



# The Boston Opportunity Agenda

A Historic  
Education  
Partnership

Second Annual Report Card

November 2012

# A Historic Partnership

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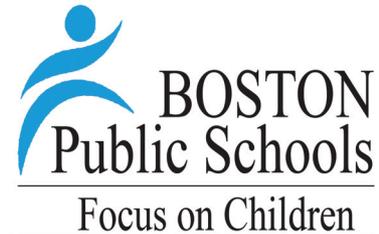
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Dear Friends,

Much like a canary in a coal mine, there are clear indicators along the educational pipeline about the health and vitality of the educational system in Boston. The goals and benchmarks of the Boston Opportunity Agenda serve as our communal canary, telling students, parents, community leaders, policy makers, philanthropists and city officials how we are doing. In this report card, we provide our current status on nine critical goals and an analysis of who is doing well and who needs additional support across each part of the educational pipeline. Finally we provide a researched-based description of what success or failure on each metric might mean for individual students.

In this report you will see that there is reason to celebrate. Boston has made significant progress on increasing the number of students passing the MCAS in 10th grade with proficiency, the four-year graduation rate and the number of Boston Public Schools (BPS) graduates completing college. The changes are significant and reflect the new and innovative ways that BPS and community organizations are engaging students and delivering educational content.

While these successes are worthy of celebration, much work remains. The number of students ready for Kindergarten has risen modestly over the past year and the number of students reading proficiently in 3rd grade continues to fall. Given that both of these indicators are connected to graduating high school and college, they sound an alarm for renewed thought and action at the beginning of the education pipeline. We need to bring the same critical thinking, energy and innovation to our youngest learners that we have invested in those in high school and beyond.

In order to meet these continued challenges, the Boston Opportunity Agenda invites you to join us. In these pages we have outlined multiple ways for everyone in Boston to support this work and to partner with us for success. We are confident that if we align our collective resources, use data for continuous improvement and as a guide to programming and investments, and work together to highlight critical changes needed in our educational pipeline, we can create lasting change in our city.

Yes there is more to be done. The canary must emerge from the proverbial coal mine, ready to soar. That is our work. We look forward to partnering with you throughout this year and beyond to expand educational excellence and opportunity for all Boston students.



Reverend Ray Hammond  
Chair



Kristin McSwain  
Executive Director

# About Us

**The Boston Opportunity Agenda** is a public private partnership among the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the city's leading public charities and many local foundations. 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. 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 systems change that will ultimately impact all Boston residents. 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.

Our partnership is driven by three organizing principles. Over the past several years, Boston Opportunity Agenda member organizations have used these principles to guide our collective work and network structure.

## 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.

Boston Opportunity Agenda 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 system 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. This year we created multiple ways for others to join us:

**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.**



- ★ **Investing Partners** contribute financial and human resources to the Boston Opportunity Agenda's priority initiatives.
- ★ **Philanthropic Partners** align their education investments to support Boston Opportunity Agenda priority initiatives or advance the Agenda's 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 Boston Opportunity Agenda 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](mailto:Kristin.Mcswain@bostonopportunityagenda.org).

# The Cradle to Career Educational Pipeline

The education pipeline begins by building a solid educational foundation for all of our city's youngest children, feeds into the K-12 educational system and extends to post-secondary completion. The pipeline also includes adults, particularly parents and immigrants who have missed or been denied opportunities for education and job training, in order to prepare all Boston residents for jobs with family-sustaining wages. To achieve our goals, Boston Opportunity Agenda members are investing in a set of high-leverage initiatives at every point along the education pipeline.

## A Strong Educational Foundation

Boston's future prosperity depends on the health and well-being of our next generation. Investing in young children now secures both their and our bright future. **Thrive in 5** is a city-wide partnership that provides a vision and a plan for Boston to ensure that every child enters Kindergarten ready to succeed.

## On Track for High School Graduation

By better using time, we can begin to close the achievement gap and ensure that students are on track for graduation. The **Summer Learning Project**, promotes student achievement as well as develops new models for out-of-school programs that combine academics and social emotional development for students.

## High School and College Completion

High school graduation and a post-secondary credential are essential for success in Greater Boston's knowledge economy, where more than 50% of all job vacancies require at least an Associate's degree—a percentage that is expected only to grow. **Success Boston** is a college completion initiative developed through a partnership of the Mayor's Office, the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, the Boston Foundation, the Boston Private Industry Council, UMASS Boston and 37 other institutions of higher education to ensure that students "Get Ready, Get In, and Get Through" post-secondary education.

## Post-Secondary Attainment

The level of education and skills that Massachusetts adults need to attain good jobs has never been higher, yet our adult education system is not designed to prepare adults to enter and succeed in college and careers. The **Adult Opportunity Network** links state-funded Adult Basic Education programs (including English for Speakers of Other Languages) and delivers case management and other supports to ease the transition to college.

In addition to these investments in networks, the Boston Opportunity Agenda is making three direct investments in the Boston Public Schools in order to change the way that system operates.

To achieve our goals, Boston Opportunity Agenda members are investing in a set of high-leverage initiatives at every point along the education pipeline.

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System-wide, personalized, student-centered approaches... require fundamental changes not only in the way that schools are organized, but also in the way that central offices are structured to support schools, principals and teachers.

