \$57.1 million could be saved each year in remediation costs and lost earnings. If the state's male graduation rate grew by just 5%, the Massachusetts economy would see crime-related savings and additional revenue of about \$115 million each year. Further reductions in the number of dropouts each year would multiply these savings.

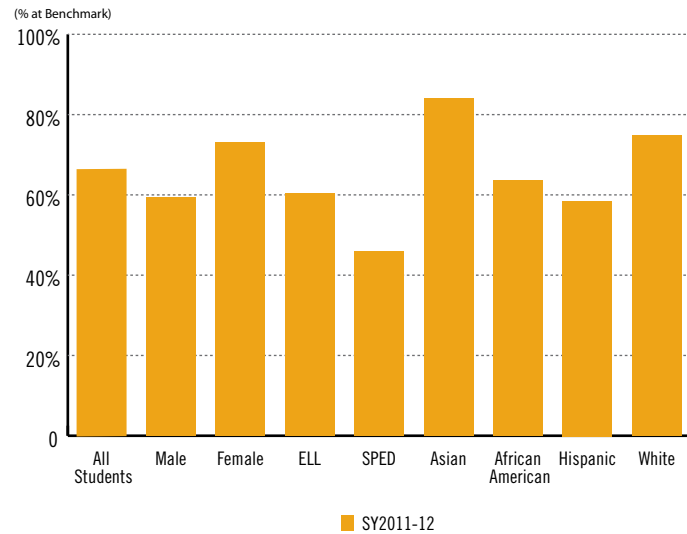
If all students
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remediation costs
and lost earnings.

High School Completion

Who's Graduating?

What's Under the Hood:

4-Year Completion Rates by Race, Gender, ELL and SPED Status
Boston Public School Students Only



How are Boston Public Schools doing?

Boston continues to have one of the highest urban 4-year graduation rates in the nation, at 65.9 percent. While there was no change from 2011-12, more students are staying in school (a 1.7 percent increase) and the 4-year cohort dropout rate fell by 1.2 percentage points. At the same time, the 5-year graduation rate rose to 70 percent, up 2 percentage points from 2011-12.

Compared to the previous 4-year cohort, the 4-year graduation rate for students with disabilities, Hispanic students, and English Language Learners increased by 1.9, 1.0 and .8 percentage points, respectively. Finally, 10 BPS high schools met the state's 4-year cohort graduation-rate target of 80%. They are the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, Boston Latin School, the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science, Fenway High School, New Mission High School, Boston Latin Academy, Boston Arts Academy, Boston Community Leadership Academy, Josiah Quincy Upper School, and TechBoston Academy.

How are Boston Catholic schools doing?

For the graduating class of 2013, 84% of those who enrolled as freshmen graduated from Catholic secondary schools in the city of Boston in four years. The other 16% reverted back to the Boston Public Schools or chose another private school.



4-Year Graduation Rate

	Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2012 / 2013	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Public Schools	61.4%	65.9%	↑	80%
	Base 2013 / 2014	Current 2012 / 2013	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Catholic schools	84%	84%	n/a	in process
Boston Charter schools	74%	74%	n/a	in process

Additionally, 98% of students who entered at the beginning of their senior year graduated at the end of the year.

How are Boston Charter schools doing?

Five Boston Charter schools have been serving high-school students long enough to have a combined 4-year cohort graduation rate of 74.1 percent. Currently the schools include Academy of the Pacific Rim, Boston Collegiate, City on a Hill, Codman Academy, and MATCH Community Day Charter School. As other schools grow their cohort of students, their completion rates will be added to this group.

Boston
 continues to
 have one of the
 highest urban
 4-year graduation
 rates in the
 nation, at
65.9 percent.

Postsecondary Attainment

College Completion



What's Under the Hood:

Percentage of the 2002-2003 9th-grade cohort

	% Completing high school in 5 years	% Enrolled in college and completed	% Enrolled in remedial education
Boston Public Schools	65	17	36
Boston Charter schools	81	25	24

*Students who enrolled in postsecondary institutions the first year after high-school graduation.

"Why does it Matter" source: Center on Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University, "The College Payoff."

How are Boston Public Schools doing?

