



Boston Public Schools

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Contact:

Jonathan Palumbo
Boston Public Schools
617.635.9494

jpalumbo@boston.k12.ma.us

Barbara Semedo
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
206.709.3400

media@gatesfoundation.org

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Boston Public Schools Continues Work on High School Renewal to Prepare Every City Student for College and the Workplace

New grants to accelerate reform aimed at improving instruction, performance management and the range of school options to help more than 18,000 Boston students

Boston, Mass. – Boston Public Schools (BPS) today announced a \$9 million investment by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the expansion of its secondary school reform efforts to include initiatives aimed at strengthening small schools and small learning environments, enhancing teaching, engaging at-risk high school students, and improving district-level policy and operations. BPS will work closely with its long-term partners Jobs for the Future (JFF) and the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) to implement the strategies.

These initiatives advance BPS's High School Renewal initiative focused on ensuring that more of Boston's young people receive the high school education they need to graduate and succeed in college and the workforce. The expanded strategy is expected to affect every public high school student in Boston.

"I'm delighted that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has deepened its commitment to the Boston Public Schools with additional funding and support," Mayor Thomas M. Menino said. "This grant is a validation of the very hard work taking place in our high schools every day. The sustained support from the foundation allows the district to expand its high school renewal work so that our students can choose an education that will keep them interested and help prepare them for life after high school."

Boston has long been a national leader in high school transformation. In the last five years, BPS has worked closely with JFF, CCE, the Boston Plan for Excellence, and the Boston Private Industry Council to create new schools and restructure the city's large comprehensive high school into small schools or small learning communities. This work has begun to show results. From 1998 to 2004, the percentage of students passing the 10th grade math test of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tripled (from 24 percent to 74 percent) and the percentage passing the English test almost doubled (from 43 percent to 77 percent). New BPS data show that the dropout rate is the lowest that it has been in 20 years

and more of Boston's high school graduates are attending postsecondary education or training. A study conducted by the Boston Private Industry Council found that 74 percent of the class of 2003 were enrolled in post secondary education or training, the highest rate in the 18 years in which the follow-up study of graduates has been conducted.

"The hard work and commitment of Boston's teachers, principals, students, and parents is paying off," said Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant. "Our commitment remains to improving instruction in every classroom of every high school so that all students graduate with a diploma that provides them access to opportunity in continuing education and work."

JFF will work with BPS to improve school level reform and to strengthen the support at the district level to increase student achievement. Activities include:

- Deepening instructional and organizational support to Boston's small high schools;
- Developing data collection tools to monitor student and school performance and provide critical school-level supports;
- Expanding educational options for high school students whose educational progress has stalled; and
- Strengthening the district's graduation policies.

"Young people, particularly those who are already struggling, can easily get lost in large, impersonal high schools," said Marlene Seltzer, CEO of Jobs for the Future. "Boston, like other pioneering cities, has found that smaller, more personalized learning environments—coupled with rigorous coursework—helps all students achieve to high standards."

CCE and the Boston Pilot Schools Network have been a critical component of the Boston Public Schools strategy. Roughly 10 percent of students in the district attend a Boston Pilot School. A grant to CCE will improve its capacity to support special education and English Language Learners. It will also be used to document CCE's existing school development strategy in an effort to start similar schools in other districts throughout New England.

"Every Pilot school has the same goal—we are focused on helping each young person reach high academic standards," said Dan French, executive director for the Center for Collaborative Education. "This model is clearly making a difference. With control over their resources, Pilot Schools are able to create personalized and academically challenging learning environments that prepare students for continuing their education in college and beyond."

Since 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has invested more than \$25 million in Boston to open new high schools and strengthen existing ones to ensure all students have a wide range of high-quality educational opportunities.

"Steady, effective leadership by Superintendent Payzant and the School Committee, the growing array of available high-quality high schools, and a district-wide commitment to excellence have transformed Boston into one of the most promising urban districts in the nation," said Jim Shelton, program director of education at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "The district's progress and focused strategy should inspire others engaged in the difficult challenge of creating schools that work for all students."

To date, the foundation has invested about \$1 billion on efforts to improve the nation's high school system, including supporting the creation of more than 1,900 high-quality high schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia. As of this fall, more than 550 of these new and transformed high schools had opened around the country.

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The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (www.gatesfoundation.org) works to promote greater equity in four areas: global health, education, public libraries, and support for at-risk families in Washington state and Oregon. The Seattle-based foundation joins local, national, and international partners to ensure that advances in these areas reach those who need them most. The foundation is led by Bill Gates' father, William H. Gates, Sr., and Patty Stonesifer.

Jobs for the Future (\$7.9 million over three years) believes that all young people should have a quality high school and postsecondary education, and that all adults should have the skills needed to hold jobs that pay enough to support a family. As a non-profit research, consulting and advocacy organization, JFF works to strengthen our society by creating educational and economic opportunity for those who need it most. *Contact: Carmon Cunningham, 617.728.4446, ext. 133; ccunningham@jff.org*

Center for Collaborative Education (\$3.7 million over five years, \$1.1 million will be applied toward work in Boston) promotes purposeful learning and small, caring communities in K-12 public schools. It provides coaching, professional development, advocacy, and research toward the development of schools that nurture every student. *Contact: Dan French, 617. 421.0134, ext 227; dfrench@ccebos.org*