



Boston Public Schools

Overview of the District

Rank Among U.S. School Districts (by size):	67
Number of Schools:	136
Number of Students:	60,150
Number of Teachers:	3,696
Annual Budget:	\$861 million

Superintendent: Dr. Thomas W. Payzant was appointed in August 1995. His prior 30-year career in education included a 1993 appointment as Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education.

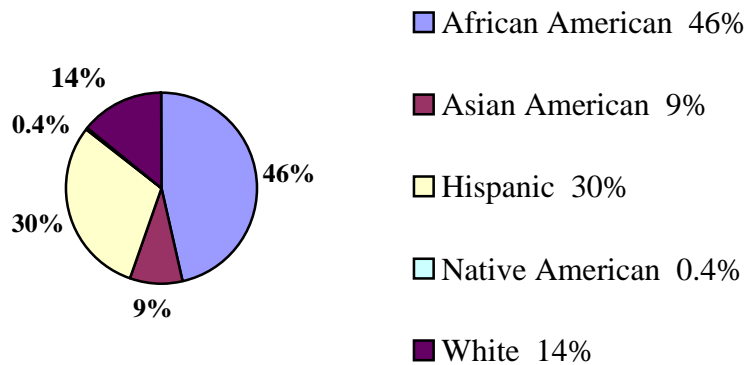
Governance: Appointed Board. Seven members appointed by the mayor for four-year terms. Replaced a 13-member elected committee in 1996.

Teacher Unions: Boston Teachers Union, Massachusetts Federation of Teachers

Student Characteristics

Percent of Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price School Lunch:	73%
Percent of Students Designated as English Language Learners:	19%
Graduation Rate (based on Manhattan Institute methodology):	67%

Student Demographics



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Meeting Federal No Child Left Behind Requirements

- ✓ In 2004, 50% of Boston's schools met their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets as identified by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, which requires that schools meet performance targets for students in all significant subgroups (e.g. ethnicity, income, language, and disability).

Consistent High Performance while Reducing Achievement Gaps across Ethnic Groups

- ✓ Boston is a consistent high performer (2001-2004) among demographically similar districts in Massachusetts. Using The Broad Prize methodology, Boston outperformed similar districts in Massachusetts in six of six areas (elementary, middle and high school; reading and math). This is Boston's fourth year as a Broad Prize finalist.
- ✓ Boston showed significant reductions in achievement gaps for African-American and Hispanic students when compared to their White counterparts in the following categories: high school reading (gap reductions of 14% for African-Americans and 15% for Hispanic students) and high school math (gap reductions of 21% for African-American and Hispanic students).

Graduation Rates

- ✓ Boston's current graduation rate is 67% based on the Manhattan Institute methodology of calculating graduation rates. Boston has one of the highest graduation rates for African-American students when compared to other urban districts in the country.

RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

Curriculum and Academic Goals

- ✓ All district goals center on the unifying goal of *Focus on Children II*, a five-year plan "to accelerate the continuous improvement of teaching and learning to enable all students to meet high standards." The two main goals are to move students beyond the minimal to the proficient level and to close achievement gaps between different ethnic and income groups.
- ✓ Teams from the district and from schools expanded the state standards from grade-level expectations into specific performance standards by grade and subject. Available on paper or online, supporting materials include pacing guides, course descriptions, instructional activities, and sample formative assessments.
- ✓ District specialists work with schools to build a curriculum calendar with benchmarks throughout the year. All teachers receive curriculum standards and pacing guides at the beginning of the year. The district expanded its assessment program this year to include more district-wide tests at the "end of chapters," at mid-year and at year-end.
- ✓ The district conducts curriculum implementation reviews of the middle and high schools that are similar to "mini accreditation visits." Deputy superintendents observe one

department at a time to give feedback to every teacher on his or her classroom instruction. These visits also review how well campus administrators support and monitor instruction.

