

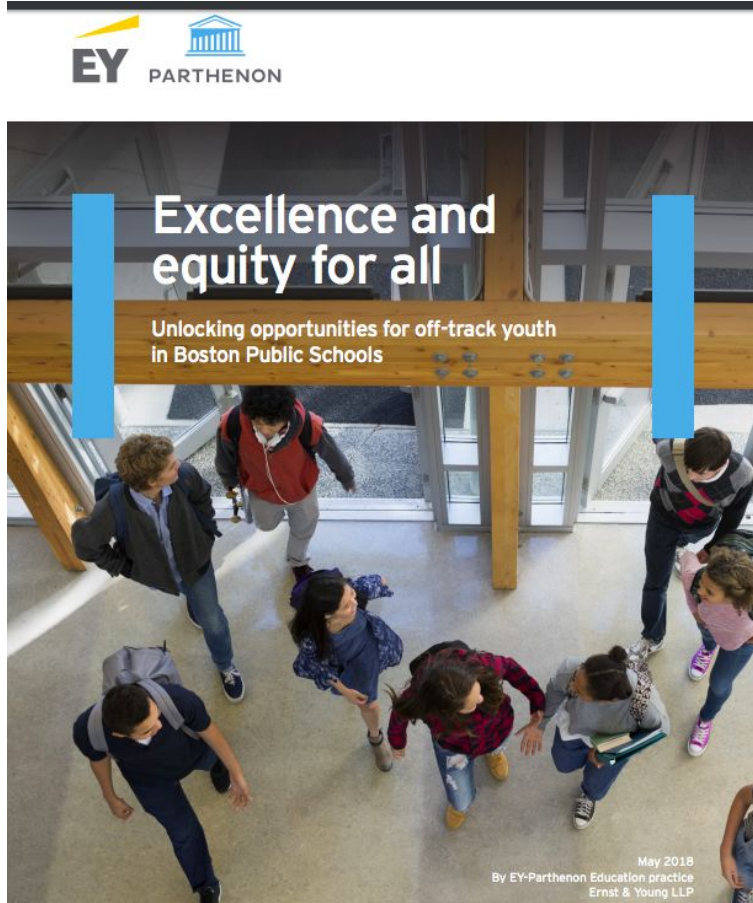


BPS RESPONSE TO OFF-TRACK YOUTH REPORT

Donna Muncey, Deputy Superintendent of Strategy
Dan Anderson, Executive Director of Strategy

School Committee
May, 2018

Off-Track Youth Report



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Foreword

In 2007, Boston Public Schools commissioned a report from Parthenon to examine how the district was serving youth who were off-track to graduate from high school. That examination of the dropout pipeline revealed serious need for improvement and was followed by investments in some crucial areas, and in alternative education in particular, to better serve our youth.

Since then significant efforts have been made by BPS and by the Boston community as a whole to support all of our students not just to graduation, but to a fruitful life after high school. Thanks to these concerted efforts, the BPS four-year graduation rate has risen from 57.9% in 2007 to 72.7% in 2017. Over the same timeframe, the annual dropout rate has fallen from 7.9% to 3.6%.

But these improvements are not enough. With that in mind, last year I commissioned a second report to update our understanding of how our secondary schools support our youth who are off-track to graduate. With support from the Barr Foundation, EY-Parthenon has worked tirelessly to identify patterns of when, why, and how students fall off-track to graduate, as well as which early warning indicators might help us see that students are at risk to fall off-track.

This study has concluded what we suspected: (1) some of our own policies are contributing to the inadequate service for our youth and (2) our practices are not yet sufficiently developed to prevent students from falling off-track or to help them recover if they do. I concur fully with the findings and recommendations presented in this report. BPS will act decisively and with the support of our partners to implement these recommendations. We must be decisive, not incremental, so that we see significant change following from this report.

This report has given BPS a strong foundation and clear direction from which to act. I have directed staff to develop an initial response to the report including a set of actions that can be taken immediately. I will also convene a steering committee to formulate a longer term strategic plan to address each of the findings and the recommendations and their implications in detail.

My team and I are extremely grateful for the generous support from the Barr Foundation that enabled this crucial analysis. We are equally grateful to the EY-Parthenon team for their dedication to rigorous and honest analysis. Our commitment is to dramatic, not incremental, change.

