



# Boston's School Readiness Roadmap





Dear Reader,

Our community, city and state leaders, public and private, should be proud to accept this roadmap for leveling the playing field for our youngest citizens and safeguarding our city's future. *Thrive in Five* outlines the scientific, economic and ethical reasons to focus on the earliest years, laying out powerful goals and thoughtfully considered strategies to be pursued in Boston.

The plan builds on Boston's many strengths and more than a decade of successful groundwork in early education and care, in our public schools, and throughout the larger Boston community. *Thrive in Five* would not have been possible without the dedication of so many Boston leaders and residents. I thank the planners for their work to date and their partnership to come. I especially thank United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley for providing strategic guidance throughout the planning process.

*Thrive in Five* is compelling to me as Mayor, and also as a father and grandfather, with six grandchildren growing up in Boston and attending the Boston Public Schools. Every day I meet young people who give me hope and inspiration for what we can achieve in this great city. Our youngest residents are our present and they are our future.

My administration is already aligning the work of our city government departments to support this plan and I encourage all leaders in the city, many of whom are recognized trailblazers, to join us in traveling along this essential path. Similarly, the continued partnerships and investment of our state government – which funds many of the vital services referenced in this plan – will be essential to our success moving forward.

As the planners state in *Thrive in Five's* conclusion, 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.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Menino  
Mayor of Boston

*Thrive in Five outlines the scientific, economic and ethical reasons to focus on the earliest years.*





# A Message From the Co-Chairs of the School Readiness Action Planning Team



Sandra Fenwick

At the request of the Mayor, and using as a foundation what is known from cutting-edge science about the critical importance of early childhood development, the 65 members of our School Readiness Action Planning Team (APT) identified a framework from the beginning. Children are most likely to thrive in their first five years of life and be ready for sustained school success when they have:

- ❖ Families in a strong position to assist their learning and development;
- ❖ Early educators and caregivers of the highest quality;
- ❖ Pediatric providers and other professionals who can rapidly detect and address problems that threaten their healthy development and ability to learn; and
- ❖ A city that makes children a top priority.



Jackie  
Jenkins-Scott

*Thrive in Five's* roadmap defines and integrates these needs in an ambitious, yet realistic, agenda developed and endorsed by people who live and work across Boston.

We are deeply grateful that Mayor Menino asked us to spearhead this effort and for the opportunity it afforded to work with such an unusually diverse, committed, and thoughtful group of Boston leaders and residents. It is our hope that this roadmap will inspire and guide you, the reader, to participate in a movement that will reap profound benefits not only for Boston's children, but for the entire city.

*Let us envision for all  
children what they can  
see from Boston's harbor:  
unlimited horizons.*



*Sandra L. Fenwick*

Sandra Fenwick  
Chief Operating Officer  
Children's Hospital Boston

*Jackie Jenkins-Scott*

Jackie Jenkins-Scott  
President  
Wheelock College



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## Scenarios of Progress

These stories, throughout the plan, illustrate how children’s and families’ lives will be different as a result of *Thrive in Five* – and how the city will be different.

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# Executive Summary

**Our Vision** *Young children's healthy development and love of learning will be a top civic priority for our city. We will ensure that Boston's children have a strong foundation for educational success, essential for productive, satisfying and contributing lives. We will see them supported by families, educators, health care and human service providers, and communities that are well prepared for their unique and crucial roles in helping children reach their full potential, and that work together to achieve the best results for each child, from birth throughout the early years and early school grades, and then beyond.*

Children are born ready to learn. In fact they are born learning! What takes place between birth and school entry greatly determines whether they will enter school ready for sustained success, something we want for all children. Conversely, what takes place in these early years determines whether a gap in competencies – cognitive, social/emotional, and physical – will exist from the start of K-12 education, leading to a wide range of problems that are significantly more difficult, as well as more expensive, to address later on.