## Data Systems

The Boston Public Schools (BPS) system is engaged in a three-phase project to change the way that it uses individual student data to drive academic success. During the first phase, BPS engaged internal and external stakeholders to create a vision for data usage in the system that allows BPS to:

- ✦ 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

The Boston Opportunity Agenda engaged in the external advisory group in Phase One of data systems work and is poised to support the work moving forward. Once completed, this work will ensure that teachers, principals and nonprofit partners are able to access and use individual student data for continuous improvement and target interventions to students strategically.

## Personalized Student Centered Approaches

System-wide, personalized, student-centered approaches are in many ways a new frontier in education reform. They require fundamental changes not only in the way that schools are organized, but also in the way that central offices are structured to support schools, principals and teachers. The new Race to the Top District (RTT-D) competition released by the U.S. Department of Education provides an opportunity for school districts across the nation to fundamentally change the way they meet the educational needs of students. The Boston Opportunity Agenda is investing in the BPS application for RTT-D in order to assist in designing new ways to deliver content in middle schools throughout BPS. Regardless of the success of the BPS application we believe that the preparation required to submit a competitive national application will benefit teachers, principals and administrators as they continue to seek new and innovative ways of engaging students, delivering curriculum and governing schools.

### School Choice

The City of Boston is engaged in a public conversation to change the way families select—and students are assigned to—schools. The Boston Opportunity Agenda is supporting this process to ensure that BPS has the resources it needs to conduct a high quality, inclusive and transparent process that is informed not only by community input but also by the data on school choice, school quality and equitable access.

# Boston Opportunity Agenda Goals & Measures Update

We use data to constantly keep the goals of the Boston Opportunity Agenda in the public view and to evaluate, continuously improve and if necessary rethink our priority investments. This year we have begun to expand our use of data to include the overall performance toward our goals and to look “under the hood” at the data in its disaggregated form. It is our hope that by doing so we can begin to identify areas where changes in performance for a particular group of students may accelerate progress overall.

The Boston Opportunity Agenda is committed to using our goals and measures to highlight areas where we are falling short and as a call for action and change. For the second year in a row, MCAS scores for 3rd grade reading have fallen—an outcome that absolutely has to change if our students are to thrive in school and in life. Boston is not alone in this challenge. Ironically, despite our own reading challenges, Massachusetts leads the nation in reading proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress or NAEP and Boston leads urban areas. This challenge has spawned a number of national, state and local efforts to make gains for students on this critical measure.

Nationally, the Campaign for Reading Proficiency is focusing on the importance of reading proficiently by 3rd grade. It has challenged communities across the nation to improve early learning so that children enter school ready to learn, provide summer learning opportunities for students so that they do not lose ground during the summer months, and ensure that all

Kindergarten through 3rd grade students are in class every day so that not one minute of time is lost for those most at risk of not achieving reading success. Boston joined the campaign and is focusing on these three issues over the next several years.

But while improving access and outcomes for kids in these areas is important, it is only a small piece of the complex challenges that impact 3rd grade reading. Massachusetts recently passed An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading proficiency. This act creates a panel that will make recommendations on what is needed in Massachusetts to improve our progress in 3rd grade reading.

Locally, the Boston Opportunity Agenda has convened literacy stakeholders to identify our specific literacy challenges and potential levers for creating change and to put forward a plan that builds on the strong literacy programs that we have and expands them to reach more students. While we haven't totally identified the roots of our reading challenge, we are confident that chronic absenteeism, a limited out-of-school focus on ELL literacy strategies, teacher preparation in literacy acquisition, and availability of rigorous reading content are a few of the challenges that we face. We also know that, given the diversity of the sectors where these challenges occur, our final plan will require the committed participation of the Boston Public Schools, teachers, parents, community based organizations, teacher preparation and professional development institutions, and many others to achieve success.

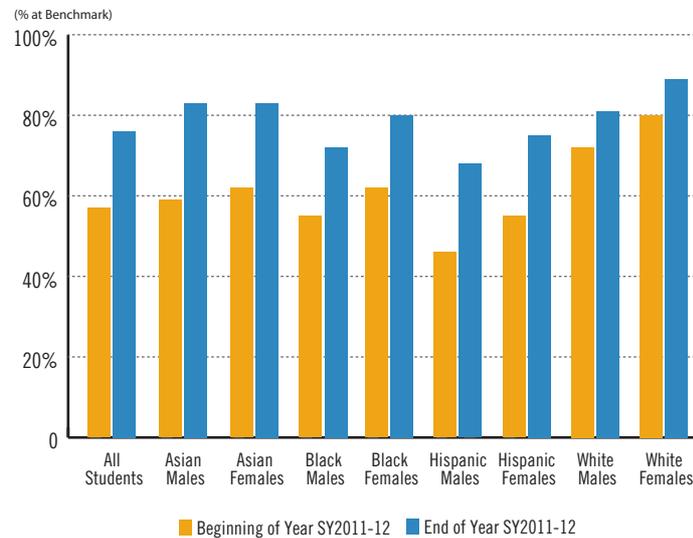
**For the second year in a row, MCAS scores for 3rd grade reading have fallen—an outcome that absolutely has to change if our students are to thrive in school and in life.**

# A Strong Educational Foundation

**Early Literacy:** Percent of entering Kindergarteners achieving the DIBELS\* benchmark

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2011 / 2012	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
54%	57% (76% at end of year)	↑	75%

## What's Under the Hood: DIBELS by Race and Gender



## How are we doing?

The DIBELS test is given when children enter Kindergarten (which is the measure that we are tracking here) and when they leave. While the progress for entering Kindergarteners is a modest 1%, Kindergarten achievement is very impressive: 76% of children leaving Kindergarten in 2012 achieved the DIBELS benchmark in reading and literacy that is necessary to enter 1st grade ready to learn. Given this growth, BPS in partnership with community based early education providers is piloting 10 community based Pre-Kindergarten classrooms that will provide teachers with training, coaching and the BPS curriculum in an effort to ensure that more students enter Kindergarten ready to learn.

