

To: Members of the Youth Council

From: Joe Zukowski, Chair

Re: Youth Resource Map

Date: May 19, 2005

To continue providing youth resources mapping information to the Youth Council, staff have continued to investigate the levels of education, employment and training programming in Boston targeted to struggling students and disconnected youth. Behind this memo is an update to the initial review of youth services that was presented to the Youth Council in January of this year. It includes additional information on alternative education programming; MCAS support services, occupational training, and the Streetworkers Program.

The information presented here was suggested by the questions raised at the January meeting. For example, the information includes a somewhat more in-depth section on Latino youth and the services available to them. At the January meeting, a Youth Council member pointed out that since this group has higher proportions and severity of risk factors, it deserved some focused attention.

1. Alternative Education

According to our Census analysis, there were about 7,000 young adults between the ages of 20 and 24 without a credential living in Boston as of the Census 2000. Each year, between 1,200 and 1,500 students drop out of Boston Public Schools (BPS) annually.

Our initial review identified 750 alternative education seats for youth in Boston, with about 450 serving dropouts, and about 300 serving struggling students referred to them. Additionally, Boston Public Schools (BPS) has about 1,000 seats in high school and middle school alternative programs, most of which are for struggling students. BPS has added 300 seats this academic year.

After that review, there were several remaining questions:

1. How many young drop-outs are there? The 2000 Census data was inconclusive for numbers of 16-19 year olds, and there are also some that are younger than this.
2. How many students are at risk to drop out? How do we identify them in time for intervention or referral to settings that fit them better? How do we intervene?
3. Are there significant alternative education programs not captured in our initial review?
4. How do we balance preventive measures with efforts to provide programming for the large number of older youth who have already disengaged from school?

Since then, staff have investigated some of the questions.

1. ***How many young drop-outs are there?*** The Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University (CLMS) used the Census to provide an estimate of 5,335 dropouts between the ages of 20 and 24 (lower than our estimate) and 2,598 dropouts between the ages of 16 and 19. **There were a total of 7,933 dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24 as of Census 2000.** CLMS researchers allow that the actual number is probably higher due to Census undercounting of dropouts. CLMS validated our estimate of BPS students dropping out each year.
2. ***How many students are at risk to drop out?*** We hope to work with BPS, CLMS, alternative education providers and our partners through the Youth Transitions planning process to identify this group and to address questions of real-time intervention with them.
3. ***Are there significant alternative education programs not captured in our initial review?*** Our initial review and subsequent investigation suggest that the youth alternative education system in Boston has been more responsive to the need of struggling students than that of dropouts. Even so, there has not yet been a significant change in the number of students leaving school each year, though the hope is that the current Small Schools and Small Learning Communities reform along with the increased BPS alternative program capacity might begin to impact that number.

The gap between need and available services seems much larger for those who have already dropped out. To investigate the issue more deeply, since our initial review staff considered

the young adults served in adult education providers that are part of the established provider networks in Boston.

Although the *national* rate of youth participation in adult education and literacy programs has increased from about 35% to 39% since 2002, the increases are concentrated in 8 states (Michigan, New York, Texas, Illinois, North Carolina, Georgia, California and Florida). The rate for Massachusetts has remained stable at about 25% (US Department of Education, 2004).

The Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services (JCS) and the Massachusetts Department of Education (DoE) have provided data on the number of Boston's 18-24 year-olds receiving DoE-funded services through the adult basic education system. **Of the 4,400 adults participating in adult education, 875 or 20% were between the ages of 18 and 24.** Among them, 358 participated in Adult Basic Education (ABE), 109 in English for Speakers of Other Languages and 408 were in programs that offered both services. This shows that young adults account for a good proportion of those using the services, though at a lower rate than the national and state averages.

After considering the major sources of youth and adult education alternatives, it appears that in Boston there are youth numbering in the thousands who lack a diploma or GED and remain unenrolled in educational programs.