Understanding this, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, in partnership with United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, engaged a carefully constructed cross-section of leaders to identify what it would take for Boston's young children to enter school on a level playing field, ready to succeed. Our work, "Boston's Birth to Five School Readiness Initiative," has resulted in this comprehensive school readiness roadmap: *Thrive in Five – Boston's Promise to its Children.*

*Why should we focus particular attention on our youngest citizens and on ensuring children's school readiness? The answer is clear: neuroscience and economics together reveal that no single strategy offers a greater return on investment. A moral and civic imperative exists as well.*

With so many societal needs to be addressed, why should we focus particular attention on our youngest citizens and on ensuring children's school readiness? The answer is clear: neuroscience and economics together reveal that **no single strategy offers a greater return on investment.** A moral and civic imperative exists as well. The playing field for children entering school is far from level and this must change. The workplace today's children will enter upon high school or college graduation will demand capabilities that cannot be achieved without a strong groundwork laid in early childhood and early school years. When children thrive through their first five years, they are poised to be strong lifelong learners, earners and engaged citizens. It is not in

our city's fabric to give up on any resident at any age, and it is never too late to provide intervention and support for children, youth and adults. However, doing so earlier is most effective.<sup>1</sup>

*Thrive in Five* is a roadmap to strengthen existing child and family-serving systems, create new supports and alter systems where needed, coordinate our work across the city for greater impact, and measure and sustain progress over the long term. Detailed implementation plans, realignment of existing resources, and calculation of the full resources needed will be shaped and refined over the next year by the partnerships described in the plan. However, the framework for action provided in this document – the school readiness equation and the goals created by a diverse and extraordinarily committed group of Boston leaders and parents – will remain in place over the next decade so that its participants will know what they, that is we, are working toward, together.

**The *Thrive in Five* approach is built on an extensive research base that illustrates our scientific, economic and moral imperative, including findings that:**

- ❖ The human brain is the only organ that is not mature at birth. The brain develops more rapidly from birth through age three than at any other time of life – although brain development does continue throughout life.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Children's earliest experiences actually shape the architecture of the brain – the foundation of neural circuits upon which future learning, behavior and health depend; this does not pre-determine a child's future, but creates either a resilient or fragile foundation for learning and for health.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ The economic benefits of quality early childhood interventions are significant – producing a \$14-\$17 return for every dollar invested.<sup>3</sup> The return includes savings from reduced special education and remedial education, welfare, and criminal justice costs, as well as increased tax revenue produced in the workforce.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ A child growing up in poverty who has experienced high quality early education is 40% less likely to require special education or to be held back a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school, and twice as likely to go to college.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ The average college graduate contributes 78% more in annual taxes than the average high school graduate. The average person who has not completed high school can expect to take home (net income) under \$20,000 per year, while someone with a college diploma on up through an advanced professional degree can expect to take home an average of anywhere from \$38,000 to \$70,000.<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ Creating an environment that supports healthy development in early childhood is more effective programmatically than treating problems at a later age.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ Learning is cumulative and basic early childhood skills are a necessary foundation for life long learning.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Shonkoff, J and Phillips, D. (Eds.). (2000). *From Neurons To Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

<sup>2</sup>National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development*. <http://www.developingchild.net>.

<sup>3</sup>Karoly, L.A., Kilburn, M.R., and Cannon, J.S. (2005). *Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

<sup>4</sup>Rolnick, A. and Grunewald, R. (2003). *Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return*. <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/fedgaz/03-03/opinion.cfm>.

<sup>5</sup>Patrick, D. (January 24, 2008). Governor's State of the Commonwealth Address.

<sup>6</sup>Baum, S. and Payea, K. (2005). *The Benefits of Higher Education to Individuals and Society*. [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf).

<sup>7</sup>Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2007). *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children*. <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>.

## Goals:

**The goals of *Thrive in Five* are both simple and urgent:**

- ❖ 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.

## Preventing the Achievement Gap in our Next Generation By Promoting School Readiness and Ensuring the Healthy Development of Boston's Children

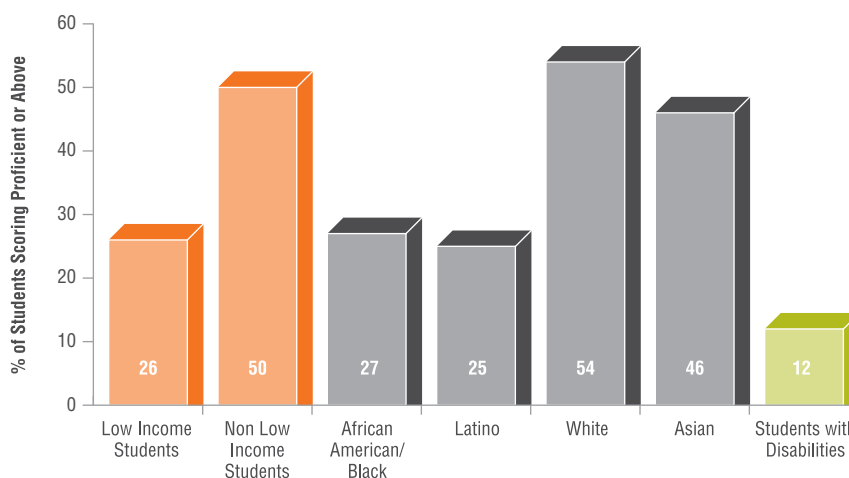
The name *Thrive in Five* reflects our commitment to ensuring that all children flourish in the first five years of life and beyond. It also reflects the importance of all five dimensions of a child's growth – language development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, and physical and motor development. In short, successful outcomes for children require support and stimulation that must be consistent and comprehensive, and must begin at birth.

