



CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
Office of the Mayor
Thomas M. Menino

November 18, 2009

Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee
26 Court Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear School Committee Members:

Earlier today, 136 business and community leaders experienced the thrill of being in a Boston Public School. As “Principals for a Day,” they power-walked school corridors, greeted children arriving on buses, spoke with parents, teachers, and custodians, supervised school lunches and breakfasts, monitored reading groups, and evaluated science projects. It is likely that this day was among their most rewarding -- and their most demanding.

Boston Public Schools is home to 56,340 students from well over 40 countries. Each child arrives at our schools with his or her own history, individual strengths and needs. We have an obligation to provide each and every one of these young people with a quality education – a solid foundation that equips all students with the tools they need to become our leaders, our future Principals for a Day. I continue to welcome this awesome responsibility – as difficult, as complicated, and as challenging as it is. Putting public education first is vital to the health and vibrancy of our city – and is the most important thing I can do as Mayor.

For the most part – and for many young people, Boston schools are doing a good job. Our test scores have steadily risen, more graduates are heading off to college, and a growing number of families are considering our schools. We have much to celebrate: with the investment of many stakeholders – educators, partners, and parents – Boston Public Schools has come a long way, gaining national recognition and acclaim. While I am proud of these accomplishments and grateful to the thousands of individuals who work hard in and with our schools, we would be doing a disservice to say that *all* children and *all* schools are advancing.

Some of our schools are just not making the progress they need to make. We can no longer afford to have these schools limp along. We must be honest, acknowledge the challenges, and be open to new ideas and reforms. Tonight, Superintendent Johnson presents a thoughtful plan that does just this. The plan reviews our work to date and lays out a vision of where we need to go – and why it is vitally important that we do all we can to turn around our low-performing schools, so that every school will be a school of quality and choice. We all need to come together and support the Superintendent in this effort.

Some of the proposed initiatives are bold – demanding creativity, accountability, and above all, flexibility. There may be some who will find it easier and safer to sit back, to stall – to use our stretched dollars as an excuse to postpone this critical work. To these people, I say *time has run out*. We can no longer wait to take action. From this day forward, we must collectively re-commit ourselves and pool our energies. With diminishing resources, it will be all the more important to think creatively and to rely on those measures that are cost effective, but reap big returns.

Today, 16 years after I first took office, I am even more passionate about our schools' potential, more optimistic that we can reach our goals, and more driven to ensure excellence for all. But none of this can happen unless we all share a sense of urgency. We can re-invigorate and transform our schools with a shared vision and our collective willingness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Thomas M. Menino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "T" and "M".

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston

cc: Superintendent Carol R. Johnson