



# Boston's Progress *toward* Universal School Readiness

Year One Report  
*to*  
Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor of Boston  
*and*

Michael K. Durkin, President and CEO  
United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley

**THRIVEIN** **5**  
Boston's promise to its children



May 2009

# Highlights of Boston's Progress



Thrive in 5 is a citywide commitment to universal school readiness, driven by the science and economics of early childhood, as well as Boston's shared priority to prevent the academic achievement gap and ensure equal opportunity for all our children. **Spearheaded by a public-private partnership between the City of Boston and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley**, Thrive in 5 was developed to transform the way we support young children and their families – by ensuring coordination and collaboration of local efforts, strengthening the quality and reach of existing services, and developing new resources and initiatives where needed. The Thrive in 5 School Readiness Roadmap is based on the following equation:



Released in March 2008, the Thrive in 5 School Readiness Roadmap puts forth five goals, each with specific strategies to achieve citywide results within 10 years (available at [www.Thrivein5Boston.org](http://www.Thrivein5Boston.org)). This progress report summarizes collaborative activity in Boston supporting school readiness between April 2008 and April 2009, as well as upcoming work. We welcome your comments, your additions and your involvement in the Implementation Partnerships for each goal.

## Ready Families

**GOAL:** Parents will be able to obtain the accurate, culturally appropriate information they seek on child development, parenting, and school readiness, as well as community resources that help to strengthen families.

- **160 families – with 300 children** – living in subsidized housing in Roslindale, Charlestown and Mattapan enrolled in a **comprehensive set of services for family stabilization and school readiness**, through Smart from the Start, a collaboration among City departments (Boston Housing Authority, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, and Boston Public Health Commission), the Family Nurturing Center, and other community organizations.
- With funding from United Way, communities began **identifying gaps in services and coordinating programming**. Fifty community-based organizations in Allston-Brighton formed the Early Childhood System of Care to connect parents and young children to neighborhood resources, and 15 family-serving organizations in Mattapan began meeting as a team to coordinate services.
- Countdown to Kindergarten, a citywide collaboration, increased its Play to Learn groups from 20 to 26 groups per week, now **servicing 350 parents and their 1-3 year olds**, hosted in 9 Boston Public Schools elementary schools in Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, and East Boston.
- 741 early education, health and dental providers distributed **guides with child development milestones and activities to do at home, in eight languages**, to 7,500 children and caregivers during the November launch of Talk Read Play, a **new public and parent engagement campaign** from Countdown to Kindergarten and ReadBoston. The campaign includes a website ([www.talkreadplay.org](http://www.talkreadplay.org)) for families and providers to learn about free educational activities throughout the city, as well as ways to support child development.
- The Early Words campaign increased awareness of the **importance of early verbal interaction with young children** through TV and radio PSAs and **intensive workshop series with low-income parents**.

## Over the past year, Boston has...

- Ensured that early childhood is a high priority in programming, policy and resource development.
- Improved and expanded services for young children and their families.
- Identified common indicators and begun to gather baseline data to monitor citywide progress.
- Established a collaborative infrastructure that ensures a permanent commitment to the healthy development and school readiness of all Boston children.

- **Sixty-two early education and care providers became accredited**, a nationally-recognized measure of quality, and an additional 140 Boston providers are in the process of becoming accredited/reaccredited.
- From the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Boston Children's Museum received **\$841K for a permanent model kindergarten classroom** which will offer professional development for early education providers, as well as activities for families.
- Advocacy activities sponsored by Early Education for All, Community Partnerships for Children, the Boston Alliance for Early Education and others **educated state policy makers about the value of high quality early education and care.**

- All home visiting programs serving Allston-Brighton have partnered to increase capacity to **screen and respond to maternal depression.**
- The Boston Public Health Commission and Thrive in 5 collaborated with local and state partners on two **federal proposals to significantly expand and improve early childhood mental health services.**
- As a result of the new statewide Children's Behavioral Health Initiative, Medicaid-eligible children will now be **screened regularly for behavioral health concerns** during well-child visits.

- Eight partners came together to develop and fund a **sustainable infrastructure** for Thrive in 5, including the Barr Foundation, the Eos Foundation, Boston Medical Center, Children's Hospital Boston, Partners HealthCare, Boston Public Schools/Community Partnerships for Children, United Way and the City of Boston.
- Departments and initiatives are **prioritizing early childhood quality improvement** across City government. For example, Healthy Baby Healthy Child, Boston's largest parent home visiting program, is incorporating early literacy strategies into their services.
- Demonstrating a **deep understanding of the importance of the early years**, a recent report from the Boston Indicators Project included a new section on early childhood school readiness. At the state level, the Governor's education plan, The Readiness Project, created a taskforce on birth through school entry.

- Boston Public Schools, in partnership with Harvard Graduate School of Education, received **\$1.2M to assess children's school readiness and evaluate kindergarten programs** from the Institute of Education Sciences.

## Ready Educators

GOAL: Boston will become the city with the highest quality early education and care system for all young children – infants, toddlers, preschoolers and kindergartners – in all settings: family child care, private/community-based centers, Head Start/Early Head Start, and school-based early education.

## Ready Systems

GOAL: Health care, early intervention and other systems that serve young children will succeed in earlier detection and more effective responses to barriers to child development and school readiness, including earlier detection of family and environmental conditions that can create "toxic stress" in young children.

## Ready City

GOAL: The many sectors in Boston will work together to ensure children's school readiness becomes and remains a top priority.

## Children Ready for Sustained School Success

GOAL: Thrive in Five will track and report on its success in ensuring universal school readiness.

# Indicators



In addition to evaluating each strategy in Boston’s School Readiness Roadmap, Thrive in 5 will track key indicators that demonstrate overall progress toward universal school readiness. Baseline data is accessible for some indicators and not yet for others. In the coming months, data will be disaggregated and refined to identify gaps in outcomes for various groups of young children. Below are highlights from the full set of 22 indicators.

## Examples of Baseline Indicators

81%	Adequate Prenatal Care % of mothers with adequate prenatal care
87%	Immunizations/Well-Child Visits % of children who have had all of their recommended immunizations by age 3
39%	High Quality Early Care and Education % of early education and care seats that are nationally accredited*
43%	Qualified Early Educators % of early childhood educators with at least a BA*
95%	Strong Parent Engagement % of early childhood educators who communicate with parents at least once a week*
7	Library Usage Boston Public Library picture books/early childhood materials checked out annually per 0-5 year old
75%	On-Time K Registration % of families who registered their child for Kindergarten by the end of the first round of registration
75%	Social Connections % of Boston residents who say that they can rely on a nearby neighbor for help
74%	Sustained School Success % of students who “passed” the 3rd grade Reading and Math MCAS (performed at Needs Improvement, Proficient and Advanced levels)
68%	Reading Math

\* Based on aggregate data across all settings: family child care, private/ community-based centers, Head Start/Early Head Start, and Boston Public Schools’ early education programs.

## Examples of Indicators Still in Development

Ready at School Entry	Data from BPS Fall Kindergarten Assessment
Reading to Young Children	% of parents who report that their young child is read to at least once a day
Preventive Screening	% of well-child visits for children 0 to 5 that include screening for developmental delays, behavioral issues, and environmental/family risk factors
Parent Civic Engagement	% of parents of children ages 0 to 5 who are registered to vote/voted in the last election
Safe Playgrounds	% of playgrounds that meet set safety and quality standards



## Looking Ahead

*We are not just going to close the achievement gap – we are going to prevent it. We will continue to apply the most progressive problem solving and the most unflinching commitment to the challenge of educating all of Boston’s children. By opening up their minds, we open up their worlds.*

**Thomas M. Menino**  
Mayor of Boston  
2007 State of the City Address

With these words, Mayor Thomas M. Menino asked that Boston come together to prevent the achievement gap in our next generation of students by promoting school readiness and ensuring the healthy development of all Boston children. With strong guidance from the Thrive in 5 Leadership Council and partners across the city, Boston will move forward on each of the Thrive in 5 goals in the coming year.

### Examples of Next Steps

- Thrive in 5’s Ready Families Partnership will launch **Community School Readiness Wiring**, a neighborhood-based approach to integrate key information on supporting young children’s school readiness into parents’ daily lives – through the workplace, grocery stores, playgrounds, and more.
- The City of Boston’s Registry Division will **begin reaching out to parents through birth certificates** with information from Talk Read Play about infant care and parent support, reaching approximately 21,000 parents each year.
- A **Haitian Creole radio show about child development, parenting and school readiness** will begin airing on three local stations, hosted by a Mattapan pediatrician.
- The Boston Children’s Museum’s **new interactive play, “DW Counts Down to Kindergarten,”** based on the popular PBS Arthur series, will visit families across Boston neighborhoods.
- To **support the early education workforce**, multiple higher education institutions will offer career coaching and mentoring to early education and care providers who are striving to obtain college degrees, and UMASS Boston will begin offering a new Bachelors Degree program in “Early Education and Care in Inclusive Settings” in Fall 2009.
- The Children’s Investment Fund will conduct a statewide **survey of early education and care facilities**, with a special focus on Boston, to determine the scope of needed capital improvements.
- The Thrive in 5 Ready Systems Partnership will build on the model of a **“medical home” for each child**, enhancing pediatric well-child visits and providing families with consistent, effective linkages to key family support services from birth through school entry and beyond.
- As a part of the Superintendent’s Acceleration Agenda, which sets reading on grade level by the end of 1<sup>st</sup> grade as a district-wide goal, BPS will conduct **literacy assessments with all 4- and 5-year old Kindergarten students**. Annual assessment data will provide information on a **key component of young children’s school readiness**.
- A New Bostonians Summit – that brings together community, government and business partners to address the education, employment and ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language) needs of immigrants – will include a focus on developing **better supports for non-English speaking families with young children**.

# Thrive in 5 Mission

By age 5, every child in Boston will be ready to succeed in school, an essential foundation for success in life. The readiness gap currently evident at school entry will be prevented.

## Thrive in 5 Leadership Council

**Randal Rucker Co-Chair**  
Family Service of Greater Boston

**Liz Walker Co-Chair**  
The Walker Group:  
Communications Specialists

**Nishith Acharya**  
The Deshpande Foundation

**Marilyn Anderson Chase**  
MA Executive Office of Health  
and Human Services

**Nina Andersson-Willard**  
Brown Rudnick

**Mari Brennan Barrera**  
Eos Foundation

**Michael Durkin/Peg Sprague**  
United Way of Massachusetts Bay  
and Merrimack Valley

**Barbara Ferrer**  
Boston Public Health  
Commission

**Sally Fogerty**  
Educational Development Center

**Hanna Gebretansae**  
Urban College of Boston

**Kimberly Haskins**  
Barr Foundation

**Joanne Jaxtimer**  
Bank of New York Mellon

**Carol Johnson**  
Boston Public Schools

**Sherri Killins**  
MA Department of Early  
Education and Care

**Roderick King**  
Harvard Medical School

**Shari Nethersole**  
Children's Hospital Boston

**Michele Norman**  
MA Executive Office of Education

**Elizabeth Pauley**  
The Boston Foundation

**Marta Rosa**  
Wheelock College

**Ronnie Sanders**  
Partners HealthCare

**Sharon Scott Chandler**  
Action for Boston Community  
Development

**Laurie Sherman**  
Office of Mayor  
Thomas M. Menino

**Gloria Weekes**  
Parent

**Hiro Yoshikawa**  
Harvard Graduate School of  
Education

**Barry Zuckerman**  
Boston Medical Center

## Thrive in 5 Team

**John Lippitt, PhD**  
Executive Director  
[John.Lippitt@Thrivein5Boston.org](mailto:John.Lippitt@Thrivein5Boston.org)

**Cassandra Baxter**  
Project Coordinator  
[Cassandra.Baxter@Thrivein5Boston.org](mailto:Cassandra.Baxter@Thrivein5Boston.org)

**Katie Britton, MSW**  
Ready City/Data and Research  
Team Co-Manager  
[Katie.Britton@Thrivein5Boston.org](mailto:Katie.Britton@Thrivein5Boston.org)

**Alba Cruz-Davis, PhD**  
Ready Systems Manager  
[Alba.Cruz-Davis@Thrivein5Boston.org](mailto:Alba.Cruz-Davis@Thrivein5Boston.org)

**Katie Madrigal, MA**  
Ready Families Manager  
[Katie.Madrigal@Thrivein5Boston.org](mailto:Katie.Madrigal@Thrivein5Boston.org)

**Ophelia Navarro, EdM**  
Data and Research Team Co-Manager  
[ONavarro@AssociatedECE.org](mailto:ONavarro@AssociatedECE.org)

Spearheaded by:



**Thomas M. Menino**  
Mayor of Boston



United Way  
of Massachusetts Bay  
and Merrimack Valley

For more information, links to partners and sources for Indicators, visit [Thrivein5Boston.org](http://Thrivein5Boston.org).