



First Annual Report Card

September, 2011

# A Historic Partnership

Barr Foundation

The Beal Companies, LLP

The Boston Foundation

Boston Public Schools

Catholic Charities Archdiocese  
of Boston

City of Boston

Combined Jewish

Philanthropies of Boston

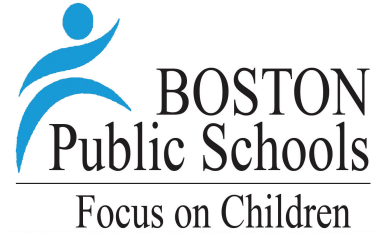
Eos Foundation

Robert & Myra Kraft Family  
Foundation

Nellie Mae Education  
Foundation

New Profit Inc.

United Way of Massachusetts  
Bay and Merrimack Valley



# Table of Contents

Letter from the Chair and Executive Director | 2

About Us | 3

The Pipeline | 5

Moving Forward | 6

Boston Opportunity Agenda Goals & Measures Update | 7

A Strong Educational Foundation: Thrive in 5 | 12

On Track for High School Graduation: The Summer Learning Project | 15

College Completion: Success Boston | 17

Post-Secondary Attainment: The Adult Opportunity Network | 20

Conclusion | 23

Honoring Myra Kraft | 24

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to share with you the first annual Boston Opportunity Agenda report card. In it we highlight our progress towards achieving the ambitious goals laid out last year with our launch. There is much to celebrate. As a city, our collective work on behalf of students of all ages has led to gains on almost every measure. More of our young people are entering school ready to learn, graduating from high school, and succeeding in higher education. This progress enriches our entire city and strengthens our continued economic growth.

The Boston Opportunity Agenda has also grown. After hiring our first Executive Director, we launched a new Adult Learning Network and expanded the Summer Learning Project, engaging over 1,500 young people in enriching summer programming. Since this is our inaugural report, in addition to reporting on the goals and measures the Boston Opportunity Agenda is tracking, we have dedicated a large portion of this report to information about our partnerships, the way we work together, and the design of the programs in which we are investing.

While this is an impressive start, there is much more that must be done if we are to achieve the goals we have set for 2014. Boston is rich in strong community-based nonprofits, social entrepreneurs and programs for student development, but we don't currently have a system that integrates and leverages our assets. This report card lays out initial ideas for knitting together the impressive work done by multiple providers, government and philanthropists across the city so that we can increase our collective impact and see greater student gains. We hope that you will contribute to these ideas over the coming year so that our 2012 report card demonstrates even greater gains for students across the entire educational pipeline.

We look forward to working 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** marks the first time that the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the city's leading public charities and many local foundations have come together to ensure that all residents have access to the education necessary for upward economic mobility, civic engagement, and life-long 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 systemic change that will ultimately impact all Boston residents. Our partnership is driven by three organizing principles.

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

Accurate and timely data is both a call to action and an accountability mechanism. We will hold ourselves accountable for the change we wish to see by regularly reporting progress on key metrics. Through our annual report card, forums, evaluations and community dialogues, we aim to educate ourselves and the Greater Boston community about our challenges, progress and collective impact.

### **Our investments must produce immediate gains and long-term system change.**

Boston Opportunity Agenda investments are designed to expedite the positive educational outcomes for underserved individuals currently in the education pipeline and to use the continuous learning from those investments to make policy and funding recommendations that will generate large scale system change. 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.**

Creating long-term systemic change is not for the faint of heart or the lone ranger. 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.

Over the past several years, the Boston Opportunity Agenda partner organizations have used these principles to guide our collective work and network structure. The partnership is governed by the CEOs of each member organization who meet on a monthly basis to discuss our progress, priorities, strategies and outcomes. On a day-to-day basis, each of our priority funding initiatives is overseen by a working group comprised of staff from

**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.**



member organizations chaired by an organization with funding expertise in that arena. The United Way chairs early childhood education; the Barr Foundation chairs K-12; the Boston Foundation chairs college completion; and Combined Jewish Philanthropies chairs our adult education work. In this way, the Boston Opportunity Agenda leverages the expertise, ideas and resources of all partnership members.

In the coming year, we will be focused on developing mechanisms so that others can join us by sharing data, co-investing in our priority initiatives or building new networks that target agenda outcomes.

