

BOSTON COMPACT

1982 – 1993

The Boston Compact was convened in 1982 by State Street Bank and Trust Company chairman Bill Edgerly, then chair of the Boston PIC, Bud Spillane, then superintendent of schools, with guidance from Bob Schwartz, then education advisor to the Mayor. The Boston Higher Education Partnership came to the agreement immediately, along with the Boston School Committee. The original signatories agreed that the issues facing Boston could not be addressed effectively without a successful public school system. The business and higher education communities believed that school improvement might be motivated if the external partners offered substantial commitment to students and graduates – in exchange for a unified commitment to school improvement from the superintendent, the School Committee and the Mayor.

Through the Compact:

- The business community committed **summer jobs and priority hiring**.
- Higher education pledged **scholarships and priority admissions** for Boston graduates.
- The Boston schools committed to improve the schools as measured **by test scores, attendance and a reduced drop-out rate**.

The Compact's **mutual accountability** arrangement -- the contributions of each stakeholder are contingent upon the contributions of the others -- was unique at the time. Equally unique was its commitment to **measurement**. The PIC organized and reported summer jobs and graduate hiring. The Higher Education Partnership delivered scholarship commitments from various colleges and universities. The Boston Public Schools reported on attendance, drop-out rates and test scores.

Following the signing of the first Compact, the partners launched various initiatives in support of the Compact goals:

- The **Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools** endowment was created by the Bank of Boston (now BankBoston) to provide resources to teachers who made innovative proposals for improving classroom instruction. John Hancock Mutual Life and the Boston law firm Goodwin, Procter and Hoar follow with the endowments dedicated to middle schools and elementary schools, respectively.
- New England Mutual Life (now New England Financial) and other leading businesses established the **ACCESS** fund to provide “last dollar” scholarships to colleges for graduating Boston students.
- The **Alternative Education Initiative** was launched by the Mayor and the School Committee to address the drop-out crisis by providing funding and support for community-based alternatives for those who were dropping out of school.

The original design required that the Compact to be redrafted after five years, reflecting an understanding that key leadership changes over time.

In 1987, F. Colloredo-Mansfeld, then Compact chairman, suggested that the next Compact would require a deeper commitment to school reform. Boston corporate leaders believed that real school change would result from shifting power back to the school, breaking the hold of bureaucracy on education. This approach, known as **school-based management**, was very popular nationally. Such a change would have to be negotiated within the collective bargaining agreement. The **Boston Teachers Union** became a full partner in the Boston Compact. The second Compact set the stage for the implementation of school-based management, on the condition that teachers and parents would share in the governance of schools.

About this time the Massachusetts Miracle faded. A large state budget deficit forced a substantial reduction in local aid. The city delayed funding the contract. A second negotiated

settlement reduced the pay raise for teachers, eliminated training funds for school-based management and scaled back professional development for teachers called for in the Compact. The Mayor and the business community pursued a two year campaign that succeeded in eliminating the elected School Committee and replacing it with a mayor-appointed board. This new committee took office for the first time in an atmosphere of confrontation rather than collaboration. The president of the teachers union, frustrated by the collapse of his relationship with the mayor, ran against him for the office. Despite the meltdown of important relationships, the Boston Compact Steering Committee met occasionally and eventually authorized the process for drafting the next Boston Compact.

1994 - 1999

The third Compact was drafted to restore the consensus for school reform that had evaporated amid budget crises and political struggles. Signed on **January 13, 1994** in the office of newly-elected Mayor Thomas Menino, the new Boston Compact contained five goals. A sixth goal was added, at the Mayor's request, in December of 1994. In the months that followed, the partners launched various initiatives in pursuit of these goals and committed once again to emphasize measures of success through the **Compact Measurement Committee**. As part of the launch of this new Compact, three new partners were added to the Compact Steering Committee – family service providers, parent organizations and arts and cultural organizations.

Goal One: Access to Employment and Higher Education

This goal extended the promise of the first Compact to increase access for graduates of the Boston schools to jobs and higher education. The business community committed to increase its support for schools and its advocacy for school reform. Additionally, employers opened up the workplace as a learning place for students, as an extension of the classroom. In 1994, based in large part on the success of the pilot **ProTech** program, the Congress passed the School to Work Opportunities Act. Funding from this legislation allowed the Private Industry Council and Boston Public Schools to develop a **school-to-career** system that, in 1998, placed more than

4000 Boston students in jobs and internships, generating more than 270 hours per student of additional learning time and more than \$12 million in student wages.

More recently, the decision of the school superintendent and teachers union to develop a **high school restructuring** initiative offered a strong response to the business community's willingness to partner in a school-to-career system. New career pathways in several high schools are serving as the basis for smaller learning communities, interdisciplinary teaching and a stronger bond between the schools and their employer partners.