The 27 Boston Public high schools are making tremendous progress on college completion. Since the baseline class of 2000, the percentage of students who complete a college degree or other postsecondary credential within six years of high-school graduation has grown from 35% to 50%. We are hopeful that these early gains will continue and that we will successfully hit our goal of 70% completion for the class of 2011. Additionally, the number of students enrolling at public institutions in Massachusetts who require developmental education or remediation is also declining (see table to the left). While this is great news for the students who enroll in college, the picture is less rosy when looking at the outcomes for a 9th-grade cohort. Of the students who entered 9th grade in 2002, 65% completed high school in five years, only 34% enrolled in college, and only 17% obtained a degree within six years of the date they should have graduated from high school.

How are Boston Catholic schools doing?

Boston Catholic schools are working to implement a tool to track the postsecondary attainment of their graduates. This includes work with the National Clearinghouse, partnerships with other organizations, and a broader strategy to keep track of former students. It is important to report on this data and the Archdiocese of Boston is committed to finding a mechanism to do this work.

College Completion Rates for High School Graduates

	Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2012 / 2013	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Public Schools	35% (class of 2000)	50% (class of 2007)	↑	70% (class of 2011)
	Base 2012 / 2013	Current 2012 / 2013	Annual Change	Goal
Boston Catholic schools	n/a	n/a	n/a	in process
Boston Charter schools	42% (class of 2007)	42%	n/a	in process

How are Boston Charter schools doing?

Students who graduate high school from a Boston charter public school and enroll in college are completing a postsecondary credential at an aggregate rate of 42% within six years of their enrollment. However the span in rates for individual schools ranges from a high of 60% to a low of 18%. This figure includes students who graduate from Academy of the Pacific Rim, Boston Collegiate, City on A Hill, Codman Academy, and MATCH Community Day. The cohort of 9th-graders that started in 2002 performed slightly better than those in BPS. Of the students who entered the 9th grade in 2002, 81% completed high school in five years, 60% enrolled in college, and 25% had a postsecondary degree within six years of high school graduation. They are also enrolling in fewer remedial classes at public higher-education institutions in Massachusetts (see the table to the left).

Why does it matter?

A postsecondary degree is essential for success in Greater Boston's knowledge economy, where more than half of all job vacancies require at least an Associate's degree—a percentage that is expected only to grow. In addition, a typical Bachelor's degree holder will earn \$1 million more than a high-school dropout over the course of a lifetime.

The 27
Boston Public
high schools
are making
tremendous
progress
on college
completion.

Adult Learners

Credentialed for Success



How are we doing?

The percentage of Boston adults who have a postsecondary credential grew from our baseline of 47% to the current rate of 49.7%. These credentials can consist of an Associate's or Bachelor's degree or an industry-recognized certification that allows people to secure higher-paying jobs. Here as in other parts of the education pipeline, the trend is headed in the right direction, even if it only represents incremental progress. Clearly there is much to learn about how to move this metric in meaningful ways that will meet the demands of our regional economy and support each individual's ability to thrive. There is a great deal of interesting and potentially game-changing work happening in a variety of places throughout Boston that will ultimately affect this population. While each initiative is at a different stage of implementation, all are connected to national or statewide networks of other cities and communities. These networks, detailed below, will allow those of us in Boston to share our challenges, learn from other cities and celebrate our successes.

Adult Education and Workforce Development Pay-for-Success Initiative

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has selected Jewish Vocational Service (JVS), in partnership with the financial intermediary Social Finance, to develop the nation's first Pay-for-Success bond initiative to deliver adult basic education and vocational training services. The initiative will expand or develop new programs in Boston, East Boston, Framingham and Lynn in four tracks: Rapid Employment, English for Advancement, Skills Training, and Bridges to College. The ultimate goal of this work is to help individuals make successful transitions to employment, higher-wage jobs and higher education. The Pay-for-Success initiative utilizes a groundbreaking and innovative funding model in which private investors purchase bonds to fund programs that address social issues. If the program is deemed a success by third-party evaluators, the state repays these bonds with a return. If the program is not successful, taxpayers pay nothing.

Aspen Forum for Community Solutions

Described more fully later in this report card, the Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative has received a three-year grant from the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions to connect young people between the ages of 16 and 24 with school and work. In its initial year of implementation, the Collaborative is working

Percentage of 25- to 64-Year-Olds with Postsecondary Credentials

Base 2011	Current 2012 / 20134	Annual Change	Goal
47%	49.7%	↑	60%

to implement pathways that connect the nearly 9,000 20- to 24-year-olds in Boston who have a high-school credential with college and career programs that will lead to a postsecondary credential. The Collaborative is working closely with Bunker Hill and Roxbury community colleges so that the lessons learned can have an impact on the larger community college community.

