



Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools

ANNIVERSARY REPORT | 25 YEARS, ONE GOAL

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*“Working together—business, school administrators, teachers, students,
and parents—we will build a public school system worthy of the children of Boston.”*

CHARLES GIFFORD
Chairman Emeritus
Bank of America



More than 56,000 children attend Boston's public schools.

Their future—and the city's—
depends on having access to a quality education.

For 25 years, the Boston Plan has worked toward that goal—excellence
in every classroom, in every school,
for every student in the Boston Public Schools.

Our work continues.

25 YEARS, ONE GOAL

First National Bank of Boston establishes a local education foundation, the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE), to foster improvement in the city's public schools. (1984)

For its first decade, BPE offers scholarships to Boston Public Schools graduates and mini-grants to individual teachers for innovative classroom projects. (1984–1995)

BPE partners with 27 schools to test and refine the **Essentials of Whole-School Improvement** with a focus on improving instruction through instructional “coaching.” (1996)

With **Annenberg Foundation** and match funds, the Boston School Committee extends whole-school improvement to all schools, and BPE shares oversight. (1997)

BPE refines its instructional coaching model to build teams that learn from each other, and the new model, **Collaborative Coaching and Learning**, is adopted districtwide. (2002)

Boston's impressive record attracts funding from the Carnegie Corporation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to focus on **high school improvement**. (2001 & 2002)

BPS and BPE launch a teacher preparation program, **Boston Teacher Residency**, that becomes a national leader in teacher preparation. (2003)

BPE board hands off management of the last-dollar scholarship program, ACCESS, to The Education Resources Institute (TERI) so the organization can concentrate on school support. (2004)

Boston Public Schools is awarded the distinguished **Broad Prize for Urban Education**. (2006)

BPE develops assessments and tools for tracking the progress of each student and an approach to help school teams **accelerate the learning of struggling students**. (2006–2009)

BPE looks ahead to the next 25 years, convening a new citywide partnership of traditional public, charter, independent, parochial, and pilot schools—the Boston Schoolchildren's Consortium. (2009)



The Next 25 Years

AMONG GREAT AMERICAN CITIES, an abiding commitment to education marks Boston's history. For twenty-five years, the Boston Plan for Excellence has lived that commitment, bringing together corporate, community, and higher education leaders to answer a simple question: What can we do to help our schools educate every child well, particularly those for whom school is the best—sometimes only—chance for a good life?

Since 1984, we have contributed significantly to public education in Boston, often by charting an unmarked course. Though our efforts have not been universally successful, they have been universally dedicated to building on what we learn and weaving our lessons into a compelling whole. This report lays out how we are working toward our single goal—student success—and the core beliefs that motivate and guide us:

It is possible for public education to change children's lives.

If students do not learn and succeed, we are not succeeding.

We have a particular obligation to serve the students least well served by the existing systems of education.

Teachers and leaders—well prepared, well supported, well respected, and working together in well-ordered schools—are the heart of the matter.

We must continuously subject our work to outside scrutiny.

Data and evidence must be the basis for our decisions and resource use.

We should not work alone but join with others who share our goal.

Despite our commitment and efforts, unsolved problems persist. Thousands of students still fail, creating a crisis for themselves, for Boston, and for the country. The crisis emboldens and compels us to broaden our reach in the future to form a new partnership with all who educate Boston's schoolchildren. What that partnership will mean and deciding how we will work together lie ahead, but our common purpose fills us with excitement and hope.

CHARLES GIFFORD
Chair, BPE Board of Trustees

ELLEN GUINEY
Executive Director

1984 | A Smart Investment ...

The 1980s were an era of turmoil for Boston's schools. In that climate, the First National Bank of Boston made a bold move: To mark its 200th anniversary, it established a local education foundation committed to support the city's public schools. Rather than naming the fund after itself, the bank called it the Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE), inviting others to join its cause. The bank was accompanied at the outset by Permanent Charities of Boston, now The Boston Foundation, and within a few years, John Hancock, New England Life, Goodwin Procter & Hoar, and many others had joined in.

For most of its first decade, BPE provided mini-grants to teachers and scholarships to Boston Public Schools (BPS) graduates. In 1996, after a careful evaluation of its programs and their impact on students, teachers, and schools, BPE made a major shift to grants that support efforts of *groups* of teachers and school leaders—the whole school—to improve the quality of teaching and learning in every classroom.

2009 | ... Gets Smarter

Today, BPE acts as a partner and critical friend, working with teachers and principals to test and refine school improvement strategies that lead to better student outcomes. The work continues to evolve as we learn which approaches make the biggest difference.

Together, BPS and BPE have earned recognition as leaders in education reform nationally and, more important, have made significant improvements in the lives of Boston's children.

"The Boston Plan for Excellence is a nationally recognized leader in school reform. Its intelligent, trail-blazing, and creative approaches to improve student learning have influenced federal policy and been adopted by school districts beyond Boston."

WENDY PURIEFOY
President
Public Education Network
and a BPE founder





Then

Now

SUPERINTENDENT

1984: Robert Spillane

2009: Carol Johnson

BPS SCHOOLS

1984: 133

2009: 135

STUDENTS1984: 60,189
47% Black,
28% White, 17% Hispanic,
7% Asian, 1% Other2009: 56,340
39% Hispanic,
37% Black, 13% White,
9% Asian, 2% Other**MAYOR**

1984: Raymond Flynn

2009: Thomas Menino

**BOSTON SCHOOL
COMMITTEE**

1984: 13-member elected

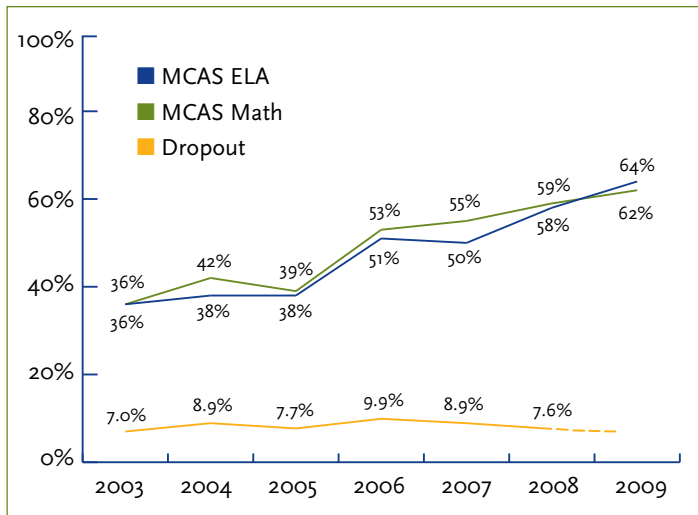
2009: 7-member
appointed**ACHIEVEMENT**1984: no systematic standards;
static performance2009: steady gains on the
state's MCAS exam

“The progress BPS has made over the past decade has been aided immeasurably by the work of the Boston Plan. BPE has been a steady, thoughtful, powerful voice for reform as well as a roll-up-your-sleeves implementation partner. Most urban superintendents I work with around the country would steal BPE in a minute if they could.”

ROBERT SCHWARTZ*Academic Dean*Harvard Graduate School of Education
and a BPE founder

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS: 2003–2009

MCAS: Percent scoring at Proficient or Advanced on Grade 10 MCAS
Dropout: Grades 9–12 annual drop-out rate



WHAT MATTERS: Student Learning

The goal that really matters is whether students learn. That focus has guided BPE's work for the past two decades. With the assessments and tools we've created, with our support to school teams, and with our public reporting, we continue to keep everyone's attention on what matters most: student learning.

There is much more to be done. Though BPE and BPS have together learned what it takes to raise student achievement, the impressive gains made in some schools and with some students haven't translated yet to system-wide acceleration of student achievement. MCAS performance has improved steadily across the district, but achievement gaps persist and, most troubling, too many Boston students continue to leave high school each year without a diploma.

Learning from other cities that have had success in raising their graduation rates, BPE and BPS have begun to carefully track and report on individual students' progress toward graduation. It's a simple approach that works, and thanks to a growing body of research, schools can now use highly predictive indicators to identify students who, without support, are unlikely to graduate—before it's too late.

With the Composite Learning Index (CLI), BPE helps school teams to use these predictors, as well as other data and input from students themselves, to guide their improvement efforts. With a clear picture of where students are—and where they need to be—teachers and principals are able to focus their energy where it is likely to make the most impact. The result is big gains in student achievement.

"We hear a lot of teachers talk about using data to drive their instruction. I think that working with BPE actually made that happen. What it helped me do was really figure out how to target my students using data on a daily basis. Every single student except for one last year made progress. That was very validating."