# The Pipeline

The education pipeline begins by building a solid educational foundation for all of our city's children and continues through the entire K-12 system, effectively preparing Boston's students for high school graduation, college readiness and success. It extends to adults, including 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, the Boston Opportunity Agenda partners are investing in a set of high-leverage priority 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 convened by Mayor Thomas M. Menino and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley 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 utilizing time, we can begin to close the achievement gap and ensure that students are on track for graduation. By linking out-of-school education experiences with academic improvements already underway in the Boston Public Schools, the *Summer Learning Project*, promotes student achievement and develops new models for out-of-school programs that combine academics and social emotional development for students.

**High School and College Completion** A high school diploma and a post-secondary degree are 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. *Success Boston* is a college completion initiative developed through a partnership of the Mayor's Office, the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Foundation, the Boston Private Industry Council and UMass Boston to ensure that students "Get Ready, Get In, and Get Through" higher education.

**Post-Secondary Attainment** The level of education and skills that Massachusetts adults need to attain good jobs has never been higher, yet the 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 enhanced academic and other supports to ease the transition to college.

As a collective, the Boston Opportunity Agenda members have pledged to invest at least \$27 million by 2014 to support these priority initiatives. We are also committed to exploring other investment opportunities that arise if they are in line with our organizing principles and goals.

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

## Moving Forward

**Boston is at the forefront of the national conversation about using cross sector collaboration or collective impact to solve community problems**

Boston is at the forefront of the national conversation about using cross sector collaboration or collective impact to solve community problems (for more information see the Winter 2011 *Stanford Social Innovation Review*). As such we have been recognized by Strive, a national network of communities working to create the civic infrastructure to unite stakeholders around shared goals, measures and results in education. Boston has been named a “Cradle to Career” community by Strive and is participating in a national learning community designed to share best practices and raise policy issues.

Over the coming year, we will be exploring at least two important expansions of our work informed by the national conversation and our local experience. The first is the development of a shared data or measurement system that allows community based organizations, parents and educators to share information about student progress and utilization of community resources across the education pipeline. Many of the building blocks for such a system are already in place in Boston including the BostonOne Card introduced by Mayor Menino, Boston Navigator, the Boston Promise Initiative data collection, the Boston Foundation’s Boston Indicators Project and its new data resource called WEAVE.

We can also benefit from the lessons learned by Strive with the creation and implementation of their Community Partner Dashboard. Understanding the impact of programming on student achievement and development is critical to our continued success. Having access to common data will accelerate this process and move us forward as a city in achieving our goals.

Second, the Boston Opportunity Agenda will begin facilitating conversations among community-based providers that work to achieve outcomes along the educational pipeline in the hope of identifying sub indicators that can be quantified and tracked. For example, tutoring and mentoring providers could identify a joint set of sub indicators leading to reading proficiency at the third-grade level which they agree to capture and report on moving forward. Our hope is to coordinate hub and spoke networks similar to those utilized in Thrive and 5, Success Boston and Strive which can leverage the assets of our strong community based programs and create a supportive system that benefits all Boston students.



# Boston Opportunity Agenda Goals & Measures Update

One of the organizing principles of the Boston Opportunity Agenda is the use of data to drive change. Not only the use of data in evaluating and continuously improving our priority investments but more importantly to constantly keep the goals of the Opportunity Agenda in the public view. Annually we will publically review the current status of our pipeline goals so that all Bostonians understand the progress that has been made and the work that is still to come.

The progress towards the goals on the following pages reflects the collective work of Boston's education structural reforms, area nonprofits, philanthropies, business, and the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Superintendent Carol Johnson. By and large the news is positive; in almost every area we have made gains. However, the gains are modest and if we maintain the current trajectory, with one exception, we will not achieve the goals that we have set for 2014. Moving forward, it is critical that we create a system to support the powerful individual programs that serve Boston's students. Only by working together, concentrating on student transitions, and identifying gaps in our current services will we be able to expedite our gains and achieve our goals.



One of the organizing principles of the Boston Opportunity Agenda is the use of data to drive change.