Staff Selection and Capacity Building

- ✓ The district is replacing retired principals through its Leadership Institute for external candidates and through the Boston Principal Fellowship for internal candidates. The fellowship involves a year-long residency with participants “living the life of a principal” for approximately 85 days.
- ✓ The district increases its pool of teacher candidates through the Boston Teacher Residency Program. Candidates are hand-selected for participation in a one-year internship with one of the district’s best teachers, leading to certification. The district’s partnership with the State Board has been integral to developing this internal route to certification.
- ✓ The district works to retain new teachers through a New Teacher Support Center, where teachers receive the “red carpet treatment” for their first two years. Other retention strategies include creating leadership positions for teachers, providing mentors and staff development, and distributing curriculum documents to aid instruction.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- ✓ The district selects instructional programs through a citywide process, soliciting input from representative teachers and administrators. The process entails conducting research, getting information from vendors, and often piloting the program for a full year prior to a purchasing decision.
- ✓ The district mandates the amount of time spent daily on instruction in two core academic subjects. Elementary schools have 120 minutes a day of language arts and 70 to 90 minutes a day in mathematics. Double blocks in math and reading in Grades 6 and 9 (the transition grades) exceed instructional time required by the state. Readers and Writers Workshop, an inquiry-based model, and Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) are the only programs or models mandated across the district.
- ✓ The CCL model involves an eight-week teaching cycle where teachers work in study groups that meet weekly to set goals and expectations for the next week. Teachers having trouble meeting a specific goal can have a coach observe their lesson, give feedback, and offer support. Coaches meet and observe several classrooms per day.
- ✓ All high schools except for the Exam Schools eventually will be broken down into small learning communities. The district also is moving to create more K-8 schools, converting former elementary schools and former middle schools. Additionally the district is adding 21 new classes for 4-year-olds. All of these instructional arrangements were selected based on the review of research, data, and pilot programs.

Use of Data

- ✓ The district monitors its progress through the Whole School Improvement Plan and the web-based MyBPS electronic data system. A new system to monitor dropouts, attendance, and suspension is being implemented this year.
- ✓ The MyBPS data system is accessible to administrators and teachers. The system includes query-friendly state assessment results, report cards, pop-up boxes with tips on how to use and interpret the data, links to state standards and skills tied to questions, and a PDF with each student's writing composition and score. Interactive graphs linked to each question are also available. Formative assessments will be available in the future on this system.
- ✓ The district requires quarterly assessments in all subjects and grade levels and provides mid- and end-of-year open response assessments. The district retains students in grades 3, 6, and 9 who have not mastered the standards assessed in the district reading and mathematics benchmarks by the end of summer school. Benchmarks are reviewed every 4 to 8 weeks.

Interventions and Adjustments

- ✓ Under contract with the union, the superintendent can request an audit when a low-performing school is identified. A team from the teachers' union and the district audit the needs of low-performing schools. Interventions include reconstitution, moving to a small school model, sending in an intervention team, and providing additional professional development.
- ✓ Student success plans are customized for those who do not meet proficiency standards on the state norm-referenced test. The district mandates summer school for students in grades 3, 6, 7 and 8 who do not meet benchmarks in reading, writing, and mathematics. School interventions include tutoring, support from instructional specialists, and regrouping of students.

Stability of Leadership

- ✓ Dr. Thomas W. Payzant was appointed superintendent of Boston Public Schools in August 1995. His prior 30-year career in education included a 1993 appointment as Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education for the U.S. Department of Education.

Other Factors

- ✓ The school district is a city department and has strong support from the mayor's office. The Boston School Committee (board of directors) is appointed by the mayor. In a November 1996 referendum, voters chose to retain the appointed committee rather than return to the 13-member elected committee. The district's budget is a line item in the city budget, and the superintendent is a member of the mayor's cabinet.
- ✓ A local education fund endowed by local businesses and foundations works in close partnership with the district to refine professional development for all teachers and principals and to improve literacy instruction in all classrooms. The group tests new ideas that hold promise for accelerating improvements in schools and presses the district to look at its own policies and practices that inhibit reform.