## Why does it matter?

Children who participate in high-quality early education programs are 40% less likely to repeat a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school and 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.

\*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"



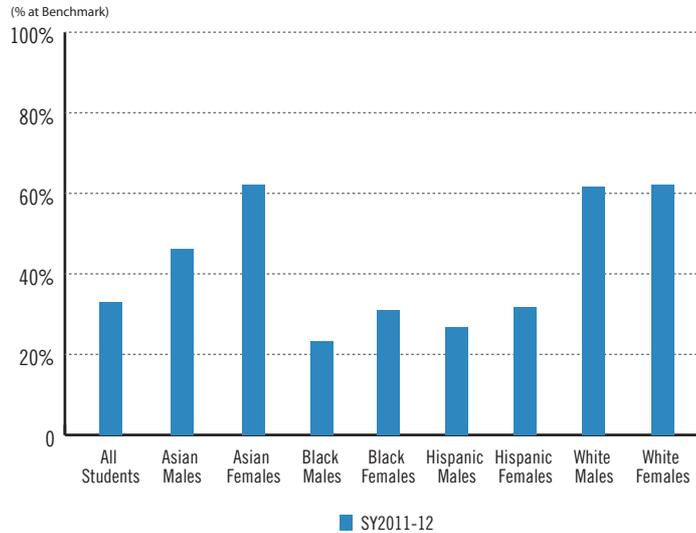
# A Strong Educational Foundation

## 3rd Grade Reading Proficiency

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2011 / 2012	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
31%	34%	↓	75%

### What's Under the Hood:

Proficiency for 3rd Grade MCAS ELA by Race and Gender



### How are we doing?

From the 2008/2009 school year to the 2009/2010 school year, BPS 3rd grade reading proficiency increased by 6%. This was an exciting point in time since reading scores had stagnated for the previous decade. Unfortunately, the score has fallen one or two percentage points each year since then. A look at the data by race and gender reveals that not only are there huge disparities in performance but even our best performers are merely scoring at the statewide average for 3rd grade reading. Moving this benchmark is crucial for the future success of our students and can serve as a springboard for improving other metrics further up the pipeline.

### Why does it matter?

From 1st to 3rd grade, students are learning to read and from 4th grade on they must be able to read to learn. “One in six children not reading proficiently in 3rd grade fail to graduate from high school on time. This is four times the rate for children with proficient 3rd grade reading skill.” 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.”



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

# On Track for High School Graduation

## Percent of non-exam 8th Graders who are enrolled in Algebra 1

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2011 / 2012	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
4%	34%	↑	40%

### How are we doing?

Boston has made great strides in expanding access to 8th grade Algebra for all students. In partnership with EdVestors, BPS has expanded the Algebra enrollment while providing wrap around supports for teachers and students in the form of professional development, summer programming and coaching. As a result, 28% of non-exam students enrolled in 8th grade Algebra achieve a C or better on the final exam allowing them to pursue Geometry or Algebra II in 9th grade. This is up from the 2010-2011 baseline of 22%.

### 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. “Finishing a course beyond the level of Algebra 2 . . . more than doubles the odds that a student who enters postsecondary education will complete a Bachelor’s degree.”

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

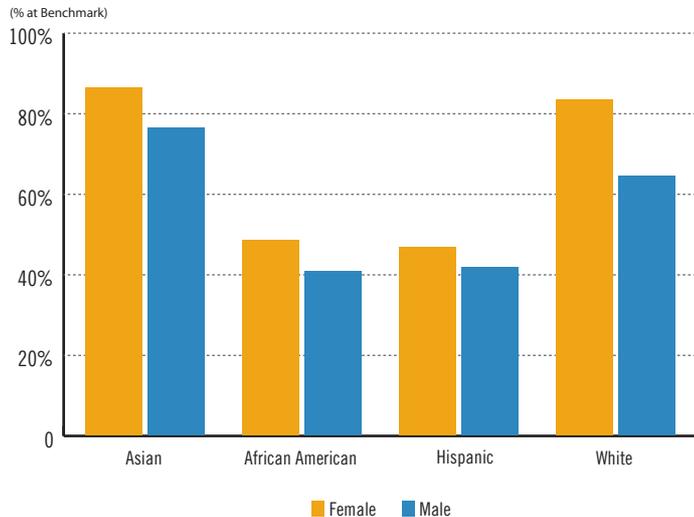


# High School Completion

## Percent of 10th Graders who pass all MCAS tests\*

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2011 / 2012	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
44%	53%	↑	75%

**What's Under the Hood:** Percentage of 10th Grade Students Scoring Proficient or Higher by Gender and Race



\*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 proficiency on ELA and Math and needs improvement in Science. We have updated the report card measures here to reflect these changes.

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

### How are we doing?

This year, Boston 10th graders performed at the highest levels of proficiency in the history of MCAS: 73% were proficient in English Language Arts (ELA), 64% were proficient in Math and 46% were proficient in Science. Additionally, the gains in each area were greater than those seen across the Commonwealth, reflecting the increased effort dedicated to improving student outcomes. Most importantly, the percent of students attaining the necessary score for graduation in all three tests also improved from 48% in 2011 to 53% in 2012.