The link between school readiness and school achievement is well established. Gaps in children's ability not only show up early, but they stay relatively constant after age eight.<sup>8</sup> In fact, researchers now document that **half the academic achievement gap evidenced in grade 12 can be attributed to gaps that already existed in first grade.**<sup>9</sup>

Locally, statewide, and across the country, leaders are striving to ensure that all children succeed academically, which means bridging the gap between where ALL students need to be academically – to reach their full potential and compete in a global economy – and where they are now. In addition, school systems are struggling everywhere to deal with specific disparities in academic achievement – racial, economic and special education gaps.

While all students in the Boston Public Schools have demonstrated progress on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) at all grade levels, gaps persist – between low-income and middle-income students, between students who are Black or Latino and students who are White or Asian, and between special education and general education students. These gaps are evident early on. For example, there is more than a 20% gap on the third grade MCAS Reading scores between the performance of White and Asian students and the performance of Black and Latino students. The chart below illustrates a number of gaps.

**2007 3rd Grade MCAS Reading Results**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education. 2007 MCAS Results by Subgroup – Boston. <http://www.doe.mass.edu>.  
 Note: "Low Income" is defined here as students whose family incomes makes them eligible for free or reduced meals, a federal income guideline.

<sup>8</sup> Heckman, J. (Jan. 10, 2006). Catch 'Em Young. *Wall Street Journal*.

<sup>9</sup> Jencks, C. and Phillips, M. (1998). *The Black-White Test Score Gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

*Half the academic achievement gap evidenced in grade 12 can be attributed to gaps that already existed in first grade.*



Even school systems such as the Boston Public Schools that have made significant strides in addressing the academic achievement gap – bringing up the scores and overall performance of low income students, students with disabilities, and students who are Black and Latino – are finding it extraordinarily difficult to eliminate the gap or even to further narrow it. As documented in the groundbreaking report *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, “Striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten... and they are predictive of subsequent academic performance.”<sup>10</sup> It is clear that the best hope for eliminating the gap is prevention, that is starting our work *before* children enter kindergarten.

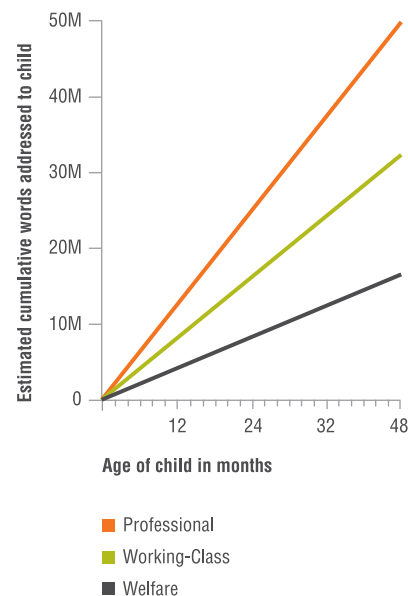
The most dramatic example of an early disparity is what has become known as the vocabulary gap – the number of *different* words a child knows at kindergarten entry. Talking to young children, starting at birth, helps them develop strong language and communication skills, which enables them to better express themselves, listen, read and learn. Children learning to read and write words they have never heard can be as challenging as learning a new language. Just hearing the *same words* over and over is important for children’s brain development. Research indicates that low-income parents, on average, speak to and talk with their children much less than higher-income parents. The average low-income child has heard 30 million fewer words than his or her higher income peers by the age of four. Most strikingly, in one key study on this, the vocabulary gap at *age three* then predicted language scores in *third grade*.<sup>11</sup>

*Thrive in Five* responds to these challenges by mobilizing Boston residents and resources to ensure that all children begin school with the strongest possible foundation for academic and lifelong success.