Sincerely,

Tommy Chang, Ed.D.
 Superintendent, Boston Public Schools

The full report is available on the BPS website

Steering Committee

We want to acknowledge the year-long effort of the educators on our steering committee

- Dan Anderson
- Chelsea Banks
- Rayna Briceno
- Jill Carter
- Hayden Frederick-Clarke
- Jenny Curtin
- Kate Dobin
- Amber Donell
- Freddie Fuentes
- Leah Hamilton
- Ben Helfat
- Alison Hramiec
- Nicole Ireland
- Eleanor Laurans
- Donna Muncey
- Sherri Neasman
- Cindie Nielsen
- Ligia Noriega
- Sunny Pai
- Stephanie Sibley
- Nora Vernazza
- Nicole Wagner

Off-Track Youth Report Findings

- Finding 1: Many open enrollment schools as currently designed are failing to meet the high needs of their students—and demand for these schools has fallen over time.
- Finding 2: Part of the difficulty for open enrollment schools results from the stratification of the BPS system, in which high concentrations of need in a subset of schools exacerbate the challenge of helping students succeed.
- Finding 3: Funding of BPS high schools...does not reflect the highly differentiated levels of need across schools and school types.
- Finding 4: Students who eventually become off-track frequently transfer from school to school within BPS and often experience poor outcomes when they transfer.
- Finding 5: Alternative education schools, on average, are not successfully re-engaging off-track students, and students seeking a placement in alternative schools are frequently unable to find one.

Foundation to Build Upon

When examining changes in the proportion of students without EWIs who fell off track, the EY-Parthenon team found a **decrease** in the **average proportion of students** without early warning indicators who later **fell off track** to graduate from 33% of the cohort of 2014 to 22% of the 2017 cohort.

Additionally, during that same time, several individual schools saw pronounced **increases in their graduation rates**, including:

- The **Burke High School** had a **14** percentage point increase,
- **East Boston High School** had a **26** pp increase, and
- The **English High School** had a **16** pp increase.

The work that produced these gains is the foundation for what will come next.

WHAT WILL WE DO?

Actions Underway

- Continue the development and rollout of the Essentials for Instructional Equity
- Support integration of college and career exploration, work-based learning opportunities, and career and technical education opportunities into the school day
- Realign existing alternative education programs with student needs
- Redesign the Re-Engagement Center
- Coordinate the deployment of central office supports more effectively, specifically in the higher need schools
- Facilitate transformation plan writing in select schools

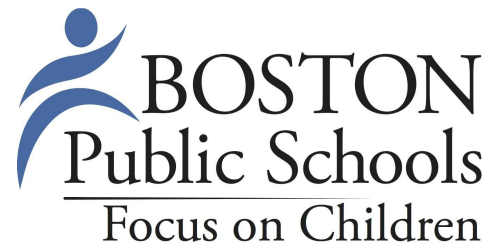
Actions in the Immediate Future

- Increase participation in Dual Enrollment
- Train and monitor staff in effective use of Aspen SIS and Naviance with and for students and families and
- Encourage schools to assign a “primary person” to each student to support toward graduation
- Implement effective use of early warning indicator data for student support across high schools
- End administrative assignment of students to under-selected and under-enrolled schools

Actions Pending Further Discussion

- Incubate new alternative programs, based on existing promising models, both within high schools and as stand-alone schools
- Consider further refinements to weighted student funding; e.g., weights for concentration of student need or alternative placement
- Consider human capital investments, eg: preferential staffing timelines for lower performing schools, incentivizing school leaders to transfer to lower performing schools
- Explore opportunities to consolidate under-selected or under-performing programs and replace them with new innovative programs
- Provide students in specialized language and disability programs with more robust choices across secondary schools
- Create a department or cross-department group managing the variety of options for high school programs across the school district

Answering the call to solve these challenges will require coordinated and sustained effort over several years.



APPENDICES

Off-Track Youth Report Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: Transform open enrollment and selective schools through a coordinated plan
- Recommendation 2: Overhaul alternative education
- Recommendation 3: Put early warning data in the hands of educators and families as a first step in enabling a more strategic use of data district-wide
- Recommendation 4: Use policy to enhance equity and create conditions that allow all schools to succeed
- Recommendation 5: Evolve how the district manages its high schools to enable effective implementation of strategic priorities