

Acceleration Agenda: Year One Progress

In November 2009, Boston Public Schools unveiled a five-year strategic plan for our district. Under the leadership of Superintendent Carol R. Johnson, investments outlined in the Acceleration Agenda were immediately implemented this school year. These important investments fall into four categories which serve as the key strategies for reaching our goals for the Acceleration Agenda.

- ▶ 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

Many of the year one strategies undertaken this school year focus on district-wide improvement in a variety of educational and operational areas.

Strengthen teaching and school leadership.

▶ Improvements for English Language Learners (ELLs)

- Increased Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) programming for all ELLs offer English as a Second Language and content instruction in math, science, social studies, and language arts designed specifically for ELLs.
- SEI programs are being redistributed across schools to more closely reflect current demographic distribution of ELLs by language and neighborhood.
- The ELL Task Force has convened regularly to make recommendations and assist in our communication process with families across the city.
- Funding for this school year reflects an \$8.2 million investment over two years to support Newcomers Academy, Newcomer Assessment Center, professional development for staff, and additional direct service providers.
- We anticipate an additional \$10 million will be allocated for SY2011-2012 to address ELL staffing needs that result from program and service expansions.

▶ Special Education Redesign

- Began work with Education Development Center's Urban Special Education Collaborative to implement recommendations from the Council of Great City Schools' study of BPS programs and services for students with disabilities.
- Increased the number of inclusion teachers at schools.
- After extensive national search, identified finalists for new Assistant Superintendent for Special Education position.
- January 28 retreat scheduled for district leadership across all departments to continue development of a consistent and coherent system of supports for students experiencing academic and behavioral challenges.
- Participated in Mayor's Autism Summit to begin to develop a citywide approach to improving programs and extended learning services for students on the autism spectrum.

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Strengthen teaching and school leadership (continued)

► Cultural Competence Training

- Cultural proficiency training provided by the Achievement Gap Office in 8 schools and 4 central office departments.
- Cultural competence the primary focus of professional development for principals and headmasters at their sessions with the Superintendent this school year.
- Achievement Gap Committee re-established to ensure implementation of the Achievement Gap Policy.

► Formative Assessments

- Formative assessments launched for students in grades 3-10 in English and Math in order to regularly monitor student performance and support a cycle of instructional improvements for staff.
- High school administrators and teachers have completed training and will administer tests by the first week in February; ongoing training for staff working with students in grades 3-8; testing to launch mid-February.

► School Based Data Teams

- Accelerating Improvement through Inquiry (AI2) started in 14 schools.
- Positive gains in student performance demonstrated by schools in second year of implementation.

► Early Childhood Education

- 3 early learning centers awarded national accreditation this year.
- Summer reading academies for 4 and 5-year-olds launched to help students learn to read before starting grade 1.

► Districtwide Elementary Reading Curriculum

- This year's implementation of Pearson's *Reading Street* materials is addressing the diverse learning needs of our K-5 students and minimizing the impact of student mobility within the district. More than 2,000 teachers have received training from Pearson to support implementation.
- Additional materials (*Sidewalks*) are designed to support struggling readers.

► Advanced Work Class (AWC) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)

- AWC Committee made recommendations to the School Committee for program improvements and expansion, with priority for Pathways Schools with incomplete strands.
- BPS expanded AVID programs to three elementary schools this school year; elementary schools designated as "turnaround schools" will be the priority for expansion in School Year 2011-2012.

► Algebra 1 in Grade 8

- 150 students attended a program this past summer to prepare rising 8th grade students to excel in Algebra 1.
- 75 current 8th graders participate in Saturday School for Algebra support
- All Algebra 1 teachers citywide in middle schools and K-8 schools meet monthly to receive specialized training.

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Strengthen teaching and school leadership (continued)

► Advanced Placement (AP) Expansion

- More than 150 teachers trained in teaching Advanced Placement classes, preparing them to offer college level courses in our high schools.
- Increase in AP enrollment by almost 200 11th and 12th grade students since SY 2008-2009.

► Alternative Programs

- Re-Engagement Center opened in July 2009; 500 students have returned to BPS to earn their high school diplomas.
- BPS has engaged Jobs for the Future and ProspectNeal Consulting to collaboratively develop a multi-year strategic plan to better serve our off-track/out-of-school youth.

► Credit Recovery

- More than 200 students participated in a citywide graduation in August 2009 after earning high school diplomas through online learning.
- Credit Recovery now available to all high school students who are over-age and a few courses short of graduation.

Replicate success and turn around low-performing schools.

► Pathways to Excellence

- Continued support for expanded new K-8s (Higginson/Lewis and King) as a result of merged schools in SY 2008-2009, as well as for pilot schools that expanded to enroll students from the former Lewenberg and Wilson middle schools.

► Montessori and International Baccalaureate (IB)

- Successful Montessori program at East Boston Early Education Center launched this year, to be expanded to grade 1.
- Internationally recognized IB program implementation underway at Quincy Upper and Snowden International.