# A Strong Educational Foundation

8



Measure	Base 2008/ 2009	Current 2009/ 2010	Goal 2013/ 2014	How are we doing?
<p><b>Early Literacy</b> Percent of entering Kindergarteners achieving DIBELS* benchmark</p>	54%	56% (75% at end of year)	75%	<p>The DIBELS test is given twice a year—once when children enter Kindergarten (which is the measure we are tracking here), and another when they leave. While the progress for <i>entering</i> Kindergarteners is a modest 2%, progress for those <i>leaving</i> Kindergarten is very impressive. 75% of children leaving Kindergarten in 2010 achieved the DIBELS benchmark in reading and literacy that is necessary to enter 1st grade ready to learn. This is a huge leap forward from just 56% at the beginning of the year.</p>
<p><b>3rd Grade Reading Proficiency</b> Percent of 3rd graders who are proficient readers</p>	31%	37% (35% in 2010/2011)	85%	<p>From 2008/09 to 2009/10, BPS 3rd grade reading proficiency increased by 6%. It fell between 2009/10 and 2010/11 by 2%. While this represents an increase of 4% over two years, there is more work to be done. Also, deep disparities exist: in 2010/2011, 62% of white students and 51% of Asian students were proficient compared to 28% of African Americans and 31% of Latinos.</p>

\*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. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills.

## On Track for High School Graduation

Measure	Base 2008/ 2009	Current 2009/ 2010	Goal 2013/ 2014	How are we doing?
<p><b>8th Grade Algebra 1 Enrollment for Non-Exam School Students</b></p> <p>Percent of non-exam school 8th graders who are enrolled in Algebra 1</p>	4%	26%	40%	Through targeted investments by BPS and EdVestors in the 8th Grade Expansion Initiative, the percent of non-Exam School 8th graders enrolled in Algebra 1 increased by 21% from 4% to 26% in one academic year.
<p><b>B or Higher in Math 8</b></p> <p>Percent of 8th graders receiving a B or higher in Algebra 1 or Math 8</p>	10%	10%	80%	Given the tremendous increase in the number of BPS students accessing Algebra and a decrease in those taking Math 8, we will be retiring this metric in future reports.



# High School Completion



Measure	Base 2008/2009	Current 2009/2010	Goal 2013/2014	How are we doing?
<p><b>Passing All 10th Grade MCAS Tests</b></p> <p>Percent of 10th graders who pass all MCAS tests</p>	65%	76% (76.7% in 2010/2011)	75%	This 11% increase is a tremendous achievement, surpassing the 75% goal for 2013/2014 and maintaining it during 2010/2011. Based on this year's figures, there was a 92.6% pass rate for ELA, 86% for Math and 81% for Science. However, when using Proficiency as the standard, only 68% achieved the benchmark in ELA and only 60% achieved the benchmark in Math.
<p><b>Reduced Annual Dropout Rate</b></p> <p>Annual high school dropout rate for BPS students</p>	7.3%	5.7%	<3%	Across grades 9-12, students in the 12th grade had the highest dropout rate at 6.2% followed by 10th graders at 5.9 percent. Both 9th and 11th graders had dropout rates below 6%. Students of color had higher dropout rates: 7% among Latinos and 6% among African Americans compared to 3% of white students and less than 2% of Asian students. (Updated by the BPS).
<p><b>Four-Year Graduation Rate</b></p> <p>Four-year graduation rate for BPS high school students</p>	61.4%	63.2%	80%	The four-year graduation rate for the BPS class of 2009/2010 was 63.2%, slightly higher than the class of 2009. Nearly 80% of Asians and 75% of whites in the class of 2009/2010 graduated within four years—meeting or nearing the goal—while 61% of African Americans and 57% of Latinos achieved this benchmark.

# Post-Secondary Attainment

Measure	Base 2008/2009	Current 2009/2010	Goal 2013/2014	How are we doing?
<p><b>BPS Grads with Associate's Degree or Higher</b></p> <p>Percent of BPS grads who obtain an Associate's Degree or higher within 6 years of enrolling in college</p>	36.6% (class of 2000)	41.3% (class of 2003)	70% (class of 2011)	More than 41% of the BPS class of 2003 had obtained an Associate's or Bachelor's degree within 6 years of enrolling in college, up 5% from 36.6% of college enrollees of the class of 2003. Just as the completion rate has increased, so has the number of students enrolling. More than 70% of the class of 2003 enrolled in college, up from 68% of the class of 2000—a 2% increase.
<p><b>Adult Learners Entering Post-Secondary Institutions</b></p> <p>Percent of ABE students who enroll in post-secondary institutions</p>	2.4%	NA	150% increase	The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is in the process of developing a new and sophisticated method of tracking adult learners who are entering post-secondary institutions, which will be reflected in next year's Boston Opportunity Agenda Report Card.



