

# The Boston Foundation



There for Education Reform



**This is the fifth in a series of publications about the many times the Boston Foundation has supported ideas and innovations that have transformed our community and improved lives. Today, as a major civic leader, the Foundation is helping to create the change our community needs—and we believe that nothing is more important to our common future than equity in education.**

**For the other booklets in this series, visit [www.tbf.org](http://www.tbf.org) and choose “There at the Beginning” or call 617-338-1700.**



## Introduction

**O**n January 18, 2010, as people across America celebrated the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., the Governor of Massachusetts, Deval Patrick, held a celebratory and moving ceremony at Boston’s Children’s Museum. The purpose of the gathering was to sign into law a historic education reform bill—and the Governor surrounded himself with public school students as well as numerous public and private partners who had played a major role in the passage of the bill.

Called *An Act Relevant to the Achievement Gap*, the legislation was advocated for—and informed by—a unique alliance of business, civic and education leaders. This remarkably diverse group, the *Race to the Top Coalition*, was convened by the Boston Foundation in the fall of 2009. The resulting legislation reflected the Coalition’s goals, which involved extending successful elements of education reform throughout the state, opening more charter schools and bestowing new powers to district superintendents to intervene in the most underperforming schools.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which reads "Deval Patrick". The signature is stylized and cursive.

[Governor Deval Patrick signs the historic education reform bill at Boston’s Children Museum.](#)



## The Quest for Equity and Excellence in Education

**T**he Boston Foundation’s leadership in support of the 2010 education reform legislation reflects the expanded civic leadership role the Foundation has played over the last decade. It also caps four decades of Boston Foundation contributions to one of the great struggles of our time: the quest for a system of public education that serves *all* children, regardless of race, ethnicity or learning ability.

This publication tells the story of that quest—beginning in 1970 when the Foundation provided crucial support to another group of civic leaders focused on education reform and ending with the story of the *Race to the Top Coalition*. Of course, the story will never really end until Boston—birthplace of public education in America—has the capacity to provide every single child in our city with the education they need and deserve to achieve their full potential.

[The Governor shakes hands with students from Roxbury Preparatory Charter School and East Boston High School](#)



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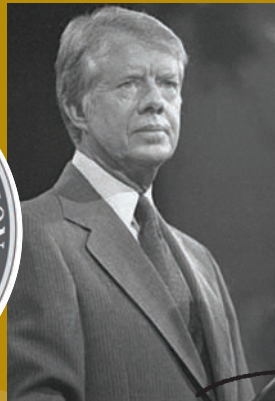
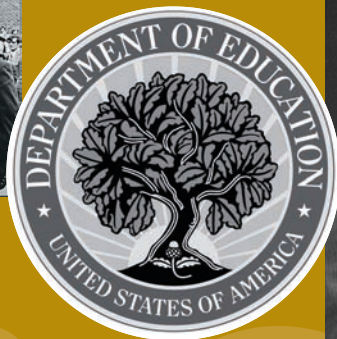
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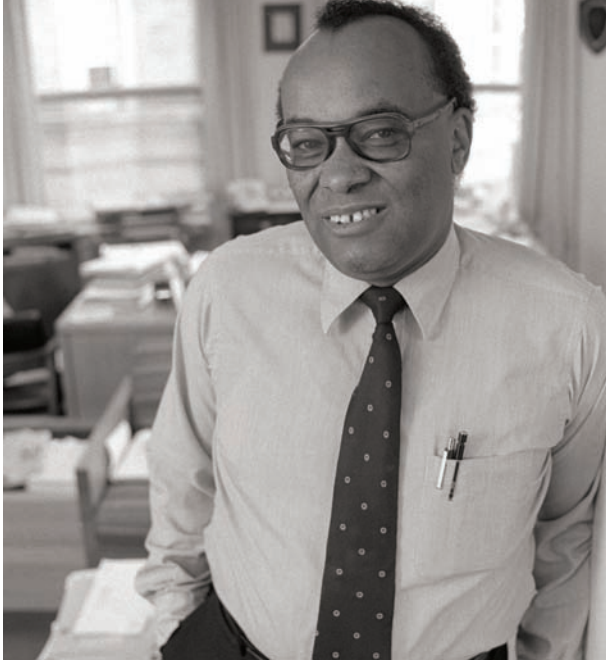


*Jimmy Carter*

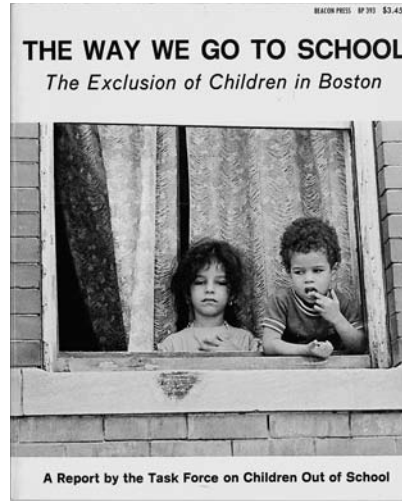
## The National Context: From Nixon to Carter

The 1970s began with widespread support across America for the conservative education policies of Richard M. Nixon, whose positions were seen largely as a negative reaction to grassroots efforts to improve equity in education during the 1960s.

The decade ended on a somewhat more positive note, however, when President Jimmy Carter created the Department of Education as a cabinet level entity of the United States government. But the crucible of the 1970s—for American educators and for social activists across the country—was the issue of civil rights in education, especially school desegregation. And no other city in the country was gripped by those challenges more than Boston.



Hubie Jones



The Task Force Report uncovered some 10,000 children not being educated by the Boston Public Schools because of diagnosed disabilities or lack of English language skills.

## Education Equity for All

**I**n 1969, when Boston educator and social activist Hubie Jones was serving as Executive Director of Roxbury Multi-Service Center, he found himself inundated with disturbing reports from caseworkers about children who were not being educated by the Boston Public Schools. Evidence was mounting that vast numbers of children were deemed by the system to be “learning disabled,” in many cases wrongly so. And a large percentage of those not being educated were young children from immigrant families who simply spoke little or no English.