► Turnaround Schools

- Identified 14 schools that required rapid, targeted interventions in order to accelerate student achievement; immediately began a process of diagnostic work to assess the needs and necessary supports for each school community. *Recommendations for Turnaround Schools can be found later in this document.*

Deepen partnerships with parents, students, and the community.

► Circle of Promise

- “Circle of Promise” identified in the Acceleration Agenda as the geographic area surrounding the heart of Boston’s north Dorchester and Roxbury neighborhoods.
- Started mapping existing community resources in the Circle to better coordinate efforts and engage faith-based, business, and community-based organizations to help us address the academic and non-academic needs of students and families.

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Deepen partnerships with parents, students, and the community (continued)

▶ Parent University

- Three Parent University day-long sessions over the course of this year to bring parents of BPS students together to take courses that increase families' capacity to effectively support their children's education.
- Highlighted in *Time* magazine and the *Boston Globe* for innovative work.

▶ Arts Expansion

- BPS has raised \$1.3 million and been awarded a grant from the Wallace Foundation to develop a long-term plan to increase students' access to high quality arts education.
- This year more than \$540,000 has been granted to schools to provide high quality arts classes to approximately 2,000 students.

▶ Student Health and Wellness

- Through partnerships, increased students' access to healthy and appetizing meals by providing homemade meals and locally grown produce in 12 additional schools.
- Developing a comprehensive, district-wide health and wellness strategic plan to increase physical activity, physical education, and nutrition education
- Awarded the Carol White Physical Education for Progress grant to expand physical education in 36 schools.

▶ Middle and High School Athletics

- Partnered with Suffolk Construction's Red and Blue Foundation to launch a \$7.5 million funding campaign to offer more athletic opportunities to students and strengthen academic supports for athletes.
- Immediate results: launched 5 girls' intramural soccer teams and increased participation by 40%.
- In partnership with the PlayBall! Foundation, created new middle school football league.

Redesign district services for effectiveness, efficiency, and equity.

▶ Management Institute

- Launched high quality training and coaching program for senior managers and leaders to increase management capacity and effectiveness.

▶ Transportation Efficiencies

- Initiated implementation of state-of-the-art bus routing software to optimize routing efficiency and find ways to reduce transportation costs.
- Reviewed door-to-door transportation services for students to achieve greater efficiency across the district.

▶ Building Modernization

- Collaboration with the Massachusetts School Building Association to undertake substantial renovations at two BPS schools: Quincy Upper School and Dearborn Middle School.

An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap

Putting Children First through Education Reform

To get the results we seek — at the speed we want — we must make transformative changes that boost achievement for students, improve quality choices for parents, and increase opportunities for teachers. We need to empower our educators to quickly innovate and implement what works.

— Mayor Thomas M. Menino

On January 18, 2010, Gov. Deval Patrick signed into law An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap (S.2247), the most sweeping education reform bill since 1993. The law gives the Boston Public Schools powerful new tools to improve our schools and help children achieve. Education reform was aimed at establishing new types of innovative public schools, allowing greater intervention into underperforming schools and districts, and revising the state’s charter school laws. This law will also strengthen our ability to compete for up to \$250 million in federal Race to the Top funding.

Interventions for Underperforming Schools

While there are many exceptional schools across the Commonwealth, others are chronically underperforming. In Boston, we have identified 14 schools in this category. The new law:

- ▶ Authorizes the Commissioner of Education to designate up to 72 Massachusetts schools as “underperforming” based on student achievement and improvement measures. These schools will be targeted for aggressive intervention through a **turnaround plan** developed in collaboration with the superintendent, the school committee, the local teachers’ union, administrators, teachers, community representatives, and parents. The plan will focus on **educational strategies** that best meet the needs of students within these schools, and may include extended learning time, community partnerships, professional development for teachers, and additional focus on students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
- ▶ Gives superintendents **greater administrative flexibility** in staffing and school work rules and the authority to negotiate changes in collective bargaining agreements through a resolution process. Teachers in underperforming schools may be dismissed for “good cause” but have a right to appeal through expedited arbitration.

Innovations for Public Schools

Massachusetts is competing against other states for a potential \$250 million in federal funds through the **Race to the Top** program. States that win these grants will receive new funding for almost all schools, as well as targeted funding for underperforming schools. To be successful, states must demonstrate their commitment to innovation. The new law:

- ▶ Establishes new **Innovation Schools** which closely resemble Boston’s pilot school model. These schools will have increased flexibility and autonomy in the areas of curriculum, budget, school schedule and calendar, and teachers’ contract provisions. Through collaboration with teachers, parents, and community stakeholders, Innovation Schools may serve as an in-district alternative to other types of charter schools.
- ▶ Allows up to 14 new in-district **Horace Mann charter schools** (with at least 4 in Boston) to be created without union approval as currently required. Horace Mann schools have the flexibility to foster new types of innovation and success.