Ford Corridors of College Success

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) has received a planning grant from the Ford Foundation’s Corridors of College Success Initiative to secure new and improve existing pathways for residents of the Dudley neighborhood in Roxbury. These efforts will allow residents to move seamlessly along postsecondary pathways leading to careers that pay enough to support families. DSNI will be working closely with residents, youth, Success Boston, the Boston Opportunity Agenda, Roxbury Community College and others to build a shared community understanding of:

- the current reality in terms of availability and quality of postsecondary educational and workforce development opportunities for DSNI residents,
- the community’s future goals,
- pathways to meet those goals.

Lumina Community Partnership for Attainment

Success Boston is partnering with the Lumina Foundation to increase the number of Boston Public Schools graduates who attain a postsecondary credential. Led by the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Foundation, Bunker Hill Community College, the University of Massachusetts Boston and the Boston Private Industry Council, Success Boston focuses the attention of numerous area nonprofits and nearly 40 Massachusetts colleges and universities on ensuring that BPS students are “getting ready, getting in and getting through” higher education and then “getting connected” to careers. Boston was selected for this national partnership because of Success Boston’s demonstrated impact on student success. The national partnership with Lumina will amplify existing momentum by supporting the development of an action plan to increase the percentage of local residents with high-quality certificates, associate’s degrees and bachelor’s degrees.

The percentage of Boston adults who have a postsecondary credential grew from our baseline of 47% to the current rate of 49.7%.

Thrive in 5

A Strong Educational Foundation



Thrive in 5 envisions a Boston where a child's ZIP code does not determine his or her future. Ensuring that all children— particularly children from low-income families, children of color, children with special needs and children who are learning English— have access to resources and opportunities that promote healthy development, early learning and school readiness is critical to ending the achievement gap and securing our city's future prosperity. To achieve this vision, Thrive in 5 focuses on creating sustainable change in organizations, communities and systems by investing in capacity building and developing and supporting effective approaches to achieving positive outcomes for young children and their families.

Thrive in 5 supports three strategies to improve school readiness rates citywide:

Boston Children Thrive

Boston Children Thrive (BCT), Thrive in 5's signature family engagement model, was created over the last three years with parents and partners across five communities: Allston/Brighton, Dudley, East Boston, Fields Corner, and the South End/Lower Roxbury. BCT empowers parents to be leaders and change makers in a neighborhoodwide campaign that engages all members of the community in supporting school readiness. Parents work alongside professionals to develop and lead innovative programming for young children and their families that respond to the needs of diverse cultural, linguistic and

socioeconomic groups. This includes play groups, field trips, workshops and community events. As a result, 3,567 families, including 4,267 children ages birth to 5, have enrolled as BCT members since 2012. Membership data documents BCT's success in engaging vulnerable families. Of enrolled adults, 81% are of color, 60% were born outside of the United States, 58% speak a language other than English, and 52% have a high school diploma or less—all higher percentages than neighborhood and citywide averages.

BCT's neighborhood coalitions of parents and community partners, known as "School Readiness Roundtables," support integration and collaboration across the major systems that touch the lives of young children and their families. Through the Family Engagement Learning Collaborative, which includes the BCT hub agencies and neighborhood grantees of the Boston Family Engagement Network (state-funded organizations working on early childhood family engagement in Boston), BCT's best practices in parent leadership and community engagement are expanding citywide.

Ready Educators

Thrive in 5's Ready Educators strategy encompasses multiple initiatives to move Boston's early care and education programs to the highest quality, using child outcomes to drive program improvement and supporting innovative models from design to implementation.



- **Boston K1DS** embeds the critical quality drivers of the Boston Public Schools' (BPS) successful K1 (pre-K) program in 14 community-based preschool classrooms, increasing at-risk children's access to high-quality early education and, ultimately, improving their school readiness. Initial evaluation results from the three-year demonstration project show that children in Boston K1DS classrooms are making substantial strides in their language, literacy, mathematics, and self regulation skills, and that Boston K1DS classrooms are improving the learning experiences of young children in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- Through the **Ready Educators Quality Improvement Project**, Thrive in 5 is piloting a new approach to quality improvement that links program-level quality improvement efforts to areas where data indicate that children need additional support. The Project includes nine early education and care programs and one family child-care system, and provides hands-on technical assistance, professional development, and coaching aligned with the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System to program directors and teachers.
- **Thrive in 5** is also playing a key role in Mayor Walsh's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) planning process, supporting the Mayor's commitment to doubling the number of high-quality pre-K seats in Boston by 2018.

