


MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson and Members
Boston School Committee

FROM: Carol R. Johnson 
Superintendent

DATE: October 31, 2008

RE: Pathways to Excellence – Conceptual Framework

I am submitting the following conceptual framework to guide the Pathways to Excellence reprogramming recommendations and to drive our academic agenda, as well as our plans for greater fiscal and operational efficiency. These recommendations were originally submitted on October 1, 2008, revised on October 29, 2008, and now integrate the suggestions made by the School Committee at the October 29th meeting. These changes and/or additions are highlighted in **bold**.

It is expected that this framework will serve as the basis for considering programming and operational decisions moving forward and will be amended from time to time to reflect changing realities and priorities. In addition, this recommendation serves to define the framework or guiding principles that we use to make decisions and do not imply any specific program or school changes, which as is the practice would come before the School Committee for review and action on an annual and/or as needed basis.

The overall goals of the Pathways to Excellence framework include: expanding academic excellence, increasing access, ensuring equity, **and improving efficiency and effectiveness**.

The framework incorporates the following driving factors:

- The needs of families who are searching for quality educational options distributed in an equitable manner across the city
- The ambitious academic agenda we have set through 2012
- The enrollment pressures we have experienced because of a declining birth rate and fewer school-age children living in the city
- The economic realities of today, ranging from less revenue at the local and state level to rising costs on the operational side

In addition, the framework articulates the importance of designing quality educational options that improve academic achievement and increase access and equity for all students.

- More K-8 programs and pathways to provide seamless educational experiences
- More pilot schools to promote flexibility and innovation
- “Graduation for All” through safety nets, **including prevention, intervention, and recovery services; alternative pathways to graduation;** and rigorous, personalized **middle schools** and high schools
- Innovation and enrichment through expansions in arts and music, new approaches to serving special-needs students and English Language Learners, creative programs such as Montessori schools and two-way bilingual programs, **and programs that ensure that graduates are college-ready.**

The framework also delineates utilizing fair, consistent, and transparent criteria to inform decision-making.

- Academic performance: Data sources will include Adequate Yearly Progress, No Child Left Behind status, **evolving district-based formative assessments, graduation and attendance data,** and performance as well as improvement in MCAS scores.
- Operational factors: **choice trend data,** facility utilization rates, and operational costs per pupil
- Building conditions: the Facility Condition Index, utility costs per square foot, and anticipated maintenance and repair costs

While change is not easy, it is necessary, and I believe that this conceptual framework enables us to address the challenges ahead in a way that improves the educational excellence and access for our students. Therefore, I recommend the approval of this framework and underlying principles at the November 5th meeting.