

To: Youth Council Members
From: Emmanuel Allen, Marvin Moore
**Re: Project Reconnect Dropout Outreach and Recovery Report,
2006-2007 Cohort**
Date: March 14, 2008

From June through October of 2007, we worked with the Boston Public Schools and other organizations to reach out to the 1,976 students who dropped out between July of 2006 and June of 2007. In the summer of 2006, we had worked with one BPS guidance counselor to reach out to a smaller group (1,660). That first year, we spoke with over 300 (141 in depth) and reconnected 81 with educational pathways that year. Over the year in between, our project gained more visibility and momentum and attracted an expanded team to work with us this past summer.

This second summer (2007), our team consisted of a guidance counselor, two social workers, two special education experts, the Boston Youth Service Network coordinator and a one-stop career center youth employment specialist. The extra help we had allowed us to reach more students. We spoke to over 500 students or parents (319 in depth) and reconnected 208 with educational pathways.

Behind this memo are the findings on reasons that students in this cohort left school and how they fared when they return. We have added some data points since last year because of what we learned from the first cohort. For example, last year, 51 of the 81 re-enrolled dropouts left school again, so this year, we have been monitoring enrollment status monthly, which we report here. We also check attendance monthly, which we will report on later in the school year. We have added information about the school choices and ages of those who are still attending this year, those who enrolled, but did not accept their assignment to begin with and those who left school after starting.

We hope that these findings inform some of the BPS' current work to increase graduation rates for all students. One of our findings is that larger numbers of these students were clustered in a small number of high schools, suggesting that they were assigned based on seat availability more than on the best fit. Students were most likely to start at their assigned school when they gained entry to their first choice school. Alternative education programs—both BPS and community-based—have better retention rates for these students, but many students who chose these schools did not get in. A good number of these students later decided not to come back at all. Another finding is that most of our cohort is two years or more off-track. This leads us to believe that increased capacity for alternative options would help more of these students succeed.

At the same time, we are working with partners to pilot practices that could help more re-enrolled students succeed. We are currently working with the Multicultural Dropout Outreach Collaborative (MDOC) to pilot a mentoring program combined with part-time jobs for ten young men. MDOC, staffed by the Freedom House, recruited and trained the mentors, while the PIC is organizing the employment component. Shawn Brown of the Boston Private Industry Council and Diamond Educators is providing technical assistance to the program. Shawn's Diamond Educator program is a tiered mentoring model that engages boys and young men of color with male professionals of color. Behind this memo is a Boston Globe article describing Diamond Educators.

Finally, we have begun to work with some of the schools to monitor the progress of our students. Some schools, such as Charlestown and Urban Science Academy, have helped us organize group sessions where we could coach the students. We hope to see school staff's interest in these students continue to grow, and we have been trying to cultivate as many relationships with school leaders as we can.