


MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee

FROM: Carol R. Johnson 
Superintendent

DATE: January 27, 2010

SUBJECT: Acceleration Agenda Update; Education Reform Legislation Update; Turnaround
Schools Update

On November 18, we presented a working draft of our five year strategic direction for the Boston Public Schools. Tonight, we will provide an update on the Acceleration Agenda Year One work underway. We are committed to a cycle of continuous improvement in all 135 of our schools, and the four key strategies outlined in our strategic plan are designed to move the work forward on behalf of every student in BPS.

One of the four key strategies that we are leveraging in order to create a world class educational system for all students is to **replicate success and turn around our lowest performing schools**. This past fall, we identified 14 schools that require rapid, targeted interventions in order to accelerate student achievement and immediately began a process of diagnostic work to assess the needs and necessary supports for each school community.

On Monday, January 18, landmark educational reform, “An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap,” was signed into law that positions Massachusetts on the cutting edge of innovation and bold transformation. As a result of this law, school districts will have authority to exercise newfound flexibilities at schools designated as “Level 4” (underperforming) by the state, such as requiring all staff members to reapply for their positions and suspending collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). Intergovernmental Relations staff members Jennifer Cruikshank and Keith Mahoney, along with our Chief Accountability Officer Frank Barnes will provide a legislative update this evening.

We are excited by the flexibilities that the law will afford, but we also know that the need to move forward is urgent and some immediate planning and action steps must be taken, even as we await the state's designation process. BPS has already begun the focus on instructional changes and leadership transformation. We are out in front of all of the districts in the state in this critical work because our children can not wait.

Tonight, we will discuss some of the bold actions that will be taken in order to accelerate the achievement of students in these schools, understanding that a communication process with school staff and families must take place before we provide information regarding structural, staffing, or leadership changes in specific school communities. Once the state makes its formal designation, we will be poised to act swiftly to take advantage of the Education Reform Law. We will be coming back with additional updates and details over the next several meetings, and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Attachments

- Acceleration Agenda: Year One Progress
- An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap
- Turnaround School Recommendations