Under the terms of the first Compact, the higher education community was committed to increasing access to colleges and universities for Boston students through scholarships and priority admissions. However, with college drop-out rates among Boston graduates as high as 40%, the higher education community turned its attention to retention through the **Compact for College Success**. In its third year, this initiative has reduced drop-out rates at participating institutions. The Boston Plan for Excellence's ACCESS program combined with the Higher Education Information Center to integrate scholarship support with admissions and financial aid counseling.

Goal Two: Commitment to Innovation

The Compact's school reform ambitions originated with school-based management. Yet, by 1993, less than 40 schools had voted to implement this new strategy. The School Committee, the superintendent, the mayor and the teachers union now agreed to implement school based management in every school.

In a more dramatic commitment to innovation, the School Committee and the teachers union agreed to establish **pilot schools** or in-district charter schools. These schools would be free from contractual work rules and administrative constraints in areas such as hiring, job descriptions and the amount of time in the school day and year. Currently, there are ten pilot schools -- six high schools, one middle school and three elementary schools -- serving 1500 students in the Boston public school system.

Goal Three: Comprehensive Curriculum, Achievable Standards and New Assessment Methods

The original wording of Goal Three used the phrase “achievable standards.” With the arrival of new School Superintendent Tom Payzant the phrase was changed to “high standards.” His plan for school reform, entitled *Focus on Children*, stated that the mission must be “to prepare all of our students to achieve at high levels.” The first strategy he identified to accomplish this mission was to establish **citywide learning standards** for all grades that are “rigorous, relevant and teacher-driven.” At roughly the same time, the School Committee approved a new **Arts Policy** for the Boston Public Schools, emphasizing the arts as a method for building academic skills and improving student achievement, rather than as an extracurricular activity.

Recognizing the shift to high standards for *all* students, the businesses that endowed the Boston Plan for Excellence agreed to consolidate their funds to support **whole school change**. The **21st Century Schools**, 27 of which were selected, would receive direct technical assistance and financial support from the Boston Plan in order to make a long-term commitment to whole school instructional reform.

In November of 1996, the Annenberg Foundation offered \$10 million to the Boston Public Schools to support whole school change. The Boston Plan’s endowment leveraged the financial participation of the Annenberg Fund in the Boston reform effort and allowed Bill Boyan to successfully raise well over \$12 million from the private sector to match the Annenberg “Challenge.” A new group of 23 schools were selected to engage in whole-school change, drawing on the lessons of 21st Century Schools. These schools and the 21st Century schools would develop instructional strategies that met the Superintendent’s goals of improving teaching and learning by devising professional development strategies that supported the focus of an entire school community on improving student achievement.

Superintendent Payzant, in collaboration with the Compact Measurement Committee, brought in a more challenging standardized test, the **Stanford Nine**, and reported test score

results to the schools and to the public as an accountability measure. The superintendent and the teachers union, with financial backing from the mayor, established the **school improvement awards**, cash grants for schools that showed improvement in terms of the traditional Compact measures of test scores, attendance and the drop-out rate. Additionally, new assessment of student work (“rubrics”) would allow teachers and school leaders to “more accurately measure student achievement and improvement.”

The new focus on teaching and learning took place in the context of statewide implementation of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act. This legislation provided additional funding and offered the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System – **MCAS** – as a new test of student performance and, eventually, a high school graduation requirement.

Goal Four: Training and Professional Development

The third Compact sought to remedy one deficiency of previous Compacts by making professional development a distinctive goal. The Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union created the **Center for Leadership Development** to support professional development and the reform initiatives in Boston. The goal of the Center is to strengthen instruction while allowing teachers to direct their own development as professional educators.

Goal Five: Support for Parents and Families

The initial goal five stressed early childhood education. Mayor Menino built three new early learning centers. He also identified after school time as an important parent and family priority. He launched **Boston 2-to-6** initiative to develop quality programming for young people that extended the learning experience beyond the school day.

Mayor Menino introduced the **ReadBoston** as a citywide priority. Triggering a national trend, ReadBoston declared that every Boston student would read at grade level by the third grade within ten years. Community programs would improve access to books and emphasize the importance of reading, ReadBoston piloted practical strategies that parents and teachers could

use to help children read in the home. ReadBoston also developed programs that helped parents improve their own reading abilities, allowing many parents to become better teachers of reading to their own children.

Goal Six: Community Learning Centers

To pursue his desire to bring families, schools and communities closer together to meet educational objectives, Mayor Menino appointed a **Blue Ribbon Commission** to develop a plan to build new schools in various parts of the city. Recently, the mayor committed to build **five new schools**. Two sites have been announced, Orchard Gardens in the Dudley Street neighborhood, and Brunswick Gardens near Grove Hall.