### The Task Force on Children Out of School

Some of these children were being ‘warehoused’ within schools, but others were not attending school at all. With the help of two volunteer graduate students from Tufts University, Hubie Jones formed a blue ribbon *Task Force on Children Out of School*, which published a scathing indictment of the Boston Public Schools.

The Massachusetts Transitional Bilingual Education Act was the first such law in the nation.



The report revealed the full extent of the problem. Some 10,000 children were being systematically excluded from receiving an education because they had learning disabilities, behavioral problems or did not speak English. The report was called *The Way We Go to School: The Exclusion of Children in Boston*.

“With the report in hand, we had the information we needed to prove that thousands of children were not being educated in Boston, but no way to sustain our efforts so that we could do something about it,” said Mr. Jones. “So we went to the Boston Foundation and asked for help.”

### **New State Legislation Leads the Way to Federal Law**

The Boston Foundation, then under the direction of Fred Glimp, quickly made a grant to the group of \$25,000 to launch a new organization that would keep the issue of “children out of school” before education and civic leaders and fight for the rights of all of the city’s and state’s children. The organization, which today continues to advocate on behalf of children facing barriers as the result of poverty, race, limited English skills or disability, is *Massachusetts Advocates for Children*.

Within two years, Massachusetts would enact *Chapter 766*, the state’s groundbreaking law guaranteeing education for children with disabilities—which served as the model for federal legislation. And fast on the heels of that legislation came Massachusetts’ *Transitional Bilingual Education Act*, the first such law in the nation.







Black parents first sued the City of Boston for access to public schools for their children in 1849. More than 100 years later, Judge W. Arthur Garrity ordered the School Department to implement a system-wide busing plan to end racial segregation in the schools.

### **Against the Backdrop of the Desegregation Ruling**

Another defining issue that shaped the Boston Foundation's approach to public education in the

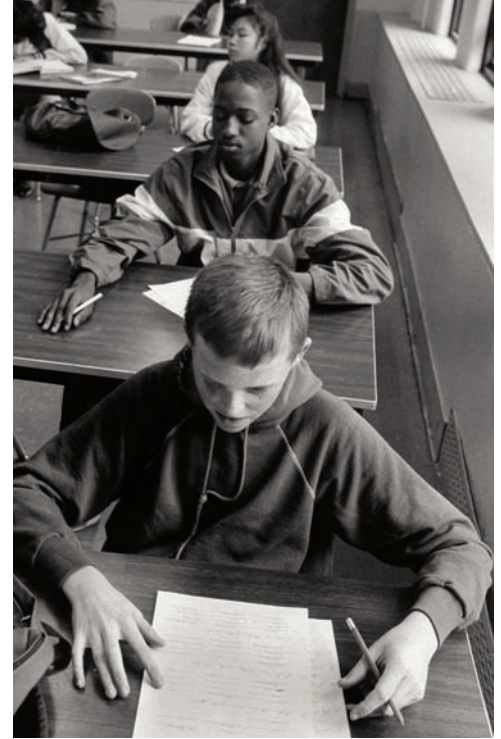
1970s—and tested the will of the entire community—was racial segregation in the Boston Public Schools. The issue came to a head when school officials, who opposed desegregation, faced a lawsuit filed by black parents. The families were outraged by the second-rate education their children were receiving in neighborhood schools that were inferior in almost every way to those serving primarily white children.

The lawsuit proceeded through the courts and on June 21, 1974, Federal District Judge W. Arthur Garrity issued the first of his desegregation orders. He had concluded that the Boston School Committee and the school department “had knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation affecting all of the city's students, teachers and school facilities, and had intentionally brought about or maintained a dual school system.”

As part of the desegregation process, Judge Garrity ordered the Boston Public Schools to implement a system-wide busing plan to end racial segregation. When the buses began to roll, they were heavily guarded by motorcycle police—and a number of the journeys sparked dissent and even violence on the part of neighborhood residents.



The Foundation supported programs that coordinated bus monitors during the desegregation years.

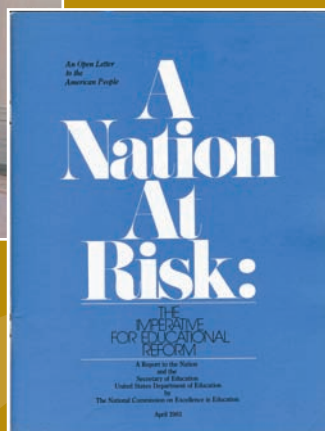


## Supporting the First School/Community Partnerships

The Boston Foundation saw the opportunity to make a significant contribution to healing the wounds caused by the desegregation process when Judge Garrity went beyond busing and forced the creation of partnerships between the Boston Public Schools and area colleges and businesses. In support of these efforts, the Foundation funded the *Tri-Lateral Task Force for Quality Education*, which for the first time brought businesses together with the city's school department to encourage an open dialogue about how the business community could support the schools.

The Foundation also funded the *Lincoln Filene Center at Tufts University* to coordinate the first university/school partnerships. And it provided start-up funds for the *Citywide Educational Coalition*, a grassroots organization created by, among others, Hubie Jones, to press for education reform. As an immediate response to the agonies of busing, the group created a special manual that was used by staff working in the schools and on the buses during desegregation.

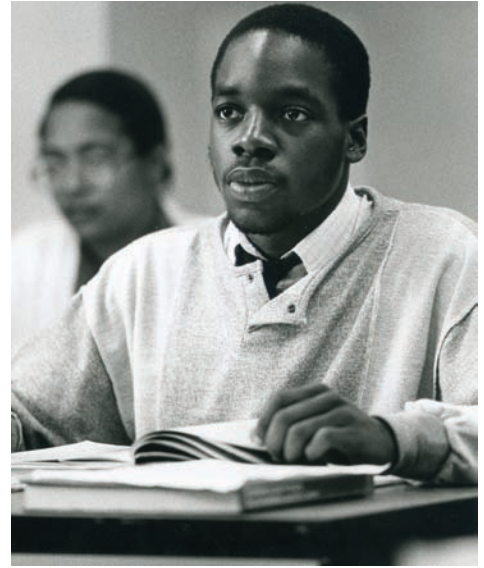
Taken together, all of these efforts, while designed initially to calm things down and make incremental improvements in public education, established a new framework through which the community would become involved in the public schools in a way it never had before—and laid the groundwork for the progress that would be made in the next decade.



## The National Context: “A Nation at Risk”

Education reform efforts across the country in the 1980s played out against a growing concern about the state of America’s schools. The undercurrents came to a head when in 1983 President Ronald Reagan was presented with a report from the National Commission on Excellence in Education called “A Nation at Risk.”

The report seethed with moral indignation about the state of public education. It included lines that would be quoted for years to come. “The educational foundations of our society,” it read, “are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and as a people.”



## In Pursuit of Excellence

“**A** Nation at Risk” added a sense of urgency to education reform in Boston and helped pave the way for the Boston Foundation to play a crucial role in creating two innovations that would advance education reform and benefit the Boston Public Schools for years to come.

### The Boston Compact

Building on the Tri-Lateral Task Force of the 1970s, which had brought businesses together with the Boston Public Schools for the first time, the Boston Foundation took on a leadership role in developing and supporting a far more ambitious undertaking.

In 1982, with the Foundation’s encouragement and support—including a \$100,000 grant—the city’s business leaders joined together with public school officials to sign the *Boston Compact*. The flagship agreement formalized a partnership among business, industry, higher education, community groups and others—all committed to strengthening the Boston Public Schools.



In 1983, Wendy Puriefoy (left), the Boston Foundation's education grantmaker, and Paul Ylvisaker, then Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education, were among those who met with the Bank of Boston to suggest the gift that led to the Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools.

The Boston Foundation made a \$100,000 grant to help launch the Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools. It also staffed the Plan for the first three years, and housed it for the first twelve years.

The business community, represented by the Boston Private Industry Council, promised to offer summer jobs to students of the Boston Public Schools and to prioritize hiring the system's graduates. The Boston Public Schools, for its part, committed to concrete improvements and reduced dropout rates. This "mutual accountability" approach was unique at the time and the Boston Compact's scale and longevity made it stand apart—and spawned similar efforts in other cities across America.

### **A Major Gift to the City**

In 1983, representatives of the Boston Foundation met with the leadership of the Bank of Boston, knowing that the Bank intended to make a major gift to the city of Boston to celebrate its 200th birthday. One of those representing the Foundation was Wendy Puriefoy, who had worked closely with Judge W. Arthur Garrity during school desegregation and today heads the national Public Education Network. Another was Paul Ylvisaker, the legendary Dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education and a member of the Foundation's Board of Directors. The purpose of the meeting was to suggest that the Bank seriously consider establishing a major endowment for public education in Boston.

### **The Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools**

In 1984, the Bank of Boston presented a generous and enduring gift to the people of Boston—a \$1.5 million endowment for the city's schools. It was the largest contribution of its kind ever made to a public school system in the United States.





Echoing the name of the national commission that had published “A Nation at Risk,” the endowment was called the *Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools*. When the gift was announced, the Boston Foundation simultaneously made a \$100,000 contribution to the new fund. In fact, the Foundation not only helped to conceive and fund the Plan, it staffed it for the first three years and housed it for the first twelve years.

Shortly after the Bank of Boston made its historic move to establish the Boston Plan for Excellence, other major institutions, including John Hancock, Massachusetts Higher Education Assistance Corporation and the law firm Goodwin Proctor & Hoar, established funds at the Boston Foundation to benefit the Plan’s programs.

Since the Foundation’s initial investment in 1984, more than \$32 million has flowed to the Plan through funds held by the Boston Foundation, including some \$4 million from the *Permanent Fund for Boston*, the fund established by hundreds of Bostonians over the years that supports the Foundation’s competitive grantmaking.

### **Helping Students Access Higher Education**

The Boston Foundation also played a central role in *ACCESS*, which was founded in 1985 to ensure that no Boston student would be denied the opportunity to go on to higher education due to lack of financial resources. *ACCESS* reaches out to students from every public high school and every neighborhood of Boston, helping them to identify and apply for financial aid, and giving scholarships to eligible students. Since its inception, *ACCESS* has helped students secure



In the last year of the 1980s, Mayor Ray Flynn, shown here with a graduate of South Boston High School, suggested replacing Boston's elected school committee with an appointed committee—a harbinger of major changes coming in the next decade.



hundreds of millions of dollars in financial aid and has awarded more than \$5 million in need-based last dollar scholarships, maintaining a 75% college graduation rate for the students it serves.

### **School-Based Management**

The 1980s also saw the beginning of a movement that would gain momentum over the course of the next decade. The revolutionary idea was to “decentralize” the decision-making authority for schools—relying less on the educational system as a whole and more on individual schools. In support of this effort, the Boston Foundation made a \$150,000 grant to the *Education Collaborative of Greater Boston* to raise the level of student achievement and to encourage parents, teachers and administrators to work together to that end.

The new emphasis on student achievement, supported by the Boston Foundation throughout the 1980s, would start to come into its own during the next decade. In 1989, Mayor Ray Flynn and a group of activists called for an appointed school committee. It was an early sign that the next decade would be a time of profound change in public education in Boston and across the Commonwealth.



## The National Context: Massachusetts Makes Its Mark

Bill Clinton took office in 1993, but didn't make his mark on education until his second term, when he came out strongly in favor of school choice for parents and public charter schools. With no groundbreaking national legislation coming out of Washington, it was the *Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993*, requiring a common curriculum for schools and statewide tests for students, that arguably had the most profound impact on national education reform.

As part of the Act, the *Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)* was established to inform curriculum and instruction and evaluate the performance of students, schools and districts according to a set of standards.

Through the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993, charter schools were allowed to open as a way to promote innovation in public schools.



## Focus on Children

**T**he dramatic changes called for in the *Massachusetts Education Reform Act* of 1993 would inform the work of the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Foundation for years to come. As part of the Act, charter schools—public schools that are independent of system oversight and enjoy a number of autonomies over scheduling and teaching—were permitted to open in Massachusetts as a way to generate new funding streams for education and accountability. And a year later, pilot schools were launched—through a unique partnership, including the Mayor, the School Committee, the Boston Public Schools and the Boston Teachers Union—to create models of educational innovation that would share many of the attributes of charter schools, but would be part of the Boston Public Schools.

### Alignment During the Payzant Years

When the Boston School Committee was originally created in 1789 as an elected body, the idea was to de-politicize public education, but over the years, accusations of corruption and patronage haunted the election process. In 1989, the people of Massachusetts voted in a non-binding referendum to give the Mayor of Boston the authority to appoint the



Supt. Tom Payzant (also right full page) took charge of a troubled school system with no coherent curriculum or published standards for students or teachers.

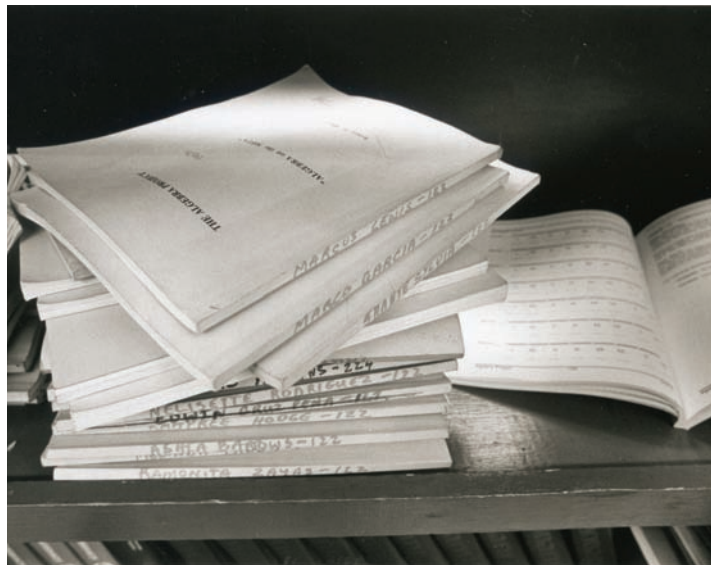
Committee and in 1992, with the blessing of the state legislature, Mayor Ray Flynn appointed the first School Committee in the city's history.

By 1995, it was Mayor Thomas M. Menino's turn to appoint the School Committee and hire his first Superintendent—Thomas W. Payzant, a nationally known educator. That same year, Ellen Guiney, who had worked with Mr. Payzant when he was an Assistant Secretary for Education in Washington, D.C., became Director of the *Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools*, the education endowment managed by the Boston Foundation.

For its first 10 years, the Boston Plan for Excellence had been making small grants to schools and awarding college scholarships. Now both the Boston Plan and the Boston Foundation would align their approach and work with Supt. Payzant's five-year strategy to raise student achievement.

Supt. Payzant introduced the popular concept of whole school change into a troubled school system that had no coherent curriculum or published standards for students or teachers. His *Focus on Children* plan was designed to raise student achievement in order to equip young people to meet the high standards that would propel them toward post-secondary education. Whole school change was aligned with the *small-schools movement* that was sweeping the country because it called for smaller learning communities inside larger schools—representing a fundamental reworking of the system.





## The Essentials of Whole-School Improvement

During the 1990s, the Boston Foundation not only continued to support the Boston Plan for Excellence through special Designated and Advised Funds that it held and managed. It also awarded the Plan close to \$1 million from its competitive funding pool, the *Permanent Fund for Boston*. The support went to the Plan's *Essentials of Whole-School Improvement* program, which was launched in 1996 in 27 Boston schools with a focus on improving teaching through instructional "coaching."

Just one year later, the Foundation's investment helped to qualify the Boston Plan for the *Annenberg Challenge*, at the time, the largest public/private endeavor in U.S. history to improve public schools. With \$10 million in funds from the Annenberg Foundation and matching funds, the Boston School Committee extended Whole-School Improvement to all schools, with the Boston Plan sharing oversight.

## Looking Toward the Future

Another program the Foundation invested heavily in during the 1990s was *The Algebra Project*, launched by Robert Moses, a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement. Mr. Moses believed that it was crucial for students—particularly children of color at the middle school level—to learn to think analytically if they were to be successful in what he called the coming "technological age." Over the course of the 1990s, the Foundation provided close to \$500,000 for the *Algebra in the Middle Schools Project* in Boston.



## Civic Leadership and Education Reform

**I**n the fall of 2001, Paul S. Grogan began his tenure as President and CEO of the Boston Foundation—with a strong mandate from the Foundation’s Board of Directors to expand the organization’s role in the community. The Board believed that, while the Foundation had made its mark on many areas through innovative grantmaking for its first 85 years, Boston needed its community foundation to serve as a civic leader as well.

### **All the Tools in the Toolbox**

As Greater Boston’s community foundation, the Boston Foundation was in a unique position to play a powerful, neutral convening role that could encourage and contribute to the dialogue about the city’s future. It was even in a prime position to help the city draft a civic agenda for the new century. In order to achieve these goals, the Foundation would need to reach far beyond grantmaking and use all the tools in its toolbox.



Under Mr. Grogan's leadership the Foundation began funding innovative charter schools and Catholic schools.

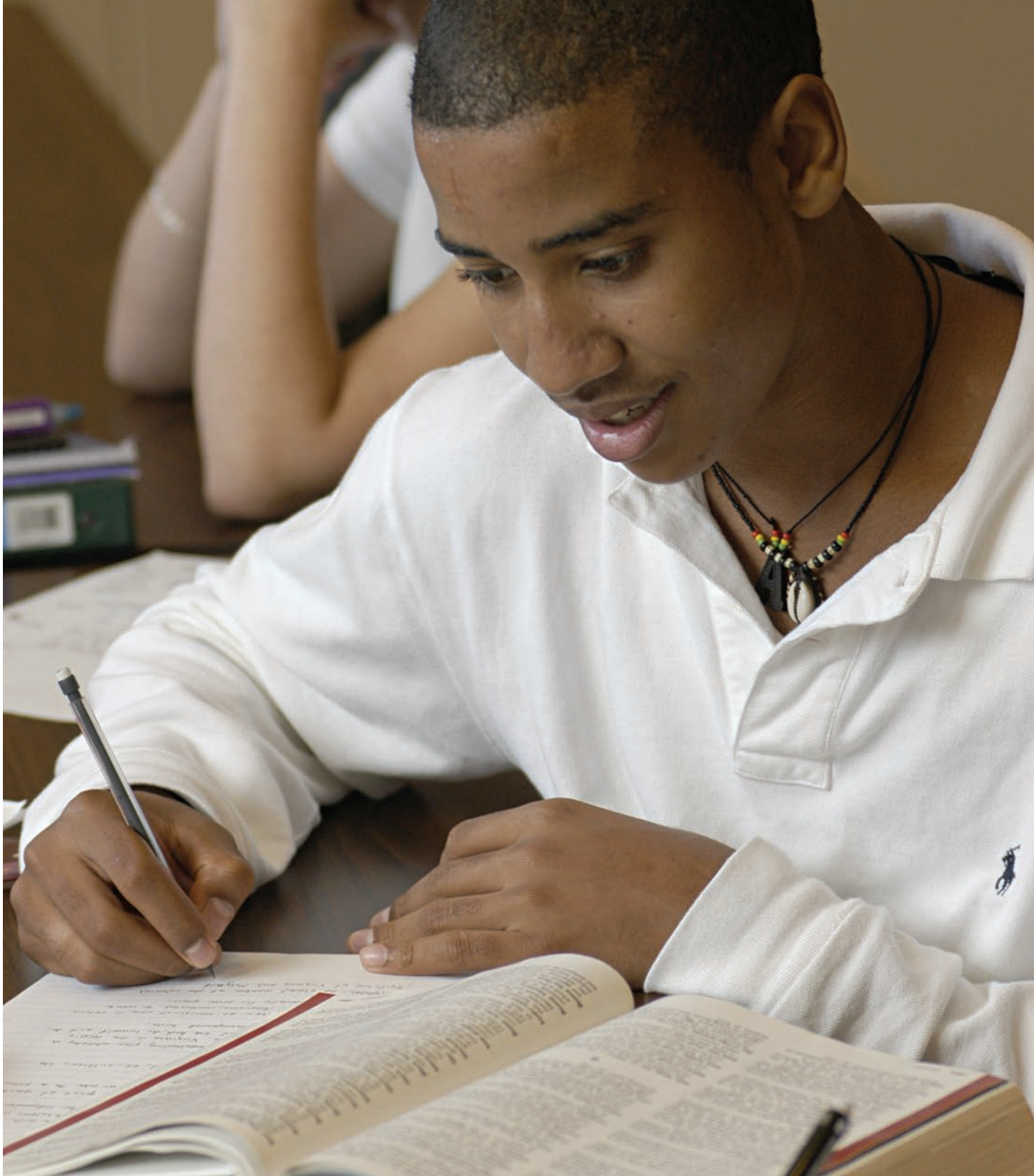
“There is no entity better suited than a community foundation to be thinking strategically and convening people around issues of fundamental civic importance,” said Mr. Grogan early in 2002. “And one of the most important issues we face as a community is equity in public education.”

### **Supporting Charter Schools and Catholic Schools**

Breaking with a longtime practice of funding only programs in the Boston Public Schools, under Mr. Grogan's leadership the Foundation's education policies quickly went through key policy shifts. The Foundation started funding Catholic schools that were showing positive results for their students. It also began, for the first time, to support charter schools, one of the great success stories in education reform—offering freedom in organizational structure, mission and academic programming, while being held to a high level of accountability.

“The Boston Foundation is a stamp of legitimacy,” said Marc Kenen, Ed.D., Executive Director of *Massachusetts Charter School Association*, which received the first of a number of major grants from the Foundation to support the charter movement. “It sends a powerful message to the community that charter schools are important labs for innovation, which ultimately will benefit the entire school system.”







The Boston Foundation helped to launch Boston Arts Academy as a pilot school—and the only arts high school in the city.

In 2002, the Foundation pledged \$200,000 to TechBoston Academy, securing a \$420,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



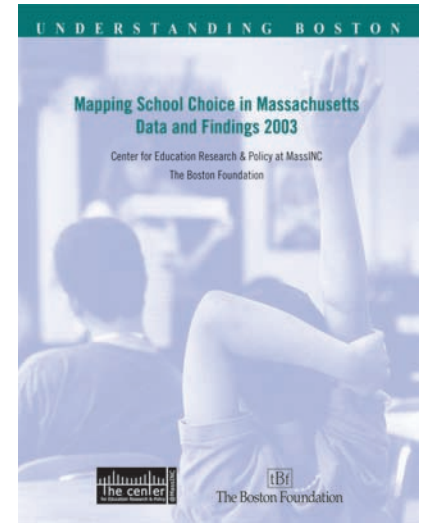
## Planning Grants to Pilot Schools

Soon the Foundation was also supporting *pilot schools*—created in 1994 as the City’s response to the popularity of charter schools. Pilot schools enjoy many of the autonomies that produce positive results for charters. In 2002, the Boston Foundation pledged \$200,000 toward the first year costs of a new pilot high school called *TechBoston Academy*, in the process securing \$420,000 in funding for the school from the *Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*.

The Foundation also announced a program to provide planning grants to schools in Boston’s system that were interested in converting to the pilot model. Representatives of more than 30 traditional Boston public schools flocked to an informational meeting at the Foundation, reflecting great interest on the part of principals and teachers. At the time, only five percent of Boston Public Schools students attended pilot schools and most of those schools were brand new—like the highly regarded *Boston Arts Academy*, which the Foundation had helped to launch—rather than “conversions” from traditional schools.

“We’re encouraged that many principals, teachers and parents share our view that flexibility and autonomy can make a substantial contribution to improved school climate and eventually superior educational results,” said Mr. Grogan.

In February of 2003, 13 Boston schools received planning grants of up to \$15,000 to explore conversion to the pilot status. Individual donors with funds at the Foundation were captivated by the pilot school idea and added some \$100,000 to the pool of funds available to encourage new pilot schools.



### **Innovation. Information. Impact.**

By the spring of 2003, the Boston Foundation was flexing its civic leadership muscle under the strategic guidance of Mary Jo Meisner, Vice President for Communications, Community Relations and Public Affairs. The first of many major education reports was released at a forum attended by hundreds of educators, civic leaders and parents. It was a model for *Understanding Boston*, a series of educational events and research sponsored by the Foundation to provide information and insight into issues affecting Boston, its neighborhoods and the region. That same year, the Boston Foundation unveiled a new slogan reflecting its expanded role in the community: **Innovation. Information. Impact.**

### **School Choice as an Equity Issue**

The first education report, *Mapping School Choice in Massachusetts*, was researched and written by the *Center for Education Research & Policy at MassINC* and the panel at the forum was moderated by the Executive Director of the Center, Paul Reville, who later would be chosen by Governor Deval Patrick to serve as Massachusetts Secretary of Education.

The report mapped, for the first time, the variety of school choice options available to students and families in the Commonwealth. It found that while a wide range of choices existed for many families, school entitlements and opportunities were unevenly distributed and significant unmet demand remained—especially for low-income students and students of color.



Paul Reville (at podium) moderated the panel for the “Making Schools Work” forum; panelists included Superintendent Tom Payzant (foreground).

Putting a stake in the ground at the forum, Mr. Grogan said: “We at the Boston Foundation believe that school choice is an equity issue. This study indicates that low-income families and children of color have far narrower choices—or none at all—and that is not only unconscionable, it is having a profound impact on the viability of Boston as a vital urban center.”

By the fall of 2003, pilot schools—one of the new choices for families seeking effective educational experiences for their children—had made progress with help from the Boston Foundation. There were now 19 pilot schools, including five “conversion” schools, and about 10 percent of Boston’s students were attending pilot schools.

In October of that year, the staff of the Gardner School in Allston voted to become a pilot school by an 82 percent margin, but the conversion was vetoed by Richard Stutman, President of the Boston Teachers Union. He cited “overtime” pay issues, making it clear that no pilot schools would be approved until a new teachers contract was in hand and “overtime” issues were resolved. It would be the start of an impasse that stalled the pilot movement for several years.

### **Making Schools Work**

In the spring of 2004, the Foundation held an *Understanding Boston* forum featuring William G. Oucchi, author of what some were calling one of the most important books about school reform in the last century. Called “Making Schools Work,” the basic message of the book is that schools, like businesses, perform best under decentralized management systems in which autonomous principals control budgets, personnel and other parameters. The book and the lively

In the fall of 2007, the Boston Foundation's Annual Report, called "The Opportunity Pipeline," reflected its growing focus on the importance of excellence in education at all levels.



discussion at the forum continued to build a strong case for the kinds of autonomies enjoyed by charter and pilot schools. Mr. Grogan opened the forum by saying that, in his opinion, "the most important issue facing the city and the Commonwealth is education reform."

### **A New Superintendent**

On November 9th, 2007, the Boston Foundation held another forum on pilot schools. The first person to arrive for the early morning session was Carol R. Johnson, who had recently succeeded Tom Payzant as Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. When she took to the podium to make closing remarks, everyone was impressed with her grasp of the challenges and her quiet sense of determination. "All of us want better schools and a portfolio of opportunities," she said to those gathered. "We are meeting the needs of some students, but we are not meeting *all* of the needs of *all* of the children in the ways we must if we are to be a really successful community."

That same year, with the teachers contract now signed, the Boston Foundation released another RFP for pilot schools and Supt. Johnson encouraged schools to apply. Schools that completed the process were eligible for up to \$100,000 in implementation grants from the Foundation.

"All of us want better schools and a portfolio of opportunities," said the new Superintendent of Schools, Carol Johnson, at her first "Understanding Boston" forum.





### A Presence at the State House

By 2008, through its now firmly established role as a civic leader, the Boston Foundation had developed a presence at the State House. Thousands of new housing units were in the state’s production pipeline thanks to the Foundation-convened *Commonwealth Housing*

*Task Force*, with scores of towns adopting “Smart Growth” districts under legislation drafted by the Task Force. And the Foundation’s public policy work had catalyzed more than \$30 million in state investment in cultural facilities. By now, the Foundation also was building a strong relationship with Governor Deval Patrick, who was elected in the fall of 2006 as the first African American Governor of the Commonwealth.

### Boston’s First Education Report Card

In addition to the *Understanding Boston* series and strong partnerships with State Legislators, another major Boston Foundation initiative that informs its civic leadership and grantmaking is the award-winning *Boston Indicators Project*, which the Foundation coordinates with the City of Boston and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Through biennial reports, special reports and a constantly updated website, the Project tracks changes in 10 sectors, including Education.



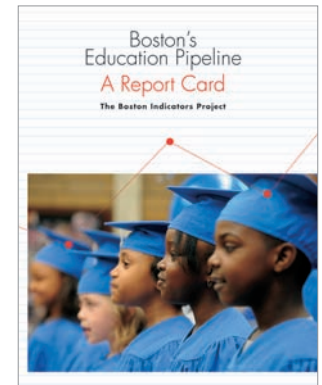


In 2008, the Boston Indicators Project released *Boston's Education Pipeline: A Report Card*, the first comprehensive view of the city's system of educational opportunities and outcomes. It was, by far, the most detail-rich report on the Boston Public Schools and other education resources in the city ever published and it told a compelling story.

The Report Card's major conclusion was that while Boston has one of the best urban school systems in America—even winning the national Broad Prize for the most improved urban public school district in 2006—it is still not seeing the results needed to break what Mr. Grogan calls in the preface to the report, “the stubborn link between socioeconomic status and educational attainment.”

### **The New Gold Standard**

The *Report Card* maintains that high educational outcomes for all children, regardless of background, are the new gold standard—not only for moral reasons, but for the long-term economic health of Boston and the region it anchors. With a shrinking population of children since the 1960s, the talents and aspirations of each child in Boston are more precious than ever before.







Despite measurable progress, however, gold-standard educational outcomes remain elusive for Boston. Key indicators of success for the Boston Public Schools, for instance, such as third-grade reading and the racial/ethnic achievement gap, have plateaued since 2001.

“Boston has nothing to be ashamed of,” said Mr. Grogan at the forum about the report. “Indeed, evidence suggests that we have one of the best urban school systems in America. But like all cities, we are not yet achieving the results that ultimately will break the connection between poverty and poor results.”

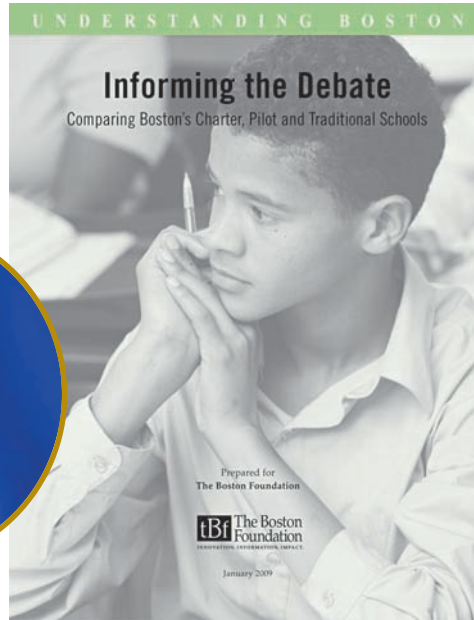
Supt. Carol Johnson added: “The power of this report is that it calls on all of us—parents, teachers, students and everyone who cares about education—to do something spectacular.”

### Getting to the Finish Line

One of the studies reflected in the *Education Report Card* and funded by the Boston Foundation—called *Getting to the Finish Line*—found that only 35.5 percent of students who graduated from the Boston Public Schools in the class of 2000, and had enrolled in college, had earned a two-year or four-year postsecondary degree by September of 2007. In response to this grim news, Mayor Menino issued a community-wide challenge to support a new initiative that will prepare more Boston graduates to earn a college degree. The Boston Foundation committed \$1 million for the new initiative—called *Success Boston*.

Success Boston  
COLLEGE COMPLETION INITIATIVE





In January of 2009, the Foundation published a report showing that students in charter schools persistently outperform their peers at traditional and pilot schools. (Inset) Commissioner Mitchell Chester called on leaders to “learn from the charter school experiment.”

## The Charter School Debate

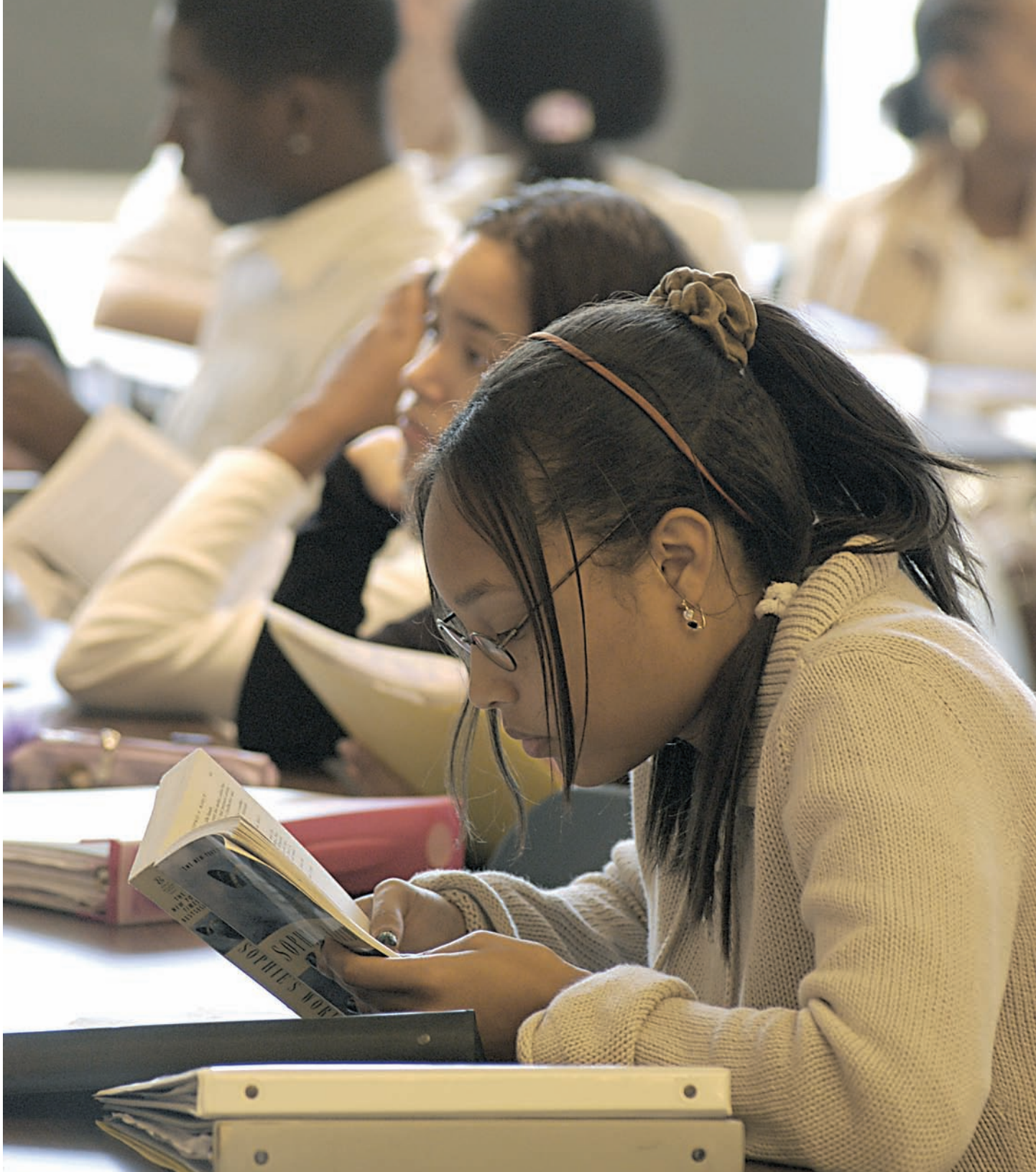
In January of 2009, the Boston Foundation published the most rigorously controlled examination ever conducted of student performance in the three types of schools in Boston—traditional, pilot and charter schools—prepared by a team from MIT and the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Called *Informing the Debate*, the report, released at a full-to-capacity forum at the Foundation, generated headlines and intense dialogue about the results.

The report showed that students in charter schools consistently outperform their peers at traditional schools and pilot schools on both the middle school and high school levels. The authors of the report considered the results for pilot schools “inconclusive,” and called for more research into their performance.

According to the study, results in math achievement for middle-school students were nothing short of remarkable.

“Clearly, we have failed to take advantage of the charter school experiment in Massachusetts and to learn from it,” said Mitchell Chester, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, at the forum that focused on the report. “How do we bring these reforms to scale?”

During the forum, panelist Paul Sagan, President and CEO of Akamai Technologies, Inc., called for lifting the cap on charter schools in Massachusetts, which had one of the most severe caps on new charters in the country. “It is unconscionable to hold off extending new charters,” added Mr. Grogan, “when so clearly these schools are succeeding. This is a time of real opportunity. Let us seize it.”





In the spring of 2009, the KIPP Foundation's Richard Barth expressed interest in opening a charter school in Boston. (Left: Students from KIPP Academy Lynn, the only KIPP school in Massachusetts.)

President Barack Obama has a discussion  
with students during a visit to the Dr.  
Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School in  
New Orleans, LA, Oct. 15, 2009



## The Ingredients of Successful Schools

In the spring of 2009, the Foundation invited Richard Barth, President and CEO of the *KIPP Foundation*, to be the keynote speaker at a special forum called *What Are the Ingredients of Successful Schools?* KIPP is a national network of free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public schools with a stunning track record of preparing students in underserved communities for success in college. At the time there were 82 KIPP schools in 20 states—and more than 85 percent of KIPP alumni had gone on to college. Toward the end of the forum, the inevitable question was asked: “Would KIPP come to Boston if the charter school cap was lifted?” Mr. Barth said that with the right elements in place, KIPP would be delighted to come to Boston.

## The Time for Education Reform

The movement to lift the cap on charter schools gained steam throughout the year, spurred in part by President Barack Obama's *Race to the Top* federal funding strategy for education, which emphasizes innovation and encourages the establishment of more good charter schools. Inspired by the potential for hundreds of thousands in federal funds for education, in the spring of 2009 Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick announced support for in-district charters. To show his support of the decision, the new U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan came to Massachusetts to join the Governor for the announcement.



On the local level, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, a longtime charter school opponent, filed legislation that would allow local school districts to open new district-run charter schools and control the state aid sent to those schools.

### **Race to the Top Coalition**

Sensing that the time was ripe for education reform, in October of 2009 the Boston Foundation convened a consortium of Massachusetts business and civic leaders who shared the goal of closing the state's persistent achievement gap. Under the direction of Boston Foundation Vice President Mary Jo Meisner, the *Race to the Top Coalition* held high-level press conferences at the State House, worked tirelessly behind the scenes to shape the Senate and House versions of the bill and then helped to develop a compromise bill that was voted on by the House and Senate on January 14th, 2010.

### **Pioneering Legislation Passes**

The new legislation, *An Act Relevant to the Achievement Gap*, doubles the number of charter school seats in the state and provides superintendents with new intervention powers in underperforming districts. It also establishes Innovation Schools, as proposed by Governor Patrick, and Horace Mann Charter Schools, as recommended by Boston Mayor Menino.







“This historic bill places Massachusetts where it should be,” said Mr. Grogan, “as a leader in the education reform movement.” Mayor Menino added: “This is one of the most innovative pieces of legislation in the country and the most important thing we can do for our children.”

## **The Boston Opportunity Agenda**

Later in 2010, the Foundation turned to another ambitious goal. For several years, the Foundation had been meeting with the City of Boston, other major charities—Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston, Combined Jewish Philanthropies and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and the Merrimack Valley—and area foundations about supporting a comprehensive education pipeline spanning from early education through post-secondary achievement. The goal would be nothing less than making Boston the premier city of upward mobility. In addition to the programmatic challenges, the group was bucking a long-held view that Boston, as the national columnist Neal Peirce once had said, “lacked the collaborative gene.”

The leaders worked closely together to hammer out an agenda that was bold, driven by data and carried with it a deep commitment to public accountability. The *Boston Opportunity Agenda* was announced, with an initial commitment by the partners of \$27 million, on June 22nd at the Lilla G. Frederick Pilot Middle School in Dorchester




The passage of statewide education reform legislation, signed into law on January 18th, 2010, and the launching of the Boston Opportunity Agenda in June of 2010, came 38 years after a grant from the Boston Foundation played a key role in passing Chapter 766, which guarantees the rights of young people with special needs to education.

in an auditorium packed with students, teachers, city officials and representatives of the nonprofits that will run the programs. It received not only local, but national attention.

### **Innovative Grantmaking and Civic Leadership**

The launching of the *Boston Opportunity Agenda* and the signing of groundbreaking education reform legislation both took place 38 years after a grant from the Boston Foundation played a key role in passing Chapter 766—the Massachusetts law which guarantees the rights of all young people with special needs to education. Today, the Foundation’s approach to education reform and other areas of community life uses not only proactive grantmaking, but increasingly effective civic leadership.

In August of 2010, Massachusetts placed first in the contest for *Race to the Top* federal dollars, receiving \$250 million in funding that will have a powerful impact on more than 685,000 students in 1,375 schools. In a letter to Paul Grogan following the signing of the education reform legislation that paved the way for the federal funding, Governor Deval Patrick thanked the Foundation for its support. “We could not have come this far without you,” he wrote. “There is a broader lesson here about the good that comes when diverse leaders work together.” In a hand written postscript, he added: “This was our finest hour.”



### **Credits**

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75 Arlington Street

Boston, MA 02116

Telephone 617-338-1700

Facsimile 617-338-1604

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