### Why does it matter?

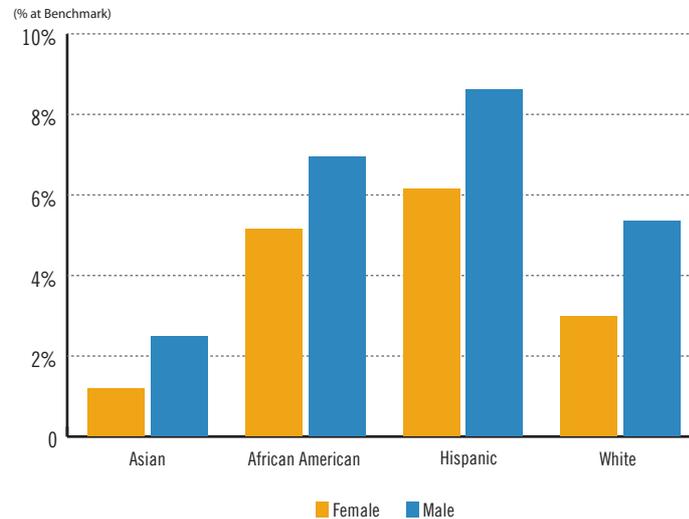
While many in the general population understand that proficiency on the MCAS is necessary in order to graduate high school, the MCAS proficiency also serves as an indicator of whether a student will enroll in and complete post-secondary education. “Not only are students with stronger reading and math scores more likely to attend college, but they are also much more likely to enroll in four year colleges and graduate with a Bachelor’s degree.”



# High School Completion Annual Dropout Rate

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2010 / 2011	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
7.3%	6.0%	↑	<3%

## What's Under the Hood: Drop out rates by race and gender



## How are we doing?

The time, energy and attention devoted to decreasing Boston's dropout rate is providing huge dividends. While this year's rate has increased three tenths of a percent, a look at the data provides encouraging news. The dropout rate for the cohort of 9th graders who entered BPS in 2006 is at 20%, its lowest level since 1991. Boston also has five non-exam high schools whose dropout rate is either zero or .7%. These schools provide examples for the entire system in retaining and engaging diverse groups of students through graduation.

## Why does it matter?

High school dropouts as a group have a tremendous impact on the Massachusetts economy. The Alliance of Excellent Education estimates that the lost lifetime earnings in Massachusetts for the class of 2010 dropouts alone would total nearly \$3.7 billion... In addition, if the state increased its male high school graduation rate by just 5%, Massachusetts' economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about \$115 million each year.

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

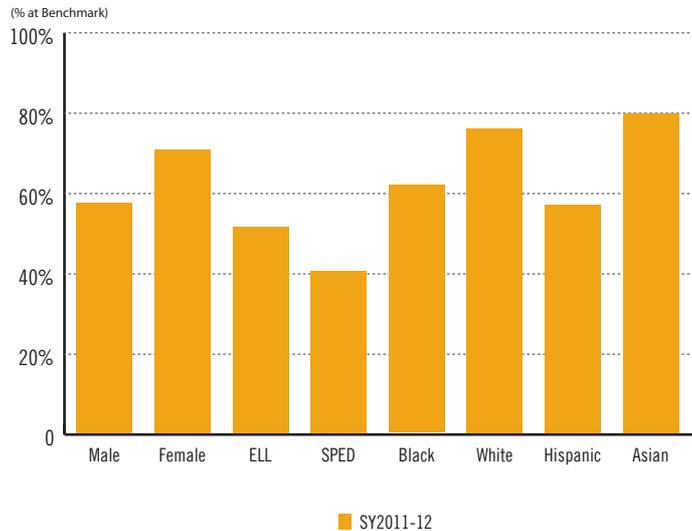


# High School Completion 4-Year Graduation Rate

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2010 / 2011	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
61.4%	64.4%	↑	80%

## What's Under the Hood:

4 year completion rates by race, gender, ELL and SPED status



## How are we doing?

The 4-year graduation rate has steadily increased since 2007, even with increased MCAS requirements for graduation over the same time period. But despite increases in Black and Hispanic graduation rates, there is still a large gap between White (76.6%) and Asian (80.4%) students and their Black (62.3%) and Hispanic (57.4%) peers. Here again several non-exam Boston schools are leading the way with graduation rates over 75%: Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, TechBoston Upper, New Mission, Boston Community Leadership Academy and Fenway. Finally, when looking at the 5 year graduation rate, 68.8% of BPS students are successfully completing high school. This is the highest percentage since reporting of this metric began with the 2006 cohort of entering 9th graders. It is important to note that this additional year produces large gains for specific populations. For example, an additional 9.6% of ELLs graduate in 5 years as well as an additional 7.7% of special education students.

