



CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Mayor
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Mayor Menino to double the college graduation rate for Boston students

Secures commitments from Boston Public Schools, colleges and universities, business, funders, and non-profit groups to improve college success rates

Mayor Thomas M. Menino today issued a community-wide challenge to ensure that more Boston Public Schools graduates go on to earn a college degree. In a news conference at Northeastern University, the Mayor joined officials from Boston Public Schools (BPS), area colleges and universities, businesses, college access non-profits and the funding community to announce new commitments to double the college graduation rate among graduates from Boston public high schools.

“We are proud that Boston sends more graduates to college than just about any city in the country, but we must do more to ensure success once they are there,” Mayor Menino said. “This baseline report, along with an action plan that provides a roadmap of measurable progress, will help all of us make the changes necessary to give our young people the quality educational experience they deserve.”

The announcement coincides with the release of a new report prepared by the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, which indicates that 35.5% of the graduates from the Boston Public Schools Class of 2000 who enrolled in college had earned a two-year or four-year post-secondary degree or certificate by June of 2007. Mayor Menino’s challenge calls for a 50% increase in the college graduation rate for college enrollees from the BPS Class of 2009, and a 100% increase – doubling the college graduation rate – for college enrollees from the BPS Class of 2011. National data indicate that fewer than half of the students who enroll in college in this country graduate within six years.

To achieve the goals, the Mayor emphasized the need to focus on three key areas related to college success: “Getting Ready, Getting In, and Getting Through.” Partners involved in the initiative have committed to creating and expanding supports to ensure that BPS students (1) *get ready*: are academically prepared to succeed in college; (2) *get in*: apply for and gain access to higher education, including financial aid; and (3) *get through*: receive the supports necessary to earn a degree prepared to enter the workforce.

Getting Ready...

- Ensure rigorous instruction and a challenging core curriculum for every student in every Boston public school. (BPS)
- Double the number of Advanced Placement (AP) classes in Boston public high schools in five years. By 2012, every Boston high school student will have taken at least one AP or Honors course. (BPS)
- Double the number of students in dual enrollment courses by 2012. Begin with the creation of 8-10 new partnerships between Boston high schools and colleges/universities. (BPS, colleges)
- Offer Boston families access to International Baccalaureate for students to engage in high-level college preparatory coursework. (BPS)
- Provide year-round access to credit recovery classes to all Boston high school students. (BPS)
- Expand administration of ACCUPLACER test beginning in Grade 11 to assess students' readiness for college-level courses, and provide the necessary academic supports to reduce the need for remedial courses in the first year of college. (BPS)
- Continue the commitment to providing workplace experiences for high school students to develop workplace skills, academic motivation and career aspiration (PIC, business)

Getting In ...

- By 2012, achieve combined average SAT score of 1650 district-wide by increasing access to SAT preparation programs. (BPS, non-profits)
- Provide \$1 million in additional financial support to increase college access for BPS students. (The Boston Foundation)
- Redesign guidance and college counseling services to ensure access, alignment and consistency. (BPS, colleges, non-profits)
- Release time for SAT preparation and other college readiness activities during summer jobs experiences. (PIC, business)

Getting Through...

- Offer college students comprehensive support services, such as effective transition experiences, mentoring, financial aid counseling, and college success skills. (colleges, non-profits)
- Develop academic and social programs to help ensure college retention and graduation. (colleges, non-profits)
- Conduct proactive outreach to connect college students to programs and services, especially during the critical first year. (colleges, non-profits)
- Provide jobs and internships for BPS graduates attending local colleges and universities related to their courses of study and career aspirations. (PIC, business)

Dr. Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools, outlined the school district's commitments to graduate students from rigorous public high schools well-prepared to pursue and be successful in college.

"We often say that college truly does begin in kindergarten, and we are firmly committed to preparing every one of our students to continue their education after high school," said Dr. Johnson. "These college graduation rates are simply unacceptable, and the school district stands ready to do its part to ensure that students enter college prepared to meet the academic challenges and earn a degree."

The Boston Foundation announced a commitment of \$1 million to support the initiative. Specific investments will include guidance and transition support, academic enrichment, and financial aid awareness and education. Key nonprofit partners that have already committed to increasing the numbers of BPS students who earn a college degree include ACCESS, Bottom Line, The Education Resources Institute (TERI), Higher Education Resource Center, Hyde Square Task Force, Private Industry Council, and others.

“The Boston Foundation is proud to support this bold and significant commitment by Mayor Menino that would raise the standard for Boston students to national levels—an extraordinary step for an urban community with the challenges that every big city faces,” said Paul S. Grogan, President of the Boston Foundation. “This work is truly about reclaiming the American Dream for the next generation because of the economic power of higher education. The potential impact of this collaboration is extraordinary.”

Dr. Gary Gottlieb, President of Brigham & Women’s Hospital, spoke on behalf of the business community about the importance of area high schools and colleges alike preparing students with the skills and knowledge for career success.