AKETA NARANG KAPUR
English as a Second Language teacher
Ellis Elementary School

25 YEARS, ONE GOAL

1996 | *BPE announces 21st Century Schools grants to support reform. The 27 schools that receive grants become the first to test the Essentials of Whole-School Improvement.*

1996 | *BPE hires and trains a “change coach” for each 21st Century School to help establish an instructional leadership team (ILT) and identify a schoolwide instructional focus.*

1997 | *BPE hires instructional coaches with expertise in literacy to provide direct support to teachers in 21st Century Schools.*

1997 | *With a \$10M grant from the Annenberg Foundation, BPS and BPE leverage \$25M in additional public and private contributions to expand whole-school improvement to all schools.*

1998 | *Superintendent Tom Payzant convenes a Resource Action Team (REACT) of top-tier BPS managers to solve operational problems that schools identify, to be staffed by BPE.*

WHAT IT TAKES: Great Teaching

Good teaching matters more than any other factor in improving student outcomes. Knowing this, BPE’s direct support to teachers, its research and policy support, and the high-quality tools and guides it produces are all geared toward building the capacity of the system’s greatest resource: its teachers.

BPE’s work begins with the understanding that teachers, like all professionals, need ongoing support to become and remain effective. We have learned, from our own work and others’ research, that the best professional development is grounded in classroom practice, is collaborative, and is guided by student data. We are building on that knowledge to continuously improve our approach to supporting teachers.

In the teacher networks we coordinate and the school-based teams we support, the starting point is what teachers already know, and the focus is on the learning of individual students in their classrooms: What does student performance data tell us about what practices are working? What does it suggest about improvements that are needed? What is the impact of our efforts? What do we need to learn to do to get better outcomes for our students?

“I am proud to be a graduate of the Boston Teacher Residency. And I’m lucky to still teach with my mentor every single day. Because of BTR I don’t feel alone in this work; I feel like I’m a part of something HUGE.”

KATI DELAHANTY
BTR graduate (‘06) and mentor teacher
Charlestown High School



DOING WHAT IT TAKES: THE BOSTON TEACHER RESIDENCY (BTR)

When Joanna Jacobson of Strategic Grant Partners asked then-Superintendent Tom Payzant what they could do to help, he said, “Help me start our own teacher preparation program so new teachers are ready for urban schools.” Based on a medical residency model, BTR draws on the best research about how new teachers learn. It pairs teacher residents with effective mentors in a yearlong, full-time apprenticeship combined with master’s-level coursework tailored to BPS priorities.

BTR is now being replicated across the country. Never satisfied, though, BTR has refined its approach each year, supporting mentor teachers to become more effective coaches to residents; building the habits of data-driven inquiry among teams of mentors, graduates, and residents; creating pathways for dual certification in special education and English as a Second Language; and extending support to graduates through their first three years in the classroom.

Many BTR graduates have gone on to become mentor teachers and to take leadership roles in their schools and the district, becoming an impressive force for change.

BTR HAS PREPARED 236 TEACHERS FOR BOSTON’S SCHOOLS

48% of graduates identify as teachers of color

36% of all graduates teach special education or English as a Second Language

10% of all BPS math and science teachers are BTR graduates

87% of BTR graduates have remained teaching in BPS beyond their three-year commitment; before BTR, only 47% of new BPS teachers remained in BPS more than three years

97% of principals would recommend hiring a BTR graduate to a colleague



WHAT IT TAKES: Strong Leadership

A system of effective schools requires strong leaders and collaboration at every level. BPE works with the schools it supports to form teams of teachers and leaders who, together, set goals based on student performance data, refine and share practices that prove effective, and seek new approaches where they need them. This team-based approach to school improvement becomes the work of the school.

In Boston's schools, the instructional leadership team (ILT), made up of teacher leaders and administrators, guides and monitors continuous improvement. Through a new BPE-BPS partnership, Accelerating Improvement through Inquiry (AI²), ILTs receive data tools and facilitation support to keep the focus on student progress and to coordinate schoolwide improvement efforts. Teacher leaders and principals also get one-on-one coaching from experienced BPE and BPS facilitators and leadership coaches, and they participate in cross-school networks to share struggles and successes, learn of new research and practice, and point to policy concerns that slow their efforts. Some of the most important learning comes from colleagues who are leading similar work and solving similar challenges in other schools.

"We were so young as a school, and we kind of needed everything, and it was great to have a partner, BPE, to say, 'Look, let's focus'. We've been helped to stake a claim in common planning time meetings. This whole concept of teams of teachers looking at practice and using assessment to identify areas of need is a huge part of the story of why we've made gains."

