



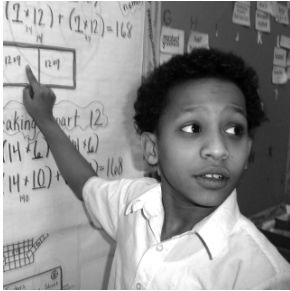
# Putting Children First Through Education Reform



*“To get the results we seek -- at the speed we want -- we must make transformative changes that boost achievement for students, improve quality choices for parents, and increase opportunities for teachers. We need to empower our educators to quickly innovate and implement what works.*

***Equality in education in the greatest civil rights challenge of the next decade.”***

*Mayor Thomas M. Menino*



The Massachusetts Legislature is currently debating an education reform bill that could greatly improve schools across the Commonwealth and help children achieve. There is momentum and excitement behind the bill, but just passing a bill is not enough. To work for students, parents, and educators, the bill must include provisions that give school districts:

- the tools to turn around our lowest performing schools;
- the opportunity to compete for increased federal investment; and
- the ability to match the right teachers with the right opportunities.

## **Turn around our lowest performing schools.**

While there are many exceptional schools across the Commonwealth, there is a group of schools that are persistently under-performing. In Boston, we have identified 14 schools in this category. There are educational strategies that we know can work for our youth and improve these schools. As currently drafted, the bill would require school districts to engage in a lengthy arbitration process prior to implementing any necessary strategies. Even after completing the arbitration process, there is no guarantee that the district would be able to execute the changes. The education reform bill must eliminate this lengthy process for turnaround efforts in our lowest performing schools.

## **Compete for federal investment.**

Massachusetts is competing against other states for hundreds of millions of dollars in federal education funds in the “Race to the Top” program. The states that win this grant will receive new funding for almost all schools, as well as targeted funding for low-performing schools. To win, Massachusetts must show it is willing to innovate. This innovation can be realized through the creation of new Horace Mann charter schools, which operate as part of a local school district and have increased flexibility in programming and accountability for results. They can currently be established through the conversion of an existing school or by forming new schools, only after approval from the School Committee, Superintendent, and Teachers Union President. Horace Mann schools have the ability to foster new types of innovation and success, but only 7 Horace Mann schools have been created in the last 15 years, including just 2 in Boston. The education reform bill must allow for the unimpeded creation of Horace Mann schools.

## **Match the right teachers with the right opportunities.**

Massachusetts has many tremendous educators; however, some school teams have not been able to create an effective learning environment in our 14 lowest performing schools. Currently we do not have enough flexibility to assign personnel in a manner that best serves our children. Removing or re-assigning teachers in these schools is a slow and expensive process – one that prevents us from achieving the academic gains we need at the speed our children deserve. The education reform bill must increase the school district’s flexibility to assign staff members who are able to close the achievement gap in our persistently under-performing schools. In our 14 turnaround schools, teachers who are reassigned would not be fired, but given other opportunities to find placement at other district schools. They will also receive one year of professional development opportunities so that they can strengthen their skills as educators.

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**Our legislators are debating this bill now. They want to hear from you!**

Please join the growing coalition of students, parents, civic and business leaders  
who are calling for sensible education reform!

Call your State Representative at 617-722-2000 or visit [www.racetothetopcoalition.org](http://www.racetothetopcoalition.org).