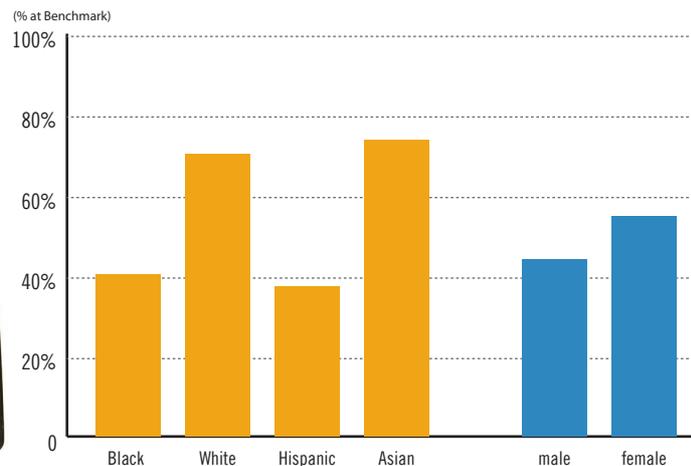


# Post-Secondary Attainment College Completion

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2010 / 2011	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
36.6% (class of 2000)	50.5% (class of 2005)	↑	70% (class of 2011)

## What's Under the Hood: Percent of BPS 2005

Graduates with Associate's Degree or Higher by race and gender



## How are we doing?

More than 50% of the BPS class of 2005 had obtained an Associate's or Bachelor's degree within 6 years of enrolling in college, up 9.2% from 41.3% of the class of 2003. Just as the completion rate has increased, so has the number of students enrolling. 77% of the class of 2005 enrolled in college up from 70% of the class of 2003.

## Why does it matter?

A post-secondary 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 \$1.73 million more than a high school dropout over the course of a lifetime.

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



# Adult Learners Entering Post-Secondary Institutions\*

Base 2008 / 2009	Current 2010 / 2011	Annual Change	Goal 2013 / 2014
2.4% (25 people)	1.5% (16 people)	Not statistically significant sample size	150% increase

## How are we doing?

The City of Boston has 24 state and city funded Adult Basic Education programs. The majority of them focus on Pre-GED, GED, ESOL and Family Literacy. All of these programs are fully subscribed and many have long waiting lists of potential students. Yet, the traditional GED program has proven to be a slow and unreliable pathway to post-secondary education. Nationally, less than half of GED holders enroll in post-secondary education and only 4% persist to earn a degree. While there are many factors that contribute to this challenge, a significant barrier is the traditional focus on the GED as a final measure of student success and program performance.

To address this issue, many GED programs are shifting focus to strengthen the relationship between earning the GED and being college ready. This year, four ABE organizations have additional funding to provide career pathways from ABE programs to Workforce Development programs including post-secondary institutions. This funding provides an intensive GED program that prepares students for the GED test and provides additional skill

building in math and English so that students test beyond developmental courses on the Accuplacer, a college placement test, and are more likely to complete college.

## Why does it matter?

More than 200,000 Boston adults do not have the education and training they need to secure self-sustaining or family-sustaining jobs. In today's economy, more than 50% of vacant jobs in Greater Boston call for at least an Associate's degree, but 41% of Boston adults are lacking the knowledge to be able to compete for those jobs.

\*The data available to capture progress on this metric is limited. We have reported here the percent of adults entering post-secondary institutions from the ABE system from among those in the ABE system who set the goal of college attendance. In the future, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will be able to report on all students who move from ABE to post-secondary enrollment but they will not be able to report retrospectively.

"Why does it Matter" Source: Goldberg 2007, "Doing the Math: What it Means to Double the number of Low-Income College Graduates"



# A Strong Educational Foundation: Thrive in 5 and Third-Grade Reading Proficiency



Launched in 2008, Thrive in 5 aims to ensure universal school readiness for all of Boston's children. Thrive in 5 achieves its mission by partnering with families, early education and care providers, health providers and others to: build community capacity to support school readiness; strengthen the quality of existing services; expand and create new programs and initiatives to meet demand; and measure progress to ensure accountability, so that each child enters Kindergarten ready to succeed at school and in life.

Five goals drive the work of Thrive in 5, woven into a simple equation:

**Ready Families**—support parents to develop the skills, confidence and knowledge they need to be leaders and advocates in their children's learning development.

**Ready Educators**—ensure that high quality early education and care is available to all young children in every setting.

**Ready Systems**—detect and address early barriers to child development through health care and other systemic interventions.

**Ready City**—transform Boston into a city that prioritizes children's school readiness by promoting effective collaboration across all sectors.

**Ready for Sustained School Success**—ultimately, ensure that young children will be ready for sustained success in school and in life.

**Community Partners:** ABCD – Head Start; Associated Early Care and Education; the Boston Alliance for Early Education; Dorchester House Multi-Service Center; Department of Early Education and Care; East Boston Social Center; Family Nurturing Center; Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative; and United South End Settlements.

## Results from the First Three Years of Thrive in 5

Thrive in 5 and its multiple cross-sector partners have made progress toward all of these goals through three city-wide strategies:

### Ready Families

To support families and provide them with the tools and information they need, Thrive in 5 launched Boston Children Thrive (BCT), a place-based initiative that engages the whole community in supporting children's healthy development and school readiness. Currently, BCT operates in five neighborhoods where 13,000 children ages 0-5, one-third of the city's young children, live: Allston/Brighton, East Boston, The South End/Lower Roxbury, Dudley and Fields Corner.



Utilizing an award-winning parent engagement and community capacity building model, a lead agency (the “hub”) in each of the BCT neighborhoods, coordinates with dozens of local organizational partners including health centers, family support programs, WIC programs, libraries, early education and care providers, and parents to deliver this effort. Thrive in 5 trains parents across the five BCT sites to serve as leaders in the early childhood efforts in their communities. These parent ambassadors plan and lead local activities and events to connect more families to the BCT network and to provide information and services to help them better support their children’s development and learning.

In the first two years of programming, evaluators from UMass Boston’s Center for Social Policy documented that BCT worked with 4,053 children, enrolling them in playgroups, connecting them to early intervention services, helping home visiting agencies reach their families, organizing field trips beyond their neighborhood boundaries and more.