Increased Charter School Choice

Charter schools are public schools that were created to provide additional choices for parents and expand opportunities for student achievement. Charter schools operate independently of school districts, while retaining local funding. The new law:

- ▶ Lifts the **cap** on charter schools from 9 to 18 percent of new school spending in the lowest 10 percent performing school districts; and eliminates the cap limiting the state’s total charter school population to 4 percent.
- ▶ Establishes **new requirements** for charter schools to develop recruitment and retention plans, fill some open seats with waitlisted students, and provide greater transparency and accountability in the state’s approval process.
- ▶ Increases and extends **reimbursement** to school districts affected by charter school growth. This funding reform will allow districts to retain additional resources within the public school system.

Turnaround School Recommendations

How did BPS identify the Turnaround Schools? ★

The 14 schools designated as **Turnaround Schools** have demonstrated persistently low academic performance, as measured by:

1. English Language Arts (ELA) MCAS scores
2. Mathematics MCAS scores
3. Average ELA and Math Composite Performance Index (CPI)
4. CPI growth over time
5. Graduation rates (high schools only)

★ *Schools identified by BPS for turnaround have not yet been designated by the state. State designation is required for many of the flexibilities provided by the Education Reform Law.*

Turnaround Schools

Elementary Schools	K–8 Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Blackstone (48)	Orchard Gardens♦ (46)	Dearborn (49)	English (70)
Dever (50)	Tobin (54)	Harbor♦ (57)	Odyssey (72)
Emerson (53)			
E. Greenwood (57)			
Guild (51)			
Holland (49)			
J. F. Kennedy (56)			
Trotter (49)			

Numbers in parentheses reflect schools' scores on the **composite performance index** in ELA and Math divided by 2. MCAS results for students in all grades within a school are combined to calculate the school's CPI for a given subject, group and time period. A composite performance index of 100 indicates that 100% of students are performing at *proficient* or *advanced* levels.

♦ Pilot schools

Core Beliefs: What Excellent Schools *Must* Have

- Experienced transformational leadership
- Effective teaching and additional time to support student and staff learning
- Culturally competent staff with high expectations for all students
- Regular monitoring and accountability for results
- Strategies to directly address persistent achievement gaps
- Active engagement and partnership with families and the community
- Full services to support students' social and emotional needs

Our Commitment to Change

We will maximize the flexibilities granted by the Education Reform Law to ensure that every student receives a world class education:

- **Change principal leadership in a minimum of 6 schools;** 6 have already been changed, effective July 2009
- **"Fresh start" at 6 schools.** Every staff member who wishes to remain in the school must reapply for their position.
- **Merge 2 schools with 2 higher performing schools,** converting them into new K-8s
- Identify, evaluate, and **remove ineffective teachers,** using legislation to expedite arbitration
- Create incentives to recruit **highly effective turnaround leader and teacher teams** to these schools and offer rewards for results; partner with Teach Plus and Boston Teacher Residency
- In addition to turning around these 14 schools, create up to 3 **new in-district charter schools** (Horace Mann Schools) in 2011-2012
- Create a **request for proposals** seeking out highly effective **charter management organizations** and **innovative models** from BPS teachers to operate schools serving students with persistent achievement gaps
- Forge **relationships with area charter schools** for professional development and technical assistance

Turnaround School Recommendations (continued)

Progress to Date

- Data analysis and diagnostic work completed by academic superintendents and cross-functional teams
 - Staff and community meetings convened
 - Leadership development needs identified
 - Ongoing meetings with DESE held to review district's prior planning work
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Investments in *All* Turnaround Schools

► **Instructional Improvements:**

- Expanded time:
 - February and April acceleration academies in Math and English Language Arts in 9 schools, providing 10%–15% more content instruction in subjects where students need it most
 - Saturday and after-school academies in 5 schools
- Redesign of service delivery for English language learners and students with disabilities in response to school-specific data; work toward dual certification for all teachers
- Cultural proficiency training through the Achievement Gap Office and external partners
- Leadership and instructional coaching from educational experts in district and through university partners
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) for elementary schools: a nationally renowned curriculum designed to prepare students for college level work

► **Monitoring and Accountability:** Regular cross-functional team meetings to track progress at 14 schools, and prompt, comprehensive support across central office departments to address school needs

► **Student Support Services:** Increased, more comprehensive services to address non-academic needs of students and families that impact student success

► **Partnerships:** Investment partners from business, arts, faith-based, higher education, and community sectors in each school; support for and evaluation of existing partnerships

Future Investments

- **Significant staffing changes** to create cohorts of turnaround teacher teams
- **Expanded school day and/or year** to allow additional student learning time, enrichment opportunities, and teacher collaboration and professional development
- **Arts and technology** access and use for all

Next Steps

- **Meet with each faculty** at the most impacted schools to inform them of the changes we will enact
 - **Communicate with the families and school site councils** of each school, followed by community meetings before February vacation at the schools with significant changes
 - **Work with engaged partners, teacher leaders, administrators, and families** to create comprehensive turnaround plans for each school
 - **Seek state approval** of an expedited process for turnaround plan approval to allow us to quickly capitalize on anticipated federal funding, new autonomies, and important preparation during the summer months
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