The School Readiness Pipeline

Thrive in 5's School Readiness Pipeline is a groundbreaking initiative for achieving universal child development screening for young children in Boston. The Pipeline uses a multipronged approach to increase access to and gather data from developmental screening utilizing the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). This approach includes data-sharing partnerships with early education and family support organizations that use the ASQ in their programs, ASQ screening offered by trained peer-to-peer parent screeners working in three Boston neighborhoods (Allston/Brighton, Fields Corner and most recently, Dudley, through a grant from the Boston Promise Initiative's Investments in Neighborhood Change Fund), and opportunities for parents to screen their own children with support of trained staff during parent-child playgroup sessions. Through the screening process, families are connected to resources and programs in their community that support early development, as well as given information on how they can support learning at home.

As of September 2014, the Pipeline had gathered screening data on approximately 1,100 young children across Boston. Data indicate that 59% of children were developmentally on-track in all five developmental domains screened by the ASQ, however 19% of children needed further assessment in at least one domain, indicating a potential delay. Fine-motor-skill development was the area where the screened children most frequently exhibited a potential or strong concern. The data collected through the Pipeline helps families, teachers, health providers, and the city take a data-driven approach to early childhood, making informed, strategic decisions to tailor supports and resources to the children, families, and communities that need them most.





3rd-Grade Reading Proficiency

A Strong Educational Foundation

Despite our rich array of programs devoted to improving literacy from birth to age 8, only 36% of Boston's 3rd-graders are reading at grade level. For the past decade, that number has never been higher than 37%. In order to address this challenge, the Boston Opportunity Agenda has been working in two different arenas—with the Boston Public Schools to improve teaching and learning and with the literacy community and the Campaign for Grade Level Reading to address student supports and family engagement.

Teaching and Learning

For the past year, Boston Public Schools has been actively implementing the literacy improvement plan that it designed in conjunction with an external Literacy Expert Panel. Under the plan, the district has introduced new reading curricula for older elementary students that infuses the teaching of literacy with elements of expeditionary learning. For the younger grades, the Office of Early Education is working with Dr. Nonie Lesaux of the Harvard Graduate School of Education to create an engaging, rigorous reading series that will meet the needs of students for content as well as the new Common Core standards. Implementation of the new curriculum for 1st graders will include professional development and coaching for teachers. This teacher-training model has already produced tremendous results in K1 and K2 classrooms and will continue to build a cadre of inquisitive young readers.

In addition to strengthening classroom instruction during the school year, BPS is also using extended learning time for students who are not solidly on the path to reading proficiency. This past summer, more than 500 K-3 students enrolled in summer learning programs designed to improve their literacy skills and get them ready for the next school year.

Student Supports and Family Engagement

For the past year, the Boston Opportunity Agenda worked with a group of early education and literacy providers to map the landscape of language and literacy supports across the city. This landscape has been crucial for understanding where programs are located, the depth of services provided—ranging from awareness building to deep one-on-one interventions—as well as the scope. Moving forward, this analysis will allow providers and Boston Public Schools to work together and identify the places where community partners can best support schools and learners.

Community Partners: BELL, Boston Plan for Excellence, Boston Partners in Education, Boston Public Library, Boston Public Schools, City Year Boston, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Education Development Corporation, EdVestors, Family Nurturing Center, Foundation for Children's Books, Friends of the Library, Generations Incorporated, Greater Boston Jewish Coalition for Literacy, Hill for Literacy, Inquillinos Boricuas en Acción, Jump-Start for Young Children, Raising a Reader, Reach Out and Read, ReadBoston, Wheelock College and YMCA of Greater Boston.

This past summer, more than 500 K-3 students enrolled in summer learning programs designed to improve their literacy skills and get them ready for the next school year.

Summer Learning Project

On Track for High School Graduation



The Boston Summer Learning Project (SLP) is a citywide effort dedicated to advancing a year-round expanded learning system that connects school, out-of-school time, and summer learning. The project aims to reverse summer learning loss; to improve skills associated with school, college, and career success; and to deepen school-community partnerships. In 2014 alone, SLP created about 1,600 new seats, allowing target populations to be served: 199 English language learners, 72 rising 2nd- and 3rd-graders, 72 off-track high-school students, 1,000 students in the district's mandatory summer program. By offering a common partnership and measurement framework to a group of aligned summer providers, the project reached a total of 4,397 students in 2014.

Comanaged by Boston Public Schools (BPS) and Boston After School & Beyond (BASB), SLP serves students who are unlikely to access quality summer programming on their own. In 2014, SLP worked with 50 public schools and 16 community partners to provide structured and engaging summer learning opportunities that nurture lifelong learners equipped for success in school, work and life. Across 18 sites, certified teachers and enrichment staff developed and delivered academic and enrichment programming to prepare students for success in the next grade level.

SLP and aligned providers use a specific set of tools comprised of teacher perspectives, student input, third-party evaluations, and a shared measurement platform to evaluate programs. This unified approach to program-quality measurement enables program providers to highlight strengths, identify weaknesses,

and pursue continuous improvement. Representatives from each site gather year-round to discuss best practices for program improvement the ensuing summer. This systemic approach is at the forefront of innovation in youth development and summer learning nationally.

Community Partners (SLP & Aligned): Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL); Boston Area Health Education Center; Boston Family Boat Builders; Boston Private Industry Council; Boston University; Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston; Brigham & Women's Hospital; Camp Harbor View; Community Music Center of Boston; Crossroads for Kids; Courageous Sailing; Dorchester House; Freedom House; Hale Reservation; Horizons at Dedham Country Day School; Hyde Square Task Force; Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA); Joseph M. Tierney Learning Center; MathPower; MIT Office of Engineering; Phillips Brooks House Association; Piers Park Sailing Center; Sociedad Latina; Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment Center; Steppingstone Foundation; Tenacity; Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center; UMass Boston; USS Constitution Museum; and YMCA of Greater Boston.



Results

Academic Progress: For the fourth year in a row, according to teacher observations on the Survey of Afterschool Youth Outcomes (SAYO-T), the average SLP student (across the 18 SLP sites) demonstrated significant improvement in math and ELA skills, with gains of 8.1% and 8.6%, respectively.

Skill Development: On average, students participating in the 18 SLP sites achieved significant gains in all skill areas measured by the SAYO-T and the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA). During summer 2013 and 2014, three “power skills” were measured by both tools—critical thinking, perseverance and peer relationships—and students demonstrated significant growth in all three areas during both summers. Research demonstrates these skills are correlated with success in school, work, and life.

Program Quality: As rated by third-party observers on the Assessment of Program Practices Tool (APT) tool, on average summer providers are either at or exceeding the program-quality benchmark for all 15 of the domains measured by the APT, such as the organization of activities and the extent to which staff build relationships with and support youth. On average, SLP programs were rated higher across all 15 domains in 2014 than in 2013, suggesting that programs are actively striving for improvement in using quality program practices.

When rated by youth on aspects of program quality through the SAYO-Y tool, SLP programs on average performed at the benchmark for six out of the eight domains, with areas for improvement identified as opportunities for youth leadership and youth choice and autonomy.



Boston Collaborative for Opportunity Youth

Opportunity Youth



After a year of planning, the Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative was awarded an implementation grant from the Aspen Forum for Community Solutions in August. Focused on young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are disconnected from both school and work, the Collaborative met monthly to share data, research characteristics of Boston's Opportunity Youth, investigate the available programs and services for them, and map pathways designed to re-engage and support them in education and career. Additionally, youth peer leaders conducted focus groups and surveys through the OYC Youth Voice Project, bringing invaluable insight and experience to bear on the Collaborative's planning. Now the task is to convene critical partners, share data, perform additional research to learn more about this underserved population, and expand participation in the Youth Voice Project. Some highlights of the past year include:

- 🔄 Creating a "Connection Center" for older youth ages 20 – 24. While 72 percent of Opportunity Youth have a high-school credential, the number of program seats and organizations dedicated to serving this population is extremely low. Given this reality, the Connection Center will reach out to older youth, assess their skills, needs, and interests, and refer them to career and college opportunities.
- 🔄 Connecting the organizations that serve Opportunity Youth through networking events funded by the Youth/Industry Partnership Initiative.

- U Convening providers and community colleges to strengthen pathways to college for disconnected youth with a high-school credential. Our pathway planning process led the CEO of X-Cel Education to begin a partnership with Bunker Hill Community College to engage and provide bridging supports for a new cohort of disconnected high-school graduates as part of the OYC initiative.
- U Securing 28 participant organizations that are willing to share data across systems and pathways. This dynamic effort will enable Boston to follow its young people from the point at which they were disconnected to the interventions and opportunities that lead to career-oriented employment and education.

While these efforts help us learn about the best ways to engage Opportunity Youth, the Collaborative will continue to elevate the profile of these young people and scale pathways through data collection, convening activities, and research.

Community Partners: ABCD Ostiguy High School, Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), Allston Brighton Community Development Corporation, American Student Assistance (ASA), Asian American Civic Association, Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology, Bird Street Community Center, Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, Boston Asian Youth Essential Service, Boston Centers for Youth & Families / City of Boston, Boston Day & Evening Academy, Boston Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Boston STRIVE, Boston Youth Service Network (BYSN), B-PEACE for Jorge, Bridge Over Troubled Waters, Brigham & Women’s Hospital, Bunker Hill Community College, Center for Teen Empowerment, Data Sharing Project,

Charlestown High School Diploma Plus, City of Boston, College & Career Readiness, Massachusetts College Bound Dorchester, Committee for Public Counsel Services, Commonwealth Corporation, Community Work Services, Department of Youth Services (DYS), Diamond Educators Mentoring Inc., Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation, Dorchester Youth Collaborative, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), ESAC Boston, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Freedom House, Health Resources in Action, Higher Ground-Boston, Hull Lifesaving Museum, Hyde Square Task Force, InnerCity Weightlifting, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA), Jewish Vocational Service (JVS), JFYNetWorks, Justice Resource Institute (JRI), Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN), Mayor’s Office of Intergovernmental Relations, Mayor’s Office of Jobs and Community Services (City of Boston), Mayor’s Youth Council Boston Youth Fund–Youth Employment Program, More than Words, Multicultural Dropout Outreach Collaborative, New England Center for Arts and Technology (NECAT), New Profit, Inc., Partnerships Advancing Communities Together (PACT), Promise Neighborhoods, US Department of Education, Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation, Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps, Roca, Inc., Root Cause, Roxbury Community College, Roxbury Youthworks, Inc., SkillWorks, Sociedad Latina, State Street Corp., Trinity Boston Foundation, Urban College of Boston, X-Cel Education, Year Up Boston, YouthBuild Boston, YouthBuild Just-a-Start, Youth on Board, Youth Options Unlimited Boston (YOU Boston), Youth Voice Project, Youth Violence Prevention Funder Learning Collaborative.

A deeper analysis of the data behind these trends shows that it may be possible to increase our gains in these areas significantly by increasing our focus on people we are calling “Opportunity Youth.”

Success Boston: A College Completion Initiative

High School Completion & Postsecondary Attainment

28

...in 2011, BPS graduates who received coaching had a college persistence rate of 85.3%, while the comparison group's rate was 69.4% after one year.

Success Boston is a citywide college completion initiative that works to dramatically increase the college completion rate of Boston Public Schools (BPS) graduates. Together with partner organizations, Success Boston implements a four-part strategy to ensure that students are *getting ready*, *getting in*, *getting through*, and *getting connected*.

Getting Ready

The Boston Public Schools is the lead partner for *getting ready* and is working to improve college advising and expand access to Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other rigorous courses that academically prepare students to meet the demands of college. In order to get students ready, Success Boston is focused on increasing the curricular rigor of high school, enhancing college awareness and preparedness, and supporting overall college readiness, including social-emotional skills and abilities.

Getting In

Beginning with the class of 2009, the Boston Foundation and a number of nonprofit partners began providing transition coaching and summer supports for up to 300 students per graduating class. These supports help students as they apply, select, enroll, and transition through the first two years at 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education. Nonprofit partners including uAspire, American Student Assistance, the Boston Private Industry Council, Bottom Line, Freedom House, and Hyde Square Task

Force have provided summer preparation for college, ongoing financial aid advising, and transition coaching. They work in partnership with colleges' student support services; together they are establishing a common standard of practice and an integrated system of transition supports for all students.