## Ready Educators

The Ready Educators multi-year strategy seeks to improve the quality of early care and education programs. Thrive in 5 supports early education and care programs in meeting state standards for quality; improving professional development models to meet the educational needs of Boston’s diverse family child care provider community; and expanding the BPS community based K1 classrooms. This includes training on screening, assessment and curriculum as well as mentoring and coaching for individual teachers.





## Ready Systems

Working with health care providers and hospitals, Thrive in 5 helps to shape health care and early intervention services at the local and state levels to more effectively identify and respond to barriers to child development and school readiness through key partnerships with health care providers, community health centers and public health. Of particular significance is the creation of a Boston Local Child Wellness Council by the Boston Public Health Commission to actively contribute to Thrive in 5 by fully engaging pediatric health care providers in city-wide school readiness efforts and developing innovative strategies to better link education and healthy care for young children.

Moving forward, data from all three of Thrive in 5 city-wide strategies will shape its work to expand Boston Children Thrive to additional neighborhoods, improve the quality of early education and care, and drive efforts in the health care community to offer coordinated services to promote healthy growth and development. Ultimately, these efforts will help us reach our school readiness goal.



## Ready City

Effective data on the status of school readiness is critical to ensuring that, as a city, Boston is prioritizing the early education needs of children. The **School Readiness Pipeline** is a groundbreaking effort to build a universal screening system to measure children's development at three points: at age two, age four and Kindergarten entry. Data collected from the Pipeline will provide a snapshot of how Boston's children are doing both citywide and at the individual level. With Pipeline data families, teachers, health providers and the city as a whole will be able to take a data-driven approach to investment in early childhood, making informed, strategic decisions to tailor support and bringing valuable resources to the children, families and communities most in need. Thrive in 5 has agreed on the measurement tools and the ages for the screening, and has begun to collect initial baseline information.

## On Track for High School Graduation: The Summer Learning Project

The Boston Summer Learning Project (BSLP) is a citywide effort aimed at advancing a year-round expanded learning system that connects school, afterschool and summer learning. Launched by the Boston Opportunity Agenda as a key lever for keeping students on track for high school graduation, BSLP called on school and program providers to collaborate to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of students.

The Project aims to reverse summer learning loss, build the skills necessary for school and college success and deepen school-community partnerships. Boston After School & Beyond (BASB) co-manages the initiative with the Boston Public Schools (BPS). Together, BASB and BPS establish the guiding principles for individual partnerships to thrive: BSLP programs should be rigorous enough to count for academic credit and engaging enough to attract students voluntarily and maintain high rates of attendance and participation.

The Summer Learning Project serves high-need students, identified largely by principals, who are not likely to find their way to summer programming on their own. During the summer of 2012, BSLP involved 40 BPS schools and 17 community partners who collectively provided 1,585 students with structured and engaging summer learning opportunities. As part of the BSLP, teachers and community partner staff co-manage the programs, jointly developing and delivering academic and skill-building content and experiences for students which take advantage of the unique characteristics of the partner organization.



The Summer Learning Project has built a strong framework for integrated school-community partnerships...

**Community Partners:** Boston Private Industry Council; Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston; Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL); Boston Nature Center; Courageous Sailing; Dorchester House; Freedom House; Hale Reservation; Hyde Square Task Force; Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA); MathPower; Sociedad Latina; Sportsmen’s Tennis Club; Tenacity; Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center; USS Constitution; and YMCA of Greater Boston.

### Results from the First Three Years

Finishing its third year, the Summer Learning Project has provided more than 3,000 high-need students, grades 3-12, with educational, engaging and enriching learning experiences designed by schools and their community partners. Equally important, the Summer Learning Project has built a strong framework for integrated school-community partnerships that deliver results-driven, student-centered learning—especially for high-need students.

### Specific Design Characteristics:

- ✦ **Alignment with the curriculum standards.** Programs adopted BPS standards that are aligned with the Common Core. BPS modified its fall assessment in order to capture summer learning progress across grades and types of programs.
- ✦ **Partnerships between schools and a wide range of community organizations.** Each site location is co-led by the school and partner: Instruction is co-designed and co-delivered by teachers and community partner staff to address student needs and spark their interests. Teachers and staff from schools and partner organizations participate in joint training

on ELA and math standards as well as social-emotional approaches to learning.

- ✦ **Project based experiences.** Each partnership uses an integrated approach, so that academic content is delivered through hands-on and project-based experiences that engage and motivate students while building on the natural or cultural assets of the community organization.
- ✦ **Whole Child Instruction.** Program approaches, activities and evaluations are focused on driving academic progress and skill attainment (based on the Achieving-Connecting-Thriving [ACT] skills framework).
- ✦ **Common Measurement.** A suite of observational and written assessment tools is utilized to measure academic progress, skill gain, social-emotional growth and program quality. The BPS’s assessments serve as the measures of students’ academic progress. The Survey of After-School Youth Outcomes (SAYO) provides a visible measure of growth from the beginning to the end of the program on key skills and behaviors associated with success in school. The Program in Education, Afterschool & Resiliency’s (PEAR) Holistic Student Assessment measures a variety of social-emotional skills and dispositions that both inform program planning and, in some cases, serve as a measure of growth. The Assessment of Afterschool Program Practices Tool (APT) provides a measure of program quality. Boston Beyond also collects information on student enrollment and attendance across the different program sites in order to create a more uniform and comparable performance reports. Outcomes on all of these measures will be available in early January 2013.