“Employers value college degrees. Consequently, college degree holders have significantly higher lifetime earnings, as compared to high school graduates, almost one million dollars for a four-year degree,” said Dr. Gottlieb. “Mayor Menino is doing the right thing by challenging us all to increase college graduation rates for Boston students. The employer community can make a significant contribution to this effort by providing local college students with jobs and internships related to their courses of study and career aspirations. ”

Speaking on behalf of private colleges and universities, Northeastern University President Dr. Joseph E. Aoun emphasized the need for higher education to work closely with K-12 school districts to prepare students for the transition to college and to ensure their success upon enrollment. He said that during the current economic downturn, Boston’s institutions of higher education must strengthen their community engagement.

“This is not a time for retrenchment. It is a time to redouble our efforts,” said President Aoun. “Creating paths to learning is both a moral obligation and a matter of economic sense. Higher education is the pipeline of intellectual capital that will help Boston and the nation recover and prosper. Northeastern’s resources have long been at the service of the community, and especially the Boston Public Schools.”

Dr. J. Keith Motley, Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Boston, acknowledged the importance of the Mayor’s challenge on behalf of the state’s public universities and pledged his support to expand the university’s pre-collegiate efforts.

“We understand the challenges that some public school students face in getting ready for college, getting into college, and then getting through college,” said Chancellor Motley. “But we also know that with the correct approach, with the right level of assistance, we can have tremendous success, as UMass Boston has through programs such as Urban Scholars and Upward Bound. We are committed to working in partnership with the Boston Public Schools, our sister colleges and universities, and the business community to meet the Mayor’s challenge to double the college graduation rate of Boston students.”

Boston is the first city to conduct such an extensive analysis of its public school graduates’ outcomes after high school. (The Chicago Consortium commissioned a similar report focused only on four-year colleges, whereas the Boston study includes all four-year and two-year colleges nationwide over a longer period of time.) *Getting to the Finish Line: College Enrollment and Graduation* is the result of tracking the seven-year outcome of every BPS student who graduated from high school in June 2000. The report was prepared for the Boston Private Industry Council and the Boston Public Schools and was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Boston Foundation.

Neil Sullivan, Executive Director of the Private Industry Council, and Dr. Andrew Sum, lead researcher on the report, highlighted some of its key findings, including:

- Among the 2,964 students who graduated from the Boston Public Schools in June 2000, approximately 64% (1,904 students) enrolled in college. Boston’s college-going rate remains one of

the highest in the country, including both urban and suburban districts. Among the BPS Class of 2006, 66.9% of graduates went on to college, compared to a national average of 64%.

- Of the BPS graduates from the Class of 2000 who enrolled in college (1,904), 35.5% (675 students) earned a degree within seven years of high school graduation. An additional 14% (267 students) were still enrolled and working toward a degree.
- College graduation rates for BPS graduates vary greatly based on the type of college that students attended: 12.5% for two-year public college enrollees (82 graduates), 34.7% for four-year public college enrollees (162 graduates), and 56.1% for four-year private college enrollees (428 graduates).

The report provides additional detail about student outcomes by race and ethnicity, gender, and type of high school attended, highlighting significant achievement gaps in both college enrollment and graduation rates:

- College graduation rates for black and Hispanic college enrollees from BPS are substantially lower than those for white and Asian students (28.2% and 23.9% versus 53.3% and 52%, respectively).
- Women enrollees have a higher college graduation rate than men (36.6% compared to 33.9%). The percentage of female BPS graduates who enroll in college (67.9%) is significantly higher than that of males (59.9%).

Superintendent Johnson noted that the school district has invested heavily in strengthening Boston's public high schools in recent years, including many key strategies implemented after the year 2000, when the students examined in this study graduated. She expressed optimism that the impact of these reforms will be reflected in the college outcomes of more recent graduates.

- **Small schools:** Every Boston high school has been reorganized into small schools or small learning communities to provide more personalized attention to students. In 1995, only 6% of Boston public high school students were enrolled in schools smaller than 500 students. Today, nearly half of high school students are enrolled in small schools.
- **Accreditation:** The City of Boston has invested more than \$218 million to ensure all high schools achieve and maintain full accreditation. In addition to capital improvements, the accreditation process helps ensure a rigorous academic program.
- **MCAS:** Schools have shown significant gains in Grade 10 MCAS results since the State test became a graduation requirement, with additional academic supports to ensure students achieve high standards. Since 2000, passing rates on the English Language Arts exam have from 45% to 91%, and on the Math exam from 34% to 84%.

Dr. Johnson's "Acceleration Agenda" includes strategies and investments to ensure "Graduation for All," as well as annual goals and targets for improved high school outcomes.

Rev. Gregory G. Groover, Vice-Chair of the Boston School Committee, applauded the Mayor's initiative and emphasized the importance of community-wide accountability for its success.

"For the sake of the young people of our community, we all must work together to turn this challenge into a reality," said Rev. Groover. "The future of our city depends upon these young men and women earning high school and college diplomas that enable them to become the leaders of tomorrow."

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