Building on decades of exemplary work in Boston, a cross-sector 65-person team worked together throughout 2007 to produce *Thrive in Five*. (See Appendix E for a full listing of members across the eleven sectors represented.) That group, the School Readiness Action Planning Team (“the APT”), was selected by Mayor Menino from 250 nominees and included local leaders as well as representatives from the Massachusetts Departments of Education, Public Health, Early Education and Care, Social Services (child welfare), and Transitional Assistance (formerly called welfare). APT members were asked to design a plan for which they would serve as ambassadors when the planning process ended – in their own organization, in their own professional sector, and throughout the city. The APT was in turn informed by a diverse group of 40 parents, grandparents and guardians from all Boston neighborhoods, called “the Parents APT.”

Initial guidance for the APT’s planning process came from a 12-person team of top researchers and practitioners who developed a policy paper on early childhood development for the Mayor in the fall of 2006. Half of that team – chaired by

The Number of Words Addressed to Children Differs Across Income Groups



Source: Hart, B. and Risley, T.R. (2003). The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3. [http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html).

## A Process of Inclusion, A Foundation of Science

*It is clear that the best hope for eliminating the gap is prevention, that is starting our work before children enter kindergarten.*

<sup>10</sup> Shonkoff, J and Philips, D. (Eds.). (2000). *From Neurons To Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

<sup>11</sup> Hart, B. and Risley, T.R. (2003). *The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3*. [http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html).

## Sectors Represented on the APT

### Early Education and Care

(family child care, private/community-based centers, Head Start/Early Head Start, school-based early education, and State agencies)

### Early Childhood Advocacy

### Research and Higher Education

### K-12 Education

### Health and Mental Health

### Community-based, Immigrant and Multi-Service Organizations

### Parenting Education, Family Support, Family Literacy, and Early Intervention

### Basic Needs and Human Services (food, housing, safety)

### Parent Advocacy and Parent/Family Engagement

### Faith, Arts, Culture and Recreation

### Foundation and Private Sector

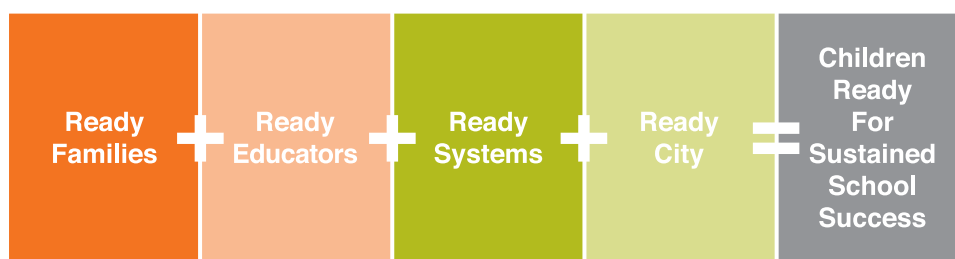
Professor Richard Weissbourd, PhD, of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Jason Sachs, PhD, the head of the Boston Public Schools Early Education Department – were able to continue on to serve on the APT.

The APT plan was informed throughout by the science of early childhood development, particularly by the work of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, which analyzes results of national and international research on neuroscience, child development, pediatrics and economics. The Center’s work documents the profound importance of children’s relationships with adults in shaping their overall development. It also illustrates the different levels of stress that affect children – from “normal stress” to “tolerable stress” to “toxic stress,” which is the level of sustained anxiety that “can damage developing brain architecture and create a short fuse for the body’s stress response systems that leads to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health.”<sup>12</sup>

This work argues for a focus on the stability and strength of children’s relationships with the adults in their lives and on re-examining the systems that impact children – such as early education and health care – in order to achieve deep, lasting change to promote healthy development and prevent or quickly treat toxic stress.

In response, the APT and its working groups developed a strategic roadmap for action to ensure Boston children’s school readiness, based on the following equation:

### Boston’s School Readiness Equation



The formulation of this equation signifies that while the focus must always be on each child, it is what we adults bring to the equation that ensures success. No element alone can deliver the citywide results we need, nor can the results be achieved if one element is missing. But if all elements are focused on a single goal and guided by a roadmap to keep us on a coordinated path, we as a community of parents and caring adults have the potential to reach the ambitious goal of universal school readiness.

While each component of *Thrive in Five* will have individual measures of success, one step the APT undertook, guided by the Data and Research Team, was to develop a list of community level indicators that would document improvement across sectors and across strategies, aligned with this equation. (See page 16 for the Progress Indicators.)