WINSTON COX
Headmaster
Social Justice Academy



25 YEARS, ONE GOAL

2001 | *BPS receives an \$8M grant from the Carnegie Corporation to renew Boston's high schools; one of several partners, BPE is charged with keeping the focus on instruction.*

2001 | *At the superintendent's request, BPE convenes a network of "Effective Practice" schools to test out refinements of whole-school improvement, including the widely emulated Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model.*

2002 | *To deepen use of CCL and workshop-style instruction, BPE forms professional networks for middle and high school teachers and offers them credit-bearing courses.*

2002 | *BPE launches Student Researchers for High School Renewal, a research-based course for high school students, to engage more students in the reform process.*

2002 | *BPE begins a five-year study on new teacher retention. With a grant from the Barr Foundation, BPS uses this data to reinvent its Office of Human Resources and to launch a new teacher induction program.*

25 YEARS, ONE GOAL

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| 2003 | <i>Responding to requests for timely data to inform classroom practice, BPE designs a series of formative reading comprehension assessments (FAST-R) that are used by teachers in more than 50 schools.</i> |
| 2003 | <i>BPE and BPS launch the district's own teacher preparation program, Boston Teacher Residency, and admit the first class.</i> |
| 2004 | <i>Boston Teacher Residency develops a set of core teaching competencies, which become the district's Dimensions of Effective Teaching.</i> |
| 2007 | <i>Working with New Visions for Public Schools in New York, BPE develops SAM-Boston (Students Achieve More), a two-year program that supports teachers to use student data to improve instruction while also building leadership skills.</i> |
| 2009 | <i>Based on its SAM-Boston pilot, BPE and BPS launch Accelerating Improvement through Inquiry (AI²), supporting school teams to identify and track struggling students, test and refine high-leverage changes in practice, and spread improvements across the school.</i> |

WHAT IT TAKES: Smart Strategies

Always looking ahead to what could be, BPE has been a leader in helping to find solutions to the toughest challenges faced by Boston's students, their teachers and school leaders, and the district as a whole. Acting as a "research and development" partner to the district, BPE incubates approaches that show promise and helps BPS bring to scale those that prove to raise student achievement.

Many strategies that BPE has tested out—including the blueprint for whole-school improvement, job-embedded professional development, and data and assessment tools for informing instruction and tracking student progress—have been adopted districtwide and have influenced schools across the country.

Much work remains. BPE's approach has evolved with its increasingly sophisticated understanding of what makes a difference for teachers' and students' learning, and with what it has learned about the challenges of bringing promising ideas to scale. Guided by data and by an entrepreneurial mindset, BPE will continue to evolve until its ambitious goal is reached.

"BPE has set a high standard for effective nonprofit organizations with a mission to support systemic reform in urban districts. A committed board, continuity of leadership, talented staff, together with an understanding of the importance of connecting good research, policy, and practice, have made a positive difference for thousands of students and educators."

THOMAS PAYZANT
Superintendent (1995–2006)
Boston Public Schools



DOING WHAT IT TAKES: DATA-DRIVEN INQUIRY

Launched this fall by BPS and BPE, Accelerating Improvement through Inquiry (AI²) takes the activities featured in Boston's Essentials of Whole-School Improvement to the next level, helping school teams track each student's progress toward promotion and graduation.

AI² teams use a structured method to help teams identify and refine strategies that improve student outcomes. Each cycle begins with individual student data, which teams use to uncover learning gaps and compare where students are to where they need to be. Inquiry participants plan and implement changes in practice that they hypothesize will lead to gains in performance, then assess the impact of those changes, continuing with more cycles until performance improves.

The inquiry approach helps teachers to build on what they know to address the specific needs of students they are teaching right now. It was shaped in large part by BPE's work over several years to develop practical data tools and build the capacity of teacher teams and principals to lead improvement.

PROMISING RESULTS: The small group of schools that participated in SAM-Boston, a two-year inquiry model with BPE, had impressive gains with students whose prior performance was in the bottom quartile on MCAS.

- 15 of 17 third- and fourth-grade target students improved their reading comprehension from pre- to post-assessment. 9 improved by more than 25 points. In 2008, for the first time, not a single third-grade student scored at Level 1 on MCAS.
- 21 out of 25 sixth- and seventh-grade target students improved in mathematical reasoning. 17 of those students made double-digit improvements, and 11 improved by more than 30 points.
- 9 out of 10 tenth-grade target students improved on inferential reading questions. All gained at least 17 points from pre- to post-assessment, and six went up 40 points or more.



WHAT IT TAKES: New Partnerships

Today, 75,400 children live in the City of Boston. They and their families have more options for schooling than they did when the Boston Plan for Excellence began in 1984. Many attend schools that serve them well, but too many do not.

Getting to where we need to be—a city that educates every child well—requires learning from the strongest schools and classrooms across the city and paying attention to serious, still-unaddressed challenges. To that end, the Boston Plan for Excellence has convened a new, cross-sector group, comprising leaders from charter, parochial, independent, pilot, and traditional public schools. As the Boston Schoolchildren’s Consortium, these leaders have committed to “get on the bus” together, to visit each others’ schools, to learn from what works, and discuss how they together can create a seamless, quality school experience for every Boston student.

The Boston Schoolchildren’s Consortium is a bold and unprecedented partnership, placing commitment to student achievement ahead of politics and the desire to learn from each other ahead of ideology. Together, we believe we can make Boston the first city with a new, larger vision for educating its children and lead the way for the rest of the country as Boston has so often done in the past.

“The need to significantly improve academic performance and close achievement gaps is urgent. We are committed to looking for the most successful models, both internally and externally, for building more schools of excellence. All of us want to give the children of Boston the best schools possible, and there is so much we can learn by sharing our work and visiting each other’s schools.”

CAROL JOHNSON
Superintendent
Boston Public Schools



“There has been much talk about sharing best practices and bringing people together but that is all it has been: talk. The Boston Schoolchildren’s Consortium has taken action by convening educational leaders from the city of Boston as a first step in sharing best practices from among our schools to ensure that all of our students receive a quality education.”

KEVIN ANDREWS
President
Massachusetts Charter Public School Association





BOSTON SCHOOLCHILDREN'S CONSORTIUM

KEVIN ANDREWS

Massachusetts Charter Public School Association

STEVE CLEM

Association of Independent Schools in New England

DAN FRENCH

Center for Collaborative Education

MICHAEL GOLDSTEIN

MATCH Charter School and Boston Charter School Alliance

ELLEN GUINEY

Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools

ALAN OLIFF

Combined Jewish Philanthropies

MARY GRASSA O'NEILL

Archdiocese of Boston

CAROL JOHNSON

Boston Public Schools

JEAN MCGUIRE

Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)

JANET PALMER-OWENS

Boston Public Schools

"Working on behalf of the Boston Schoolchildren's Consortium with BPE and the leaders of all types of schools is energizing and exciting. Together, we expect to achieve great things."

MARY GRASSA O'NEILL

*Secretary of Education and Superintendent of Schools
Archdiocese of Boston*

Financials and Donors

FUNDING SOURCES

Year ended June 30, 2009

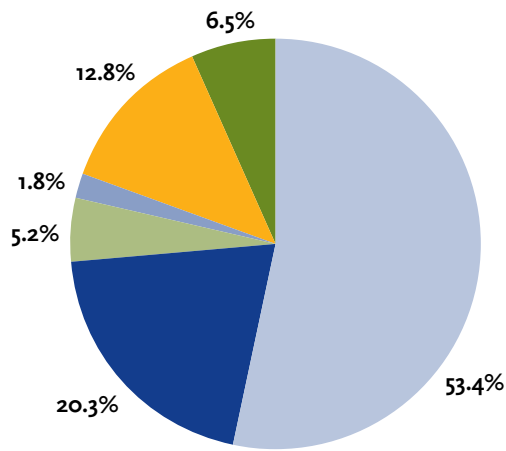
Boston Teacher Residency

Federal	1,222,803
District	1,617,052
Foundations	594,498
Other	3,737
Total Boston Teacher Residency	3,438,090

Boston Plan for Excellence

Foundations	780,971
Endowment	1,169,429
Continuing grants	1,348,471
Investment Return	61,839
Other	8,182
Total Boston Plan for Excellence	3,368,892

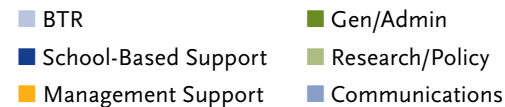
Total Revenue **\$6,806,982**



EXPENSES

Boston Teacher Residency	3,634,071
School-Based Support	1,379,439
Research and Policy	351,757
Communications	123,692
Management Support	874,193
General and Administrative	443,830

Total Expenses **\$6,806,982**



Annenberg Foundation
 Anonymous
 L.G. Balfour Foundation
 Bank of America Foundation
 BankBoston 200th Anniversary Fund
 Barr Foundation
 The Boston Foundation
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From the beginning, Bank of America (called the First National Bank of Boston) has supported the work of the Boston Plan for Excellence and better outcomes for the city's children. We are grateful for their continued support.

Bank of America 



**Boston Plan for
EXCELLENCE**
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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