


BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee

FROM: Carol R. Johnson 
Superintendent

DATE: November 18, 2009

SUBJECT: Five-Year Strategic Direction with a focus on Turnaround Schools

We are pleased to send you a working draft of our five-year roadmap for the Boston Public Schools. The document captures a new proposed mission statement, Acceleration Agenda academic targets that have been revised, raised, and realigned to 2014, our four key strategies, and program initiatives to achieve these aggressive goals.

We are fortunate to build on a strong foundation that includes the district's prior efforts under Superintendents Tom Payzant and Michael Contompassis to define effective teaching and identify the essentials necessary for every school to achieve success. *The Acceleration Agenda, 2009-2014* reflects that progress, while it reminds us of the persistent and urgent challenges that we face. We try to reflect the many voices of families, students, and community members that we have heard during numerous meetings and conversations regarding what they hope to see, while we also incorporate the action steps already underway. We are eager to receive staff and community feedback on this working draft over the coming month, before we return with a final version in early 2010.

In our mission to create a world class system of schools, we must ensure academic experiences of high quality for every student. To that mission, the *Acceleration Agenda 2009-2014* articulates a clear and urgent focus on schools in greatest need of improvement, with targeted strategies and investments to transform them. They are:

- William Blackstone Elementary School, South End
- Henry Dearborn Middle School, Roxbury
- Paul Dever Elementary School, Dorchester
- Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary School, Roxbury
- The English High School, Jamaica Plain

(continued)

- Elihu Greenwood Elementary School, Hyde Park
- Curtis Guild Elementary School, East Boston
- Harbor Middle School, Dorchester
- John Holland Elementary School, Dorchester
- John F. Kennedy Elementary School, Jamaica Plain
- Odyssey High School, South Boston
- Orchard Gardens K-8 School, Roxbury
- Maurice Tobin K-8 School, Mission Hill
- William Monroe Trotter Elementary School, Dorchester

Enclosed you will find quantitative data on the fourteen schools, along with a Question and Answer sheet that describes the range of possible interventions and supports. After more intensive work with each school community, we will come back to you with more specific recommendations for each school. We expect the state to release its list of underperforming schools by January, but we believe it is our responsibility to intervene immediately based on our knowledge and data sets, and our commitment to all of our students.

We can not overlook that a disproportionate representation of struggling schools are concentrated in particular communities of our city. This area of high need and even higher potential is termed our “Circle of Promise.” We will need our faith-based, business, and non-profit partners to invest concentrated resources and time in the schools, students, and families within that circle, so that the promise that this community and its children hold can be fully realized.

Our strategic plan for improvement, however, is not simply to turn around fourteen of our schools. This five-year plan puts us on a new path. It encompasses the work of the past two years, proposes new initiatives, and places all of our efforts in a district-wide context to assure that we are working together toward a shared set of goals crucial to the success of our students. This new coherence, focus, and alignment raises the bar across the district – for those schools requiring serious intervention to those performing at the highest level. We look forward to replicating success even as we change, innovate, and step away from business as usual.

We clearly understand the need to bring forward additional addenda and presentations to the School Committee that highlight our intentional efforts in middle and high schools, English Language Learning, and Special Education, as well as our work around closing achievement and access gaps. The addition of year-by-year academic targets on our journey to 2014 allows us to assess and regularly report on our progress, so that this strategic direction serves as the blueprint for the in depth work that must be done to accomplish our aggressive agenda.

This ambitious set of strategies and initiatives cannot be executed without the support and partnership of our families and the community at large. We look forward to hearing your responses and answering any questions you may have. Thank you.

Attachments

- Presentation: Our Five Year Plan
- Acceleration Agenda, 2009-2014
- BPS School Turnaround Questions and Answers
- Turnaround Schools List and Data