# High School Completion & Post-Secondary Attainment: Success Boston—A College Completion Initiative

Designed to dramatically increase the college completion rate of Boston graduates—especially first-generation, low-income students of color—Success Boston focuses on three key areas to ensure that Boston Public Schools students are “Getting Ready, Getting In and Getting Through” college. Success Boston is a partnership of the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools (BPS), the Boston Foundation, the Boston Private Industry Council, the University of Massachusetts Boston, and 37 other Massachusetts postsecondary institutions attended by BPS graduates.

## Getting Ready

The Boston Public Schools is committed to preparing all students for college by: adopting Common Core standards; increasing the rigor of students’ high school course of studies; expanding 8th grade Algebra and Advanced Placement courses; offering new academic credit recovery courses in Boston’s high schools; increasing college advising at all high schools; and ensuring that 100% of eligible students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). By supporting academic programming in this way and strengthening advising activities, students and their families will be better positioned to make informed choices about post-secondary education.





## Getting In

Beginning with the class of 2009, the Boston Foundation and a number of nonprofit partners have been providing year-long transition and summer supports for 300 students per graduating class. The Boston Private Industry Council, uAspire (formerly known as ACCESS), American Student Assistance, Bottom Line, Freedom House and Hyde Square Task Force are providing one-on-one and group advising around both academic and non-academic barriers—as well as transition support for the first two years of college. Together they, and university student support services, 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, 38 area colleges and universities are offering BPS graduates the support they need to earn a higher education degree. These supports include tracking Boston student progress and encouraging students to use on-campus services that are known to be effective in helping them get through college. Together the colleges are also exploring strategies to broker on-campus and off-campus employment opportunities and internships that promote persistence and career exploration. Finally a committee of financial aid liaisons is working with uAspire to promote FAFSA completion, streamline financial award letters, and establish financial aid liaisons on campuses

**Community Partners:** American Student Assistance; Boston Private Industry Council; Bunker Hill Community College; Freedom House; Hyde Square; Roxbury Community College; uAspire; and UMass Boston.

## Results from the First Three Years

### Getting Ready

While there is still a great deal of work to do, the Boston Public Schools has made significant progress in expanding access to 8th grade Algebra and AP courses over the past three years. By partnering with EdVestors, the district has been able to grow the percent of students with access to Algebra from 4% to 34%. BPS has also partnered with the MASS Math + Science Initiative to expand enrollments in AP classes by 32% while maintaining passing rates needed for college credit. These and other investments in increased academic rigor are beginning to increase student preparation for post-secondary programs. In 2009, 44% of BPS graduates who enrolled as first time students in a community college or the state university system took at least one remedial course. In 2010 that percentage fell to 43% and in 2011 it fell again to 35%. At the same time, the number of students entering public post-secondary institutions increased. (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education figures)

### Getting In

Through a rigorous one-on-one case management approach, transition coaches provide students with support in: completing financial aid documents; time management; balancing school, work, and life; and exploring majors and careers. Efforts are monitored through student performance (GPA); persistence (re-enrollment); and progress (accumulation of credits toward a degree). Early results from the first two cohorts of nearly 600 Success Boston Students are promising:

- ☆ 77% of students earned a 2.0 GPA or higher
- ☆ 85% reenrolled in college in their sophomore year, compared to a re-enrollment rate of 80% for the entire BPS Class of 2008 graduates, which is the baseline.
- ☆ 70% of the students moved from remedial to credit-bearing courses by the end of their freshmen year.

Another 300 students from the Class of 2012 have started the transitions program and will receive support for two years of their college careers. This class will increase our total direct access to nearly 1,200 students.

## Getting Through

Success Boston partners have achieved tremendous success in the financial aid realm on multiple fronts. They have established financial aid liaisons on 20 campuses that serve as the “go to” resources for BPS graduates and transition coaches. Equally important, seven local universities, including the entire University of Massachusetts (UMass) system, established common financial aid terminology and developed a standardized insert letter that goes into all award notices for BPS student aid packages. The letter helps students and parents to decode the types of funding being offered by each institution and enables them to compare easily across institutions.

A pilot project started at UMass Boston which is now expanding to Bunker Hill Community College and Roxbury Community College also shows great promise. Dubbed the “embedded model” by participants, UMass Boston brought transition coaches on campus and placed them in the Advising Center. Coaches regularly attended staff meetings and trainings as

well as developed joint programming with UMass staff. This embedded model enabled the coaches to serve more students, serve all students more effectively, and connect them more easily to academic and other support as well as co- and extra-curricular activities. The embedded model also has enabled both UMass and the nonprofits to more closely monitor whether students were getting the services they needed and intervene quickly with students encountering problems.

The increased capacity provided by the embedded model allowed all BPS graduates who enrolled in the Fall of 2010 to have either a nonprofit coach or a UMass advisor. Early evidence of this collaboration has been promising:

- ☆ 85.2% of BPS graduates from the class of 2009 returned for their second year at UMass Boston compared to 81.8% for the BPS class of 2008
- ☆ BPS graduates on track to complete degrees (2.5 GPA/24 credits/six-year graduation) increased from 26% in 2008 to 36% in 2009 and to 41% for the class of 2010.

The presence of the community based coaches has expanded the capacity of the UMass advising and student support staff and built a strong bridge between organizations serving BPS graduates in the communities where they live and work and the University. This model provides a unique opportunity for college success to be owned simultaneously by community organizations and higher education institutions. It supports Success Boston’s ambitious goal of increasing degree completion rates while also expanding responsibility for students’ college success.

