

We are not just going to close the achievement gap – we are going 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 can open up their worlds.

The Honorable Thomas M. Menino
State of the City Address, January 9, 2007



Summary – March 12, 2008

Thrive in Five is a comprehensive school readiness roadmap for Boston driven by the scientific, economic and civic imperative to focus on young children and their families. The plan aims to prevent the achievement gap in our next generation of student by promoting school readiness and ensuring the healthy development of Boston’s youngest citizens. Thrive in Five is the result of a year-long public and private collaboration that engaged over 400 individuals, lays out powerful goals and well-researched strategies to ensure that children enter school ready to learn.

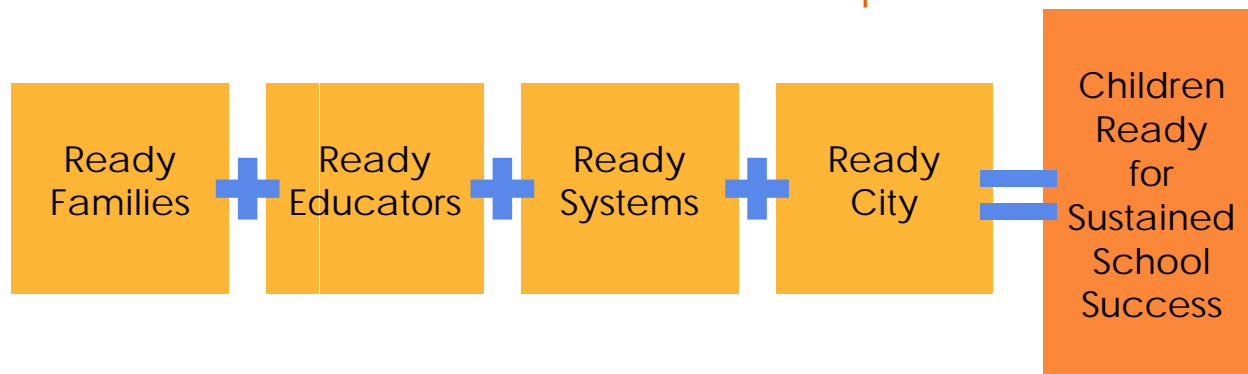
Why now?

Effective early childhood supports offer substantial returns on investment, as great as \$14 to \$17 for every \$1 invested. In the first few years of life, children’s brains develop at a faster pace than during any other time. That growth lays the foundation for all future development and learning. However, for many children the playing field upon school entry is far from level. The workplace today’s children will enter upon high school or college graduation will demand capabilities that are far more difficult to master without the critical building blocks laid in early childhood. Investing in children early is far more effective and efficient than treating problems at a later age. When children thrive through their first five years, they are poised to be strong lifelong learners, earners and engaged citizens.

How it works

The Thrive in Five roadmap is unique in that it addresses all dimensions of children’s development and learning through effective partnerships between public and private sector institutions. It is a ten-year movement that for the first time aligns families, educators, health and human service providers, the private sector, and City departments working in collaboration with State agencies to ensure that all children will be ready for sustained school success. Thrive in Five is based on the following equation, understanding that the collective effort of everyone involved in children’s lives will support their success:

Boston’s School Readiness Equation



Thrive in Five Goals

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The many sectors in Boston will work together to ensure children’s school readiness becomes and remains a top priority.
- Thrive in Five will track and report on its success in ensuring universal school readiness.

Let us be clear and focused in our specific objectives, and yet let us also envision for all children what they can see from Boston’s harbor: unlimited horizons.

How will we succeed?

Thrive in Five draws on Boston’s considerable strengths to advance clear strategies that surround children and families with school readiness supports, raise the quality of early education and care, screen earlier for threats to healthy development, conduct public engagement campaigns about the importance of the early years, and more.

Progress toward universal school readiness will be reported regularly. Each component of the equation will have performance measures that track the outcomes of our work. In addition, broad indicators will be tracked and reported, such as increases in:

- Parents who report accessing information and resources they need to support their child’s development;
- Nationally accredited early education and care programs in Boston;
- New parents who are offered a newborn visit to connect to vital services;
- Children ages birth to five screened for developmental delays, behavior issues and environmental risk factors – and connected with effective follow up services;
- Parents who are civically engaged and registered to vote;
- The circulation of picture books in the Boston Public Library system across neighborhoods; and more.

The Planning Process

Building on decades of exemplary work in Boston, a cross-sector 65-person team worked together throughout 2007 to produce Thrive in Five. That group, the School Readiness Action Planning Team (“the APT”), was in turn informed by a diverse group of 35 parents, grandparents and guardians from all Boston neighborhoods called “the Parents APT.” Together they engaged an additional 300 Boston leaders and residents through focus groups and community meetings.

For a copy of the Thrive in Five Executive Summary or Full Report, visit www.thrivein5boston.org.



Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston



United Way of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley