



Race to the Top Coalition: Closing the Achievement Gap in Massachusetts

The Race to the Top Coalition is a highly diverse group of business, community, civic and education leaders dedicated to closing the achievement gap in Massachusetts and improving outcomes for every student in the Commonwealth.

Convened by the Boston Foundation in 2009, the Coalition played a major role in passing *An Act Relevant to the Achievement Gap*, signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick in 2010. The legislation doubled the number of charter school seats in the state, established innovative in-district schools and provided superintendents with new intervention powers in underperforming districts.

Passage of the act was at the heart of Massachusetts's successful, first-place win of \$250 million in Race to the Top stimulus funds from the federal government. Tremendous gains have been made as a result. Through a broad range of initiatives, the state has strengthened curriculum and instruction, improved the effectiveness of educators and turned around some of the lowest performing districts and schools. Still, too many children of color and children from low-income families are being denied the opportunity of a world-class education. The stubborn achievement gap persists.

Now the Coalition is focused on passing *An Act to Further Narrow the Achievement Gap*, which will eliminate the cap on public charter schools in the lowest performing districts, intervene in many more underperforming schools and promote other crucial innovations that will help to close the achievement gap in Massachusetts.

The tools provided in the 2009 law expanded the options for parents by increasing the number of autonomous schools in underperforming districts. The increase in these schools—whether they be Commonwealth Charter, Horace Mann Charter, Innovation or Turnaround Schools—provides greater flexibility and decision-making for school leaders and teachers to meet their students' needs through longer school days and other innovations.

At a time when so many children still are falling behind and left unprepared for higher education and a 21st century workforce—and when *solutions that work* are closing the achievement gap for some children—why would we choose not to use every tool available to us to offer the best in education to all students?