Since the initial review, staff have also conducted a focus group of youth education and career-exploration providers to determine what limits the numbers served. Answers included (in order of priority):

- **Current funding levels do not support an increase in seats.** For example, YO funding, which had contributed \$650,000 annually to alternative education providers, will be discontinued next fiscal year. Federal Department of Labor youth allocations to Boston, which support alternative education and employment, have gone from a high of \$4,295,500 in FY 1994 to \$1,345,000 in FY 05. To our knowledge, BPS has no immediate plans to increase funding for alternative education.
- **Funder's eligibility requirements exclude some youth who need the services and make it cumbersome to enroll eligible youth.**
- A significant proportion of youth without credentials have barriers that exceed the services that community-based providers have to offer. These barriers include literacy levels below the sixth grade, learning disabilities, personal crises, low coping skills and mental health issues.

Staff plan to conduct a similar focus group of adult education providers.

4. ***How do we balance preventive measures with efforts to provide programming for the large number of older youth who have already disengaged from school?*** This question is a difficult one to grapple with because no-one wants to value one group over the other. The emphasis on struggling students in BPS and community-based programs probably reflects the fact that the need of struggling and disruptive students still connected to schools is more *visible* than those who have disappeared from the screen. This question is an important question at the local, state and federal policy level and will be one of those that partners work on during the strategic planning process.

2. Students Struggling with MCAS

Our initial review found that according to the state Department of Education, **over 700 members of the class of 2003 and about 600 members of the class of 2004 left school without passing the MCAS after their senior year.** Existing MCAS support programs include academic support offered by the schools, community colleges and Classroom at the Workplace, as well as employment and educational assistance offered by the career centers. The challenge with this population is that the services are underutilized, though they come closer to matching the need in terms of numbers of seats.

The questions remaining for serving out-of-school youth who had not passed MCAS were:

1. How can the schools and programs better identify and contact youth eligible for education and employment programs?
2. How can counselors and educators convince youth that it is worth the extra effort to persist with the MCAS, education and career planning?
3. What are viable education and career options for youth who cannot pass the MCAS, due to either language barriers or learning disabilities?

To get at answers, staff interviewed the Career Center staff who serve youth leaving high school without passing the MCAS.

1. How can the schools and programs better identify and contact youth eligible for education and employment programs? Though they did not have answers to this question, Career Center staff further defined some of the problems. One major problem is that it is unclear who has ownership of the students' educational progress once they finish senior year without passing. Some repeat the senior year at their home high school. Those that do not are removed from school attachment in the BPS data system, making it difficult for them to receive subsequent testing information from DoE through the schools. School staff are often too busy with the current students to spend time tracking exited students down. Many of the students seem to have significant learning disabilities.

It is unclear whether the public schools, the career center staff or the community colleges should take leadership in cases where students have learning disabilities. Some guidance counselors seem to have a strong referral relationship with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (Mass Rehab), while others do not. An example of how this plays out is that one student in a community college program needed to have an assessment for learning disabilities, but it was too costly for the college to conduct with the allotted grant money. It was unclear to the college and career center staff what the next step should be.

2. How can counselors and educators convince youth that it is worth the extra effort to persist with the MCAS, education and career planning? One idea expressed is that students need **incentives that are tangible and as immediate as possible**, such as earning money, earning a credential or receiving public recognition. One event that Career Center staff thought was effective was the Boston Public Schools' December 2003 graduation for members of the class of 2003 that graduated late because they passed MCAS late. There has not been a similar event since then.

3. *What are viable education and career options for youth who cannot pass the MCAS, due to either language barriers or learning disabilities?* This is an area that the Youth Transitions Planning Group and Career Center staff are exploring and the alternative programs as part of the grant. **In general, the observation about the lack of services for students severely below grade level and/or having learning disabilities has come up for many of the populations considered by the Youth Transitions Planning Group and the Youth Council, including dropouts, adjudicated youth and youth in foster care.** For this reason, staff recommend that the Planning Group prioritize this issue.

3. Occupational Training

The initial review identified about 500 seats in youth training or career exploration programs and another 100 that were used by young adults in the adult system. Additionally Youth Opportunity (YO) and Morgan Memorial offer about 650 youth transitional employment experiences each year. **About 8,000 youth were neither in school or work as of Census 2000.** Since youth working in low-skilled, low-wage training would also benefit, as would some dropouts, the potential need is even greater. **It appears that the need is significantly greater than the service level, when we consider that the difference numbers in the thousands again.** To verify this, staff have continued to investigate additional adult training programs to gauge participation levels among young adults, before we make a definitive statement.

