



# Boston Public Schools

## POINTS OF PRIDE

*Over the past decade, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) has been transformed from a failing school district to one of the most renowned urban public school systems in the country.*

In 2006, after four years as a finalist, Boston won the distinguished **Broad Prize for Urban Education** as the best city school district in the nation, earning \$1 million in college scholarships for BPS graduates.

BPS is the home of many **firsts in the nation**: first public school (Boston Latin School, 1635), first public elementary school (Mather Elementary School, 1639), first public school system (1647), first public high school (English High School, 1821).

Over the past several years, many **national media outlets** – including the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *U.S. News & World Report* – have heralded Boston as a model for urban school district reform. *Forbes* magazine rated Boston at the top of the list of the “Best Education in the Biggest Cities.”

Superintendent **Carol R. Johnson** began her tenure in August 2007 after a national search. Dr. Johnson is a nationally acclaimed leader with successful track records of school and district transformation as Superintendent in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Memphis, Tennessee. In 2008, the National Association of Black School Educators (NABSE) presented her with the Joseph E. Hill Superintendent of the Year Award.

In 2004, the Boston School Committee, appointed by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, earned the first **Award for School Board Excellence** from the National School Boards Association, citing the board’s key role in adopting policies to support standards-based reform and consistently balancing the district’s operating budget.

Elizabeth Reilinger, former Chairperson of the Boston School Committee, won the prestigious **Richard R. Green Award** in 2007 from the Council of the Great City Schools for urban school board leadership.

Boston teachers, principals, and schools have won numerous state and national prizes and awards. Since 1997, ten Boston educators – including former Superintendent Michael G. Contompasis – have been selected for the highly competitive **Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award**.

Former Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant won the prestigious **Richard R. Green Award in Urban Excellence** as the nation’s best city schools superintendent, **Massachusetts Superintendent of the Year**, and a *Governing* magazine **Public Official of the Year**.

In 2006, Jesse Auger from the Hernandez K-8 School was named **Massachusetts Teacher of the Year**.

Fifty-two Boston Public Schools teachers have earned **National Board Certification**.

Boston student have demonstrated consistent and sustained improvement on the state **MCAS** (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) exams since the tests were first administered in 1998. On the Grade 10 mathematics exams alone – which students must pass in order to graduate – 84% of Boston students now pass on the first attempt, which is more than triple the 1998 passing rate of only 25%.

On the **National Assessment of Educational Progress** (NAEP) in Mathematics – also known as the “Nation’s Report Card” – Boston 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students have outpaced their peers in all ten other participating cities.

“Nearly 15 years after the mayor and an appointed school board took charge of the Boston schools, the changes are obvious and sometimes remarkable.”

**Los Angeles Times**

“In the past 10 years, the Boston schools... have seen a steady upward trajectory of performance.”

**The Washington Post**

“Boston’s once maligned public schools have become a model by focusing on teaching.”

**U.S. News** & WORLD REPORT

In 2009, Superintendent Johnson opened **Newcomers Academy**, an innovative dropout prevention program to support immigrant high school students who arrive in the U.S. during the school year with limited English skills.

In 1996, the **Annenberg Foundation** awarded Boston its largest-ever single grant of \$10 million for systemic school reform focused on literacy. The grant was matched by \$20 million in public and private funds and became the catalyst for Boston's district-wide initiative for "Whole School Improvement."

Since 1998, the City of Boston has constructed **six new school buildings**, including three early education centers providing full-day surround care for students ages 3-6, as well as two middle schools and a K-8 school.

Ten Boston schools have been named **Compass Schools** by the Massachusetts Department of Education for outstanding MCAS performance.

*U.S. News & World Report* ranked **Boston Latin School #19** on its first list of America's 100 Best High Schools. The magazine awarded silver and bronze medals to eight other BPS high schools. *Newsweek* also ranked Boston Latin School #78 on its list of the top 1,200 public high schools.

*Boston Magazine* named four Boston schools – the Hale, Kilmer, Mason and Quincy elementary schools – among its list of the **100 Best Elementary Schools** in Eastern Massachusetts.

The Timilty Middle School and the McKay, Murphy and Sarah Greenwood K-8 Schools have won **National Distinguished Title I School Awards**.

Teachers from the Hernandez K-8 School were selected for *USA Today's All-USA Teacher Team*.

By September 2009, Boston will have 24 **pilot schools** – in-district charter schools – and has agreement with the Boston Teachers Union to open at least four more. They include the **Boston Arts Academy**, the city's first public high school for the visual and performing arts.

Today, Boston offers families 38 citywide **high school** options, 27 of which are schools smaller than 400 students. In 1995, only 6 out of 21 high schools were small schools.

The district has **reduced class size** at every grade level, with limits as low as 22 students in the youngest grades, and most classrooms in the city contain fewer than the maximum allowed.

Since 1998, Boston has guaranteed a **full-day kindergarten** seat to every five-year-old, one of the first school systems in the country to do so. BPS is now expanding full-day pre-school programs for four-year-olds, offering more than 2,000 "K1" seats in September 2008, up from 700 available seats just three years ago.

**Boston Teacher Residency**, the district's teacher preparation program, is a finalist for the distinguished Innovations in Government Award presented by the Kennedy School of Government.

By September 2009, Boston families will have access to twenty-seven **K-8 programs** spanning kindergarten through grade 8, up from only three such programs in 1995.

In 2002, Mayor Menino founded **WriteBoston**, a program to improve the writing skills of students in seven of Boston's public high schools. In 2006, the Social Innovation Forum named the program "Social Innovator of the Year."

The **Boston Schoolyards Initiative**, a public-private partnership, has attracted more than \$15 million to build and refurbish the city's public schoolyards. Since 1995, the program has helped reconstruct 71 schoolyards, with plans to invest in at least 16 more over the next two years.

In the past decade, the capacity of **after-school programs** around the city has nearly doubled to 48,000 seats, with more than 110 programs. Since 1998, BPS has tripled the number of school buildings open until 5:00 p.m. or later for additional programming.

In 1996, there was one **computer** for every 63 students. Today, the citywide ratio is one computer for every four students. A new program called Project Refresh brings in donated high-end computers from Boston area corporations.

In October 1998, Boston became the first urban school district in the country to provide high speed **Internet access** and wire all of its schools. The **Laptops for Learning** initiative provides every BPS teacher with a laptop for classroom use.

**Technology Goes Home**, which has been nationally recognized as a leading program that bridges the digital divide, has graduated over 3,000 families since its inception eight years ago.

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