*No one element alone can deliver the citywide results we need, nor can the results be achieved if one element is missing.*

<sup>12</sup> National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2005). *Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain*. <http://www.developingchild.net/reports.shtml>.

# How We Will Succeed



*Thrive in Five* is unique in that it ambitiously addresses all dimensions of children's development and learning through the early years and into the early grades while building realistic partnerships between public and private sector institutions to advance clear strategies over the next 10 years through near-term (2008-2009), medium-term (2010-2012) and long-term (2013-2018) actions.

*Thrive in Five* draws on Boston's considerable strengths, including a wide array of early education and care programs; extensive community services for children and families, including an outstanding health system of hospitals and community health centers, many effective neighborhood-based and faith-based organizations and coalitions, and a United Way that is extraordinarily engaged, investing more than \$5M annually in children birth to six; extensive City services for families with young children (libraries, community centers, housing developments, schools, and public health programs, pre-natal and beyond); a diverse population of parents who are deeply devoted to their children; and public and private sector leaders who are making children's school readiness a top priority.

The plan also addresses Boston's challenges, such as the need to help children and families better navigate and benefit from services that can be confusing, complex, and poorly coordinated; strengthen an under-resourced early education and care system; promote not just more services, but high quality and coordinated services for children and families; support families facing serious issues (such as substance abuse, domestic violence and parental depression) that produce levels of "toxic stress" in children; and create solutions that are responsive to the racial, cultural and linguistic diversity of Boston.

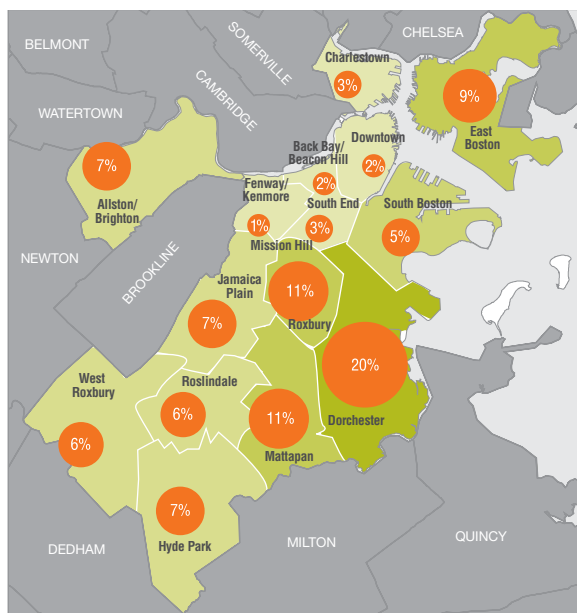
*Thrive in Five* will build on the momentum already achieved during the planning stage. We have:

- ❖ Created a team of Boston leaders across sectors who will continue to serve as drivers to help other leaders prioritize young children's school readiness.
- ❖ Developed a method to conduct planning that consistently engages parents across cultures and neighborhoods. (In addition to the on-going Parents APT, the planners held focus groups with parents facing the most tenacious challenges, such as domestic

violence and the experience of immigrating from a country for cultures that do not yet have support systems in Boston.)

- ❖ Reached agreement on a definition of school readiness, the key goals to promote universal school readiness, strategies to reach those goals, and outcomes that indicate children are developing appropriately toward school readiness in early education settings.
- ❖ Briefed and garnered input from 420 community leaders over the course of the past year, including 80 funders – corporate, foundation and government.
- ❖ Incorporated into the planning process new family and educator support and citywide engagement efforts:
  - *United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley* launched the *Mind in the Making* training program for early educators, using video modules that illustrate effective practice based on the science of early childhood.
  - *ReadBoston* launched the “*Early Words*” campaign to address the most concrete gap evident upon school entry for low-income students: the vocabulary gap.
  - *Countdown to Kindergarten* created an “*I’m Ready!*” DVD in 6 languages to help families understand what takes place in kindergarten and simple ways in daily life to prepare their children; expanded *play-to-learn groups* that bring 1-3 year olds and their parents, especially low-income and immigrant parents, into school buildings to support early learning; and developed a new “*milestones*” product to help all parents understand child development.
  - Multiple public and private partners created *Smart from the Start*, a new collaboration to serve the lowest-income families in the city with school readiness support, through a community-mobilization approach that was developed to pilot some of the strategies of the APT.