Staff surveyed the Building Trades Training Directors to figure out the degree to which older youth access the apprenticeship training system to enter building trades careers. Six of eleven Boston programs responded, indicating that about 225 young adults between 18-24 participate in their programs, which include a total of about 2100 adults participating—about 10%.

Apprenticeship	#/Young Adults In Apprenticeships	Total # In Apprenticeships
▪ The Carpenters Apprenticeship and Training Fund	100	600
▪ The Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee for the Electrical Construction Industry of Greater Boston	45 electrical 5 telecomm	800 electrical 170 telecom
▪ The Roofers Union Local #33 Apprenticeship and Training Program	125	10
▪ The Hoisting and Portable Engineers Local 4 Apprenticeship and Training Fund	0	50
▪ The Local 7 Ironworkers Joint Apprenticeship Committee	25	varies annually
▪ The National Elevator Industry Education Program	23	300

Responses indicate a highly competitive application process, with applicants at a rate of two to ten times as many seats. These programs are most likely accessed by successful students, or the most skilled among dropouts. Most programs require a diploma or GED. The Carpenters accept a transcript showing completion of the 12th grade and the Roofers do not require a credential, but do require a driver’s license. Training Directors’ suggestions for better transitioning young adults into the trades fell into two categories: preparing the young people better and providing young people with more information about the trades in high school. The type of preparation suggested includes math and literacy skills and work-readiness.

The questions suggested in this section were:

1. Is occupational skills training a useful intervention for older youth who either lack skills, credentials or a significant work history?
2. Is it best to train youth alongside those of a broad age-group, or in programs targeted for young adults?
3. If training is a viable activity for young adults, how can this activity be funded in Boston?

Staff plan to continue speaking with training providers and others to answer these questions.

4. Frameworks Services for Disconnected Youth

Staff interviewed a manager of the Streetworkers program. This program serves disconnected youth, targeting those involved with gangs and violence. The Streetworkers provide referrals to health care, jobs training, clinical services, educational programs and employment programs. There are approximately 20 Streetworkers who make over 3,000 resource referrals in a year. Of these they work intensively with about 300. Of these, about 80% are young men.

When asked about the proportion of need among the 3000, the manager noted that **employment is most in demand**. He estimated that Streetworkers refer about 600 a year to job-readiness or training programs run by organizations like YO, the One-Stop Career Centers, PIC, ABCD and others. He estimated that of the remaining 2400, 400 need these services but do not join programs. This is due to a lack of available programming targeted to the needs of this group. Many need to earn money and do not see the value of participating in preparatory activities. Others fall between the cracks of the different eligibility targets of funding sources. Another barrier to employment for these youth is that education levels of many youth are low.

Alternative education is another area of need for the Streetworkers' youth. Of the 300 youth getting intensive services, about 100 a year are seeking alternative education sets, and only about a third find seats.

5. Latino Youth:

Latino youth face daunting barriers to success as they attempt to make the transition from youth to adulthood. **Latinos experience the highest rates of family poverty.** According to year 2000 census figures, nearly 40% of Latino families in Boston are living at or below the official poverty rate. Latino youth experience the highest dropout rates. According to the Massachusetts Department of Education, statewide nearly 30% of Latino youth drop out of high school. (This contrasts with less than 25% of African-Americans and 10% of white youth.)

In the 2000 Census data, Latinos were severely overrepresented among Boston's dropouts. **3,575, the largest number and percentage of dropouts, were Latino.** Latinos accounted for 45% of the total dropout population (aged 16-24) and only 15% of Boston's young adult residents. Among the 20-24 year old cohort, Latino youth have low percentages of college going rates (less than 20% of males; roughly 33% of females) and fewer than 15% of Latino youth ages 20-24 have attained a bachelor's degree. Meanwhile, the Latino population is growing in Boston and in the Boston Public Schools (BPS); currently 30% of enrolled BPS students are Latino (Boston Public Schools, 2005).

The initial service scan found a number of targeted services for Latino youth. Those programs that exist generally target younger children (elementary and middle school youth), focus on enrichment programming, and/or offer services more broadly to "urban youth." For example, the East Boston-based Zumix program serves elementary aged Latino youth. Zumix offers youth challenging music programs and leadership opportunities and serves about 350 youth (ages 6-12) each year. The Teen Empowerment program (TEP) developed a community organizing/youth leadership model, in which youth learn about community issues and take action on issues that interest or engage them. TEP has 6 school- and community-based program sites serving about 500 middle school aged youth a year. Latino participation varies by site; the South End site has a 50% Latino youth participation rate.