**The embedded model provides a unique opportunity for college success to be owned simultaneously by community organizations and higher education institutions.**

# Adult Learners & Post-Secondary Attainment: The Adult Opportunity Network

The Adult Opportunity Network aims to dramatically increase the number of Boston adults who are college and career ready...

The Adult Basic Education (ABE) system that serves adult learners has been focused for many years on preparing students for a high school credential or English competence for everyday life rather than for success in postsecondary education and today's workforce. Changing this focus requires the ABE system to strengthen partnerships with the workforce development and community college systems, leverage additional resources and build its instructional and counseling capacities to improve student transitions from ABE coursework to college and technical certificate programs.

The Boston Opportunity Agenda created the Adult Opportunity Network in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Service and World Education, Inc. It aims to dramatically increase the number of Boston adults who are college and career ready by creating a networked system of adult education providers offering a clear pathway from ABE coursework to postsecondary education that results in a certificate or degree with labor market value. Launched in June 2011, the initial two networks are each comprised of three Boston based providers.

The Adult Opportunity Network defines *college* and *career readiness* as a set of overlapping career, college, academic and personal readiness skills and knowledge needed by adults to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career pathways. The four areas of readiness are:

- ★ **Academic Readiness**—content knowledge, study skills and strategies for college level reading, writing, and algebra
- ★ **College Knowledge Readiness**—the ability to navigate college culture and admissions and financial aid processes
- ★ **Career Readiness**—the ability to articulate a realistic goal that is aligned with labor market data and identify the steps along one's education and career pathway
- ★ **Personal Readiness**—the capacity to anticipate challenges, secure supports proactively, and juggle multiple commitments while managing stress and time.

Together, each funded Adult Opportunity Network has identified educational service gaps to be filled through a coordinated continuum of shared services.

**Community Partners:** El Centro del Cardenal; International Institute of Boston; Jewish Vocational Service; Notre Dame Education Center; United South End Settlements; and YMCA International Education Center.

## Results from the First Year

Over the past year, Adult Opportunity Network agencies have worked with National College Transitions Network/World Education, Inc. to create a uniform set of standards, competencies and curriculum for use by ABE educators. Together they:

- ✦ Developed and disseminated the Adult Opportunity Portfolio guide—a set of uniform lessons designed to promote student awareness, aspirations and skill development in all four areas of college and career readiness
- ✦ Provided training and coaching to ABE educators on curriculum delivery
- ✦ Integrated college and career readiness into 21 targeted classes
- ✦ Built multi-site networks that include transition and pre-transition to college courses
- ✦ Enrolled a total of 47 adult learners from the two networks in a bridge-to-college program, college or another type of post-secondary training program.



## Conclusion

We remain determined to make Boston a city that extends opportunity to its residents from the cradle to career.



Clockwise from left: Speakers at the 2011 Boston Opportunity Agenda Report Card Event: Kristin McSwain, Executive Director, Boston Opportunity Agenda; Reverend Ray Hammond, Chair, Boston Opportunity Agenda; Thomas M. Menino, Mayor, City of Boston; Carol Johnson, Superintendent, Boston Public Schools.

Since we launched the Boston Opportunity Agenda in 2010, we have witnessed real progress toward improving student outcomes, and have invested in initiatives and interventions that hold great promise for students in Boston. Also, we have experienced a willingness to work together differently across broad and diverse partnerships at each stage of the pipeline. Our partners have affirmed that real change is possible. We know that there is much work to be done, and that challenging times are ahead of us. But we remain determined to make Boston a city that extends opportunity to its residents from the cradle to career.

A major hurdle before us is systems-level change. Since making our first shared investments, it has become increasingly apparent that cross sector work must focus intentionally on sustaining the mechanisms for translating promising and effective programmatic practices into ongoing systems-level change. For example, a good summer program that improves academics and enrichment for young people will inevitably fade away when funding ends unless we find a way to incorporate the lessons learned from this work into the ongoing, year-round work of the Boston Public Schools and its nonprofit out-of-school time partners. Central to this will be a determination to share data about what's making a difference for all students.

This systems change work, as well as a focus on expanding participation, is the next frontier for the Boston Opportunity Agenda partnership.



**Thanks to the generosity of our investors  
who have made these incredible accomplishments possible:**

Annie E. Casey Foundation  
The BEAL Companies, LLP  
Boston Children's Hospital  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Boston Rising  
Margaret A. Bush  
Deloitte LLP  
Eastern Charitable Foundation  
Ford Foundation  
Frieze Family Foundation  
Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation  
The Hayden Foundation  
John Hancock Financial Services  
Nancy R. Karp  
W. K. Kellogg Foundation  
Robert & Myra Kraft Family Foundation  
Marjorie L. and James M. Lober Fund  
Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care  
Massachusetts Department of Higher Education  
The National Summer Learning Association  
Partners HealthCare  
PwC  
Charles S. and Zena A. Scimeca Charitable Fund  
W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation  
Matthew J. & Gilda F. Strazzula Foundation  
Sunrise Fund  
Hope and Adam Suttin  
Sally Suttinfield Webb Fund  
The Wallace Foundation  
Charles A. Walsh, III

**This report would not be possible without our data partners: the Boston Indicators Project and the Boston Public Schools Department of Research, Assessment and Evaluation. We thank them for their assistance in analyzing and reporting on the enclosed metrics. Any errors are of course our own.**



[www.bostonopportunityagenda.org](http://www.bostonopportunityagenda.org)