# A Strong Educational Foundation: Thrive in 5



12

## Building a Strong 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. Studies show that healthy development early on supports greater opportunities in education and the workforce, as well as better overall physical and mental health long into adulthood. These early investments lead to substantial cost savings for both individuals and society later in life. Boston is home to many innovative, proven programs that provide what young children need to create a strong foundation for their future success. Our challenge is to make sure that these programs work together and provide support to all our children across our city, especially those facing the greatest challenges.

## Thrive in 5

Thrive in 5 was launched in 2008 with the goal of ensuring universal school readiness for all of Boston's children. A partnership of the City of Boston and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, it is committed to collaborating across the many sectors and programs that touch the lives of young children and families to ensure that children of all races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities and languages have the opportunities and support they need for success in school and beyond.

Thrive in 5's goals are:

- ✦ **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 respond to barriers to child development and school readiness early through health care and early childhood systems of intervention.
- ✦ **Ready City**—Transform Boston into a city that prioritizes children's school readiness by promoting effective collaboration across all sectors.
- ✦ **Children Ready for Sustained School Success**—Ultimately, ensure that young children will be ready for sustained success in school and beyond.

## Progress by Thrive in 5 Over the Past Year

Over the last year, Thrive in 5 and its citywide partners have:

- ✦ **Created lasting, connected webs of neighborhood partners and resources to engage the whole community in supporting children's healthy development and school readiness.** Boston Children Thrive (BCT) was launched in 2010 in Allston/Brighton, East Boston, South End/Lower Roxbury, Dudley (Roxbury/North Dorchester), and Fields Corner (Dorchester). BCT brings parents, community organizations and neighborhood residents together to support on-the-ground efforts to provide families with resources, information and support.

Through play groups, outreach by parent ambassadors, activities in local businesses, and regular workshops and family events, BCT hub agencies and their partners have reached thousands of families, with approximately 40% becoming connected to resources.

- ✦ **Planned and began piloting innovative models to support professional development in Boston's diverse family child care community.** Thrive in 5 partnered with Urban College, ABCD, and the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center to gather information from 61 family child care providers on their professional development needs, opportunities and challenges. Provider feedback and insights were used to develop a comprehensive and relevant curriculum that meets state requirements and standards for quality and professional growth. This fall partners are offering new course programs targeted to meet the needs of this diverse community.
- ✦ **Increased the number of 3 and 4 year-olds screened for development delays through the Boston Public Schools' free screening program.** Partnering with Thrive in 5 and other community organizations to reach out to families, BPS moved free developmental screening sites to more family-friendly, accessible community locations. These changes increased the number of 3 and 4 year-olds screened for vision, hearing, speech, health and other development concerns, to over 160 children. Catching developmental delays early is essential to ensuring that children receive the right services and support to prevent them from entering school behind their peers.

Thrive in 5 was launched in 2008 with the goal of ensuring universal school readiness for all of Boston's children.



★ **Provided mental health screening and assessment to 436 children and direct services to 141 of those children through Project LAUNCH and MYCHILD, two federal initiatives led by the Boston Public Health Commission in partnership with Thrive in 5.** Combined, the two initiatives are working to create a system of care at seven pediatric sites across the city. These initiatives offer direct treatment services to young children with mental health issues and their families as well as screening, assessment, family support and consultation with early education providers.

★ **Reached consensus on a set of screening tools used citywide to better understand children's development before they enter kindergarten.** Working with the early education, K-12 education and health fields, Thrive in 5 created school readiness indicators, a series of measures between birth and school entry to make sure that children are on track to be ready for school long before Kindergarten entry. Data from the measures will provide important information to drive planning and new initiatives across the city, as well as valuable information for parents to support learning at home.



## Moving Boston Forward

Thrive in 5 aims to have 75% of Boston's children ready for school when they enter Kindergarten by 2014. Reaching this goal requires shifting the paths of about 5,000 to 7,000 young children over the next three years. Thrive in 5 is committed to supporting existing work and launching new efforts where needed to build family and community capacity to support children's development, improve the quality of early education care through professional development and accreditation, and ensure

comprehensive screening and service coordination through health settings. The five *Boston Children Thrive* communities offer an exciting opportunity to coordinate these efforts for a holistic place-based approach and are well-aligned with national efforts such as Promise Neighborhoods.

To ensure accountability and measure progress of on-the-ground efforts, Thrive in 5's School Readiness Indicators will gather data citywide on universal screenings of children's development before they enter school. At the individual level, this data will build on existing screening efforts in health and early education, empowering parents to be strong advocates for their children. Over time, the information will help our community understand how our children are doing so that we can match proven programs and resources with the families and communities that need them most and fulfill our promise to Boston's children that each child will enter school ready.



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

## Why Summer Learning?

Summertime in the United States has traditionally represented freedom, discovery, and a time for vacations—both for adults and children. Indeed, summers provide rich opportunities for some children and youth to explore new hobbies and interests, hone skills learned the previous year, and prepare for the next school year. For children and youth from low-income families, however, summer marks a season of huge risks and developmental regression. During the summer months, young people living in poverty do not have access to essential programming and resources that support their academic performance and healthy development.

A new report from RAND Education, *Making Summer Count*, states, “During summer vacation, many students lose knowledge and skills. By the end of summer, students perform, on average, one month behind where they left off in the spring. Of course, not all students experience ‘average’ losses. Summer learning loss disproportionately affects low-income students. While all students lose some ground in mathematics over the summer, low-income students lose more ground in reading, while their higher-income peers may even gain.”

Not only does summer learning disproportionately affect low-income students, it is cumulative and contributes substantially to the achievement gap. As a result, by the end of 5th grade, low-income students are two years behind their middle-class peers in verbal achievement. Additionally, research indicates that summer



By participating in high quality, engaging and enriching programming, students can reinforce their academic skills while growing socially and emotionally.

learning loss accounts for 66% of the performance gap between low-income and middle-income students.

## Early Growth and National Recognition

Another important fact about summer learning loss is that it is avoidable. By participating in high quality, engaging and enriching programming, students can reinforce their academic skills while growing socially and emotionally. Through the Boston Summer Learning Project, a pilot effort co-managed by the Boston Public Schools and Boston After School & Beyond, the Boston Opportunity Agenda is working to unify Boston's schools and its strong and diverse nonprofits around two overarching goals:

- ✧ Advancing student learning during the summer through programs that integrate academics, skill-building, and enrichment to keep students on track for graduation.
- ✧ Learning how a system of integrated school-community partnerships can deliver results-driven, student-centered learning, especially for high-need students.

In its second year, the project has grown from 232 to nearly 1,500 students, from 5 to 33 Boston schools, and from 7 to 16 community partners. Based on the success of the 2010 pilot and the strong collaboration represented in the Boston Opportunity Agenda, the Wallace Foundation selected Boston as one of six cities to participate in a national demonstration project to strengthen summer learning programs and measure their effectiveness over time.

Together, schools and partners are providing the knowledge, skills, and experiences that engage students in learning and prepare them to stay on track in the grade ahead. Moreover,

these school-partner collaborations are extending throughout the school year, paving a path to full-day, year-round learning opportunities for high-need students. The introduction of assessment, observation, and survey tools enables those closest to the students to better understand their specific academic, social-emotional, and skill needs, while providing funders and policy leaders with reliable information on performance and growth across a variety of sites.

## What are we learning and exploring?

- ✧ The 2010 pilot revealed that, on average, summer learning loss was averted for participants in grades 3-9. Additionally, statistically significant increases were found in students' engagement in learning, communications skills, and relationships with adults. Results varied by program, which enabled organizers to understand what worked and make adjustments for 2011.
- ✧ The evaluations of 2011 pilot programs, one local and one national, to be released on December 9, 2012, will produce a much more detailed examination of student performance gains, school-partner collaboration, and cost-benefit analyses.
- ✧ The Boston Summer Learning Project is establishing access to opportunities that otherwise would not be available. The students who stand to benefit most from summer learning, those who are low-income and from low-performing schools, do not find their way to programs without intentional outreach at their schools.

# College Completion: Success Boston

## Why College Completion?

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 \$1.52 million more than a high school dropout over the course of a lifetime. At 78%, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) has one of the highest college enrollment rates of any urban school system in the country, but enrollment is not enough. A 2008 study conducted by Northeastern University found that only 35.5% of the BPS students who enrolled in college earned an Associate's or Bachelor's degree within seven years. In response, Mayor Thomas M. Menino challenged the city to double the college completion rate for the BPS Class of 2011 and beyond.