Boston Youth Network offers free after-school programs for 40 students from Barnes Middle School. 80% of participants are youth of color and most are newly immigrated Latinos. The program offers homework assistance, arts and crafts, dance and performance. The program helps 100% of involved students to stay in school; 75% improve their grades as a result of program participation. Alianza Hispana offers after-school programming for Latino youth.

The Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) runs a variety of programs, serving nearly 700 youth a year, of which 70-80% are Latino. HSTF program include after -school programs (with academic support and college access support) at the Curly (middle school) and Kennedy (elementary), as well as a summer camp program for youth ages 6-11. All youth served are from Hyde Square and Roxbury neighborhoods, which have concentrations of youth and families in need of services.

Programs that serve high school youth often focus on broad youth development activities (peer leadership community organizing); some offer after school activities (often with an enrichment focus). Few programs surveyed offer job placement, intensive academic or dropout prevention, though some long-term organizations offer career counseling and college access services.

The Boston Youth Organizing Project runs community campaigns on themes such as restoring summer jobs programming and lowering the voting age. There are 7 chapters in area high schools

and churches in Boston (and Cambridge). 150 youth meet on a weekly basis to plan and conduct the campaigns. Programs are targeted to “urban youth of color.” Of participants, most are African-American; only 5% of program participants are Latino youth. HSTF runs a youth leadership program for 8th-12th graders (45 youth) which integrates college access and career support along with community mobilization efforts lead by youth.

Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation (HOPE) has a thirty-year history of providing college access support and serves approximately 25 students in a Latino Mentoring Program. HOPE also runs a youth leadership development program focused on health and prevention issues.

Sociedad Latina provides an array of programs for teens and parents. Youth services include work force development, youth leadership, and after-school educational programming. The number of slots in programs varies: 100 youth are involved in after-school programming, 30 youth participate in mentor programs, 40-60 youth are involved in peer leadership programs and approximately 40 youth in career development activities. The organization reports that 1,000 youth a year are served. Many of the programs have waiting lists.

Leon de Juda Higher Education Resource Center offers free SAT preparation programs for 120 student during the year; a majority of youth served are Latino.

Inquilinos Borinque en Accion (IVA) offers several youth development programs within the Villa Victoria housing community. These programs include a Youth Learning Center for Teens, a Summer Internship program (15-17 year olds), a Girl’s Project and Youth Leadership Training. Also, a partnership program between Villa Victoria and Bunker Hill Community College has resulted in a technology-based college campus where residents can take on-line college courses and access academic support services as needed.

The Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT) at U. Mass Boston has a long track record of offering school year and summer programming for children and teens in the Boston Public Schools. Academic enrichment programs in 5 elementary schools offer academic support for 240 children during the school year and in the summer (on the college campus). The TAG program offers 250 middle and high school youth school year and summer enrichment programming. Winter and Spring Academies help 40 youth with MCAS preparation and/or help in math and English. ALERTA prepares elementary aged Latino youth for entry into the city’s exam schools. ILT serves over 500 youth each year.

One BPS pilot school – Boston International High School – focuses on helping newly arrived youth transition into the school system. 90 students attend the International High School and 56.7% are Latino. Bicultural/bilingual staff, small class sizes and community partnerships help provide specialized support for youth and their families. In addition, several Alternative Education Programs serve Latino youth. El Centro del Cardinale serves 70 students annually in an external diploma-granting program. Youth take courses at the program and are enrolled or “re-enrolled” in their home high school. When they accumulate enough credits to graduate, they receive a BPS diploma. 66% of youth who attend El Centro are Latino. GED Plus at ESAC serves between 60-70 youth a year (half are Latino), though currently the program’s funding is in jeopardy. Greater Egleston Community High School, a Boston pilot school, serves about 75 youth per year; nearly half of the student population is Latino.

Questions:

1. What services will impact the high Latino dropout rate?
2. Are there enough targeted services for Latino youth?
3. Are Latino youth adequately represented in existing programs? Is language a barrier to Latino participation? Are undocumented immigrants excluded from programs due to eligibility requirements?
4. Are existing programs culturally responsive and competent?
5. What can be done about the significant gap in career development and post-secondary connection services?