Getting Through

Coordinated by the University of Massachusetts Boston, nearly 40 local postsecondary institutions are expanding campus-based supports that enable students to complete a degree. These include collecting and reporting student data, setting measurable goals for increasing college graduation rates, and ensuring the existence of effective student support programs. Campuses have built partnerships with nonprofit partners and other institutions of higher education, creating new collaborations that have expanded the impact of coaching through an "embedded model" that places coaches on site and reaches hundreds more students. Using a model pioneered at UMass Boston, Bunker Hill and Roxbury community colleges have begun embedded partnerships with nonprofit providers.

Getting Connected

Getting connected is Success Boston's newest strategy. Led by the Boston Private Industry Council, this work will engage employers in college completion efforts through summer jobs, internships, career advising, and other opportunities that will expose students to employment pathways and new career fields.

Results

Success Boston launched in 2008 in response to a longitudinal study by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies that showed that only 35% of BPS graduates who had enrolled in college ever completed an Associate's or Bachelor's degree by age 25. Although enrollment rates had steadily increased, completion rates had not. In 2011, the 6-year college completion rate was nearly 50% for students from Boston's Class of 2006. In 2009, BPS graduates who received nonprofit coaching had a college persistence rate of 86.5 percent, which is significantly higher than the 66.4% rate of its comparison group after one year. This trend has continued and in 2011, BPS graduates who received coaching had a college persistence rate of 85.3%, while the comparison group's rate was 69.4% after one year.

As evidence of its commitment to increasing college success rates for BPS students, the Boston Foundation committed over \$1 million each of the first five years of this initiative. In October 2014, the Foundation received a grant of \$2.7 million from the Corporation for National and Community Service to expand this effort. This funding must be matched dollar-for-dollar and will more than triple the number of students receiving coaching from about 350 to 1,000 annually.



About Us



The Boston Opportunity Agenda (BOA) is a public/private partnership among the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the city's leading public charities and many local foundations to ensure that all Boston residents have access to the education necessary for upward economic mobility, civic engagement, and lifelong learning for themselves and their families. We fervently believe that by combining our resources, expertise and influence around a single agenda, we will have a greater impact on Boston's cradle-to-career educational pipeline.

While Boston has many exciting programs and organizations that focus on providing opportunities for individuals, the Boston Opportunity Agenda is a long-term partnership focused on achieving system change that will ultimately affect all Boston residents.

Over the past several years, the Boston Opportunity Agenda member organizations have used three organizing principles to guide our collective work and network structure. The partnership is governed by the CEOs of each member organization who identify strategic issues facing our educational pipeline in whole or in part, formulate the Boston Opportunity Agenda priorities and strategies, and provide a call to action for community stakeholders.

The Three Principles

Keeping key performance measures in public view is critical to driving change.

Accurate and timely data is a call to action and an accountability mechanism. Through our annual report card, forums, evaluations and community dialogues, we aim to educate ourselves and the Greater Boston community on our challenges, progress and collective impact.

Our investments must produce immediate gains and long-term systems change.

BOA investments are designed to expedite the positive educational outcomes for underserved individuals currently in the education pipeline while surfacing the long-term changes that must be made in our systems to ensure success for all. Our investments also focus on building networks and delivery systems rather than increasing the capacity of a single organization or program.

Collective impact is required to achieve our goals.

Only by mobilizing the nonprofit, philanthropic, business and governmental communities to align resources and increase efficiency and effectiveness will we ensure the overall success of Boston's educational pipeline. We have created multiple ways for others to join us:

- 🔄 **Investing Partners** contribute financial and human resources to BOA priority initiatives.
- 🔄 **Philanthropic Partners** align their education investments to support BOA priority initiatives or advance BOA goals. They share common data collection, tools and analysis.
- 🔄 **Community Partners** join one of the priority investment networks and align one or more of their education programs in support of BOA goals. They share common data collection, tools and analysis as well as participate in continuous improvement work.

Our current partners are identified in the programmatic updates section of the report card. To learn more about becoming a Boston Opportunity Agenda partner at any level please contact Kristin McSwain at Kristin.Mcswain@bostonopportunityagenda.org.

Our mission is to ensure that all Boston residents have access to the education necessary for upward economic mobility, civic engagement and lifelong learning for themselves and their families.

These generous investors have made the Boston Opportunity Agenda's accomplishments possible

Annie E. Casey Foundation	Klarman Family Foundation
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Boston Public Health Commission	Herman & Frieda L. Miller Foundation
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www.bostonopportunityagenda.org