### Children Ages Birth through Five by Neighborhood



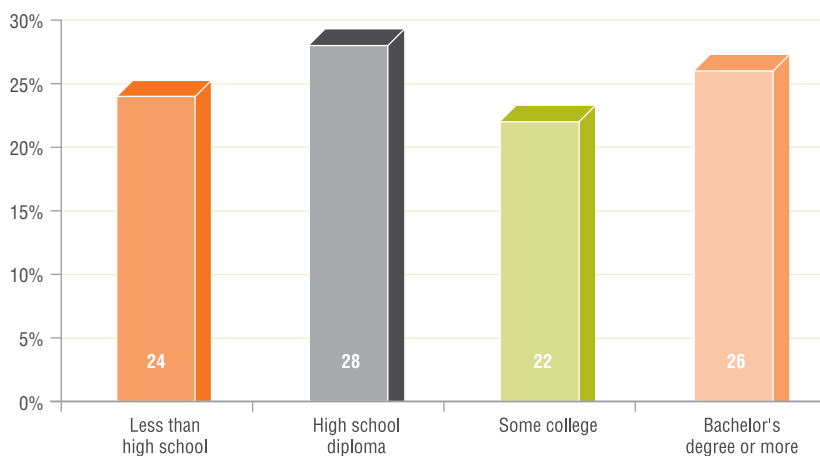
Percentage of Children Ages Birth through Five by Neighborhood  
 Total Number of Children Ages Birth to Five in Boston: 37,947  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2000).

Boston can and will succeed at safeguarding the future of our youngest citizens for many reasons, one of which is the size of the target population. Our city is home to approximately 38,000 children ages birth to five in 31,500 homes. Not all of our strategies will be universal, but even those that are, can be achieved with a population of this size. As noted above, the devotion of Boston parents to their children is a strength upon which to build.

The charts here illustrate some important factors about our young children: they live throughout the city, and their parents face significant challenges, such as not being proficient in English or not having the benefit themselves of a high school or college degree. In addition, 25% of the adults raising children ages birth to five in the city (8,000 families) are living at or below the poverty line, creating challenges and barriers for even the most loving families. This data illustrates the importance of our multi-generation approach to school readiness – our focus on the whole family.

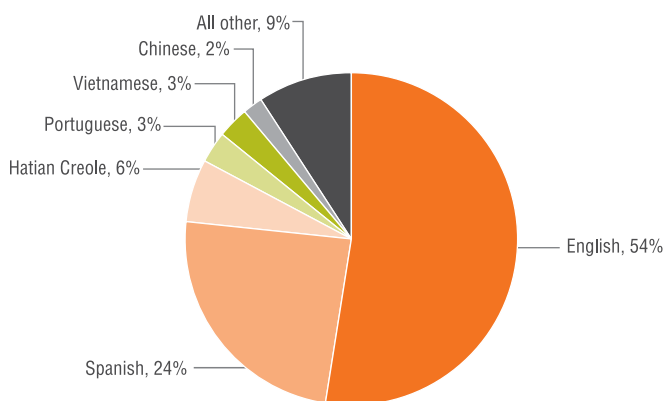


### Educational Attainment of Householders with Children Birth to Five



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Public Use Microdata (PUMS) 5% Sample. BRA Research Division Analysis.

### Languages Spoken by Householders with Children Ages Birth to Five



- ❖ 43% of the adults raising 0-5 year olds are foreign-born, while only 26% of Bostonians overall are foreign-born.
- ❖ English is not the native language for 47% of 0-5 householders, although some indicate they speak English well as their 2nd or 3rd language.
- ❖ Summary: 8300 people raising young children in Boston speak little or no English.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Public Use Microdata (PUMS) 5% Sample. BRA Research Division Analysis.

*Thrive in Five* builds from a common framework for understanding and supporting children's school readiness, using the following as Boston's first citywide School Readiness Definition:

## Boston's School Readiness Definition

*School readiness* is the state of early development that enables an individual child to engage in and benefit from kindergarten learning experiences, which is a stepping stone for sustained school success. Early development encompasses a child's capacity in language development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, physical well being and motor development.



## *Thrive in Five:* Goals and Strategies

These strategies include strengthening and expanding existing work, ensuring better coordination of existing work, and developing new initiatives and programs as needed. The APT meticulously avoided what are known as “unfunded mandates,” and instead have chosen to lay out the goals and strategies, backed by extensive research, that will ensure success in each part of the school readiness equation. The APT examined a wide range of goals and strategies before choosing those below. However, they also agreed – and welcomed knowing – that this work will continue to be shaped over the coming year by implementation partners, many of whom will be APT members continuing on to support school readiness.