## Boston's Response to the College Challenge

The Boston Opportunity Agenda is working to dramatically improve college completion rates of BPS graduates through Success Boston, a partnership of the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Foundation, area nonprofits and post-secondary institutions. Drawing on a three-pronged strategy designed to strengthen students' academic readiness and access to ongoing, as-needed supports, Success Boston launched in the fall 2008, first with a programmatic response, and then by a set of strategic policy recommendations. The program recruited



The Boston Opportunity Agenda is working to dramatically improve college completion rates of BPS graduates through Success Boston, a partnership of the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Foundation, area nonprofits and postsecondary institutions.



285 graduates from the BPS class of 2009 who received rigorous case management, including one-on-one coaching, assistance with applications and financial aid, peer supports and other assistance. Success Boston focuses on students who are at risk of dropping out of high school or not attending or completing college in order to help them:

- ★ **Get ready**—by improving academic rigor and advising on the high school level
- ★ **Get in**—by providing assistance during the transition to college
- ★ **Get through**—by connecting students to the supports necessary to complete a degree

### Results from the Success Boston Pilot: Summer 2009-Fall 2010

Beginning with a summer bridge program in July 2009, six partner organizations provided year-round intensive one-on-one coaching and group workshops, while brokering campus supports for the first Success Boston cohort. Early persistence results from the first 282 Success Boston students are promising:

- ★ 85.2% of Success Boston students who enrolled in college in the fall of 2009 re-enrolled in the fall of 2010, compared to a re-enrollment rate of 81.8% for the entire BPS Class of 2008 graduates.
- ★ 91% of Success Boston four-year college attendees re-enrolled, compared to 86.5% of all BPS students the year before.
- ★ 77.1% of Success Boston two-year college attendees re-enrolled in 2010, compared to 67.3% of the full BPS class the year before.

- ✪ Among African American women and men participating in Success Boston and attending two-year colleges, there were dramatic persistence gains of 17.6 and 23.2 percentage points, respectively.

Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies is conducting a third longitudinal study of BPS alumni, with the latest results on Success Boston participant persistence slated for release in spring of 2012.

## Institutionalizing the Initiative

Initiative partners completed a strategic plan in the fall of 2010 articulating four priorities to advance cross-sector work and systems change: curricular alignment; financial aid; student transitions; and college sensitive employment. Early implementation of the plan has been promising, resulting in the brokering of common terminology for financial aid award letters at lead campuses, the development and piloting of a "Transitions to College" course for BPS seniors, and the identification of vertical teaming strategies to advance curricular alignment engaging both high school and college faculty. In addition, 38 institutions of higher education participated in a planning process to identify the individual and collective commitments of institutions to increase the college completion rates of Boston Public Schools graduates.

## Plans for 2011-2012: Program Expansion and Systems Change

At least 300 students from the Class of 2011 will engage in a summer bridge program and receive year-long transition supports. In the fall of 2011, Success Boston will roll out a neighborhood strategy for program expansion, engaging anchor youth organizations in providing light touch college readiness and transition supports for BPS students and alumni, while referring high need students to Success Boston transition partners. Success Boston will continue to work with the Boston Public Schools and lead area institutions of higher education to focus on levers for systems change, including curriculum alignment and financial aid. Success Boston will share data with schools, nonprofits and higher education institutions about the postsecondary outcomes of BPS alumni, to improve practice and policy on the ground.

In the fall of 2011, Success Boston will roll out a neighborhood strategy for program expansion, engaging anchor youth organizations in providing light touch college readiness and transition supports for BPS students and alumni...

# Post-Secondary Attainment: The Adult Opportunity Network

More than 200,000 Boston adults do not have the education and training they need to secure self-sustaining or family-sustaining jobs.

## Why a Focus on Adult Learners?

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, over 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 Adult Basic Education (ABE) system which is designed to serve adult learners has been focused for many years on preparing students for a high school credential rather than for success in postsecondary education and today's economic environment. Changing this focus requires the ABE system to renew 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 career certificate programs. The resulting network will provide a more efficient service delivery system that will improve the livelihoods of Boston adults and their families, the quality of the workforce for Boston employers and the tax base for the overall community.

## Boston's Response to the Career Readiness Challenge

The Boston Opportunity Agenda created the Adult Opportunity Network in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services. 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.

In June of 2011, two Adult Opportunity Network Pilot Grants were awarded to the following agencies to lead Network development with partner agencies:

- 1) Jewish Vocational Services, in partnership with the Boston Centers for Youth and Families, and the International Institute of Boston; and
- 2) United South End Settlements, in partnership with the YMCA International Education Center, and Notre Dame Education Center.

Led by the National College Transition Network (NCTN) at World Education, the two Adult Opportunity Networks will contribute to the creation of a coordinated network system aimed at building adult learners' aspirations and skills to ready them for enrollment in Transition-to-College (also known as "Bridge") programs and then moving on to entering and succeeding in postsecondary education and training.

The Adult Opportunity Agenda defines college and career readiness as a set of career, college, academic and personal readiness skills and knowledge needed by adults to enter and succeed in postsecondary education and career pathways.



The Boston Opportunity Agenda aims to dramatically increase the number of Boston adults who are college and career ready by creating a networked system of adult education providers...



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; and
- ✦ **Personal Readiness** The capacity to anticipate challenges, secure supports proactively, and juggle multiple commitments while managing stress and time.

Together, the two Adult Opportunity Networks will identify educational service gaps to be filled through the creation of a coordinated continuum of shared services that:

- ✦ Raises the aspirations of adult learners and offers the opportunity to pursue a continuum of educational experiences that moves them along a pathway toward their goal;
- ✦ Fosters college, career, academic and personal readiness to enable adult learners to enroll and succeed in postsecondary education and training;
- ✦ Builds on the strengths and reach of each Opportunity Network partner;
- ✦ Enhances and intensifies existing services;
- ✦ Is shared, rather than duplicated, across network partners and is accessible to eligible students enrolled at each Opportunity Network partner site.

## What's Coming Next:

In order to develop a coherent system of college and career readiness services for Boston's adult learners, the Adult Opportunity Network will establish a uniform set of standards, protocols, and guidelines as well as document emerging promising practices to be scaled up more widely by Boston's adult education providers.

The long-term goal of the Boston Adult Opportunity Network is to transform the way adult education is delivered in Boston. This goal is echoed in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Strategic Framework for Adult Basic Education, which outlines a course for moving "beyond preparing students for a high school credential to preparing students for success in postsecondary education and today's workplace" and suggests that this move "... will require the ABE system to renew partnerships with the workforce development and community college systems, leverage additional resources, and build its instructional and counseling capacities to improve student transition." This more efficient service delivery system will improve the livelihoods of Boston adults and their families, the quality of the workforce for Boston employers, and the tax base for the overall community.



## Conclusion

The Boston Opportunity Agenda was launched on June 22, 2010 with all of the funding and nonprofit partners coming together on the stage in the auditorium of the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School in Dorchester. The room was packed with school children, parents, charity and foundation leaders, city officials and representatives of nonprofit organizations. Mayor Thomas M. Menino spoke of sharing information and surrounding Boston's youth with "a network of seamless educational experiences." Dr. Carol Johnson, Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, reminded those gathered that Boston is the birthplace of our nation's first public schools, adding that the Boston Opportunity Agenda adds to that "extraordinary legacy."

The diverse community and civic leaders gathered on that stage stood as a testament to a new era of cooperation—one aimed at making Boston a place where upward mobility can be achieved for large numbers of people.

Meeting the ambitious goals put forth by the Boston Opportunity Agenda requires the participation of all sectors of our city. We invite you to join us in the coming year and beyond—and to participate in this work.

You can do so by contacting Kristin McSwain, Executive Director, Boston Opportunity Agenda at [Kristin.McSwain@BostonOpportunityAgenda.org](mailto:Kristin.McSwain@BostonOpportunityAgenda.org).



## Honoring Myra Kraft



This report is dedicated to the memory of Myra Kraft, a remarkable humanitarian and philanthropist who touched numerous lives and institutions over the course of her life. There would be no Boston Opportunity Agenda without her. She believed strongly that the major charities of our city could have even more impact if they worked together to create opportunities for the young and disadvantaged people of our community. From there, her idea caught on and inspired a number of foundations to join the effort—as well as numerous nonprofit partners who are doing the hard work to make the goals of the Agenda a reality.

The Boston Opportunity Agenda stands as a tribute to Myra Kraft's vision and her firm belief in the power of collaboration and the deeply-rooted goodness of the people of our city.



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