### 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.

### Strategies:

- 1 Pilot “Community School Readiness Wiring,” a new process that builds on existing neighborhood leadership in order to integrate into parents’ daily lives – through the workplace, grocery stores, hair salons, playgrounds, etc. – key information on how to support children’s healthy development and school readiness. Partner with the formal organizations and also community leaders and neighbors with whom families interact daily to ensure that the information reaches those who need it most and is useful, culturally responsive, and high quality.
- 2 Coordinate and integrate new and existing public education campaigns that provide parents, caregivers and others who work with children and families updated information about early childhood development, school readiness, and parenting.
- 3 Select and promote an on-line screening and information tool that providers can use to guide families and that families can use themselves to obtain health care, housing, food security, income security, and other needed services.
- 4 Ensure access to Boston’s wealth of cultural institutions for young children and families through specific programming at the institutions and in the community to support young children’s learning and development, as well as resources to make admission more affordable and accessible for all families.

## Strategies:

- 1 Across all early education and care settings, pursue universal accreditation, the nationally agreed-upon determinant of high quality for early education and care.
- 2 Create a collaboration across the four types of early education and care settings to promote joint planning, foster stability of high-quality programs, and promote alignment in curriculum, standards and assessment as children move from infant and toddler care, to preschool, to kindergarten.
- 3 Enhance professional development for early educators to ensure high quality teaching and learning across settings, focusing on curriculum, assessment and best practices to promote early learning and healthy child development.
- 4 Improve early education and care facilities to ensure safe, stimulating learning environments for all children.
- 5 Improve compensation to support recruitment and retention of highly-qualified and well prepared early educators.
- 6 Improve access to early education and care for all children and families by decreasing financial barriers and ensuring adequate supply of services to meet demand at the infant, toddler, preschool and kindergarten stages.
- 7 Further analyze for potential application to Boston existing models that provide high quality early education to children while integrating health, social services and high-level family engagement.

## Strategies:

- 1 Conduct pilots in pediatric settings to:
  - expand and coordinate current efforts to achieve universal “welcome newborn” visits (in a location chosen by the new parents);
  - conduct universal screening for physical, behavioral, developmental, and environmental and family risk factors;
  - provide parents with information about child development and parenting;
  - offer coordination services to ensure that children and families access and benefit from existing services to support children’s growth and development.

Prioritize methods that incorporate infant and early childhood specialists into pediatric settings, including paraprofessionals to support pediatric providers and engage and educate parents.

## 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.**

- 2 Enhance the various systems of early intervention to expand and align eligibility for services, ensuring smooth transitions between services in the infant, toddler, pre-school and kindergarten stages, and include a greater focus on identifying and responding to social, emotional and behavioral issues.

### Strategies:

- 1 Track and analyze all existing public and private funding streams for early childhood in Boston, and promote comprehensive evaluation results among public and private funders to ensure long-term sustainability.
- 2 Create a public-private governance and operational structure to oversee the success of *Thrive in Five* and help fuel a broader movement to support Boston's youngest children. This will include:
  - a leadership team/board for oversight, funding alignment and fundraising, and plan accountability, which will include a cross-section of Boston leadership as well as State representation;
  - an Executive Director and 1-2 additional staff housed at United Way;
  - a lead organization for each of the plan's components that will convene (and provide staff for) a diverse set of "implementation partners" who will refine and implement each strategy;
  - a continued DART (data and research team) to serve all the partnerships and report on the indicators of success; and
  - a parent advisory group.
- 3 Align the work of City departments that serve families with young children to collaborate with one another and to support the goals and strategies of this plan. Coordinate all programming and initiatives of *Thrive in Five* with existing neighborhood-based work.
- 4 Develop citywide campaigns to help the general public understand the importance of early childhood and concrete roles for various people, organizations and sectors to support young children's school readiness.
- 5 Strengthen linkages with efforts to address broader community needs that impact the stability of families: transportation, housing, safety, adult education, employment, substance abuse and economic security.



## Strategies:

- 1 Choose and implement within Boston Public Schools (BPS) kindergarten classrooms a comprehensive, age-appropriate assessment of children's readiness upon school entry. Align the chosen assessment with early education and care assessments, and with other current and new BPS K-12 assessments, ensuring all BPS assessments provide information to teachers, to parents, to the school system and city as a whole. Annually aggregate and report school readiness results.
- 2 Create city-wide understanding of Boston's School Readiness Definition and *Thrive in Five's* goals and strategies among parents, early education and care providers and others working with young children and families.
- 3 Regularly measure, track and report on Boston's broader School Readiness Progress Indicators to understand the impact of *Thrive in Five*. (These are listed on the following page.)
- 4 In years 2, 4, 7 and 10 of the plan, hold an early childhood summit to ensure accountability and report on *Thrive in Five's* progress.

## Children Ready for Sustained School Success

**Goal:** *Thrive in Five* will track and report on Boston's success in ensuring universal school readiness.

## Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators

In addition to benchmarks and performance measures to ensure accountability for each component of *Thrive in Five*, these are a sampling of broader progress indicators that will be tracked over time, demonstrating overall progress and providing a picture of the state of school readiness in Boston.



“If you want to know the end, look at the beginning.”

- African Proverb

## Conclusion



*“The biggest gap we are facing is the gap between what we know and what we do.”*

- Dr. Jack P. Shonkoff, Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University,  
guest lecture at the April 2007 APT meeting

This roadmap serves to clarify **what we know** – about the early years and about the needs and strengths of children, families, educators and communities – and **what we must do** to ensure children are ready for school entry and for sustained school success.

Why will this roadmap lead us to the right place? We have come together across sectors and jointly set out a plan of action. We have come to understand the costs – economic and moral – of inaction. Boston has a wealth of assets on which to draw and committed partners who will move forward together, including:

- ❖ Parents who want the best for their children;
- ❖ Effective community-based organizations that are committed to reaching families most in need of supports;
- ❖ Early educators who are prepared to mount a multi-year campaign toward universal accreditation;
- ❖ Innovative health care providers and their community partners who are ready to pilot sustainable comprehensive models to support children’s healthy development;
- ❖ University researchers who are enhancing workforce development and assessing program quality;
- ❖ Strong leadership at our school department and in our early education and care community;
- ❖ A City government that is aligning across departments to improve support for young children and families;
- ❖ A State government that is soon to report on its Readiness effort, which should align state agency efforts and articulate a method for sustained early childhood investment; and
- ❖ Private funders who are increasingly interested in prevention and early childhood.

We aim to achieve more than just successful execution of a strategic plan. We will build a long-term movement on behalf of children that benefits the entire city. Let us be clear and focused in our specific objectives, yet let us also envision for all children what they can see from Boston’s harbor: unlimited horizons.

*We have come to understand the costs – economic and moral – of inaction.*

*Thrive in Five*  
Why and How





# Introduction Our Call to Action



**Our Vision** *Young children's healthy development and love of learning will be a top civic priority for our city. We will ensure that Boston's children have a strong foundation for educational success, essential for productive, satisfying and contributing lives. We will see them supported by families, educators, health care and human service providers, and communities that are well prepared for their unique and crucial roles in helping children reach their full potential, and that work together to achieve the best results for each child, from birth throughout the early years and early school grades, and then beyond.*

Children are born ready to learn. In fact they are born learning! What takes place between birth and school entry greatly determines whether they will enter school ready for sustained success, something we want for all children. Conversely, what takes place in these early years determines whether a gap in competencies – cognitive, social/emotional, and physical – will exist from the start of K-12 education, leading to a wide range of problems that are significantly more difficult, as well as more expensive, to address later on.

Understanding this, Mayor Thomas M. Menino, in partnership with United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, engaged a carefully constructed cross-section of leaders to identify what it would take for Boston's young children to enter school on a level playing field, ready to succeed. Our work, "Boston's Birth to Five School Readiness Initiative," has resulted in this comprehensive school readiness roadmap: *Thrive in Five – Boston's Promise to its Children*.

With so many societal needs to be addressed, why should we focus particular attention on our youngest citizens and on ensuring children's school readiness? The answer is clear: neuroscience and economics together reveal that no single strategy offers a greater return on investment. A moral and civic imperative exists as well. The playing field for children entering school is far from level and this must change. The workplace today's children will enter upon high school or college graduation will demand capabilities that cannot be achieved without a strong groundwork laid in early childhood and early school years. When children thrive through their first five years, they are poised to be strong lifelong learners, earners and engaged citizens. It is not in our city's fabric to give up on

*Why should we focus particular attention on our youngest citizens and on ensuring children's school readiness? The answer is clear: neuroscience and economics together reveal that no single strategy offers a greater return on investment. A moral and civic imperative exists as well.*

any resident at any age, and it is never too late to provide intervention and support for children, youth and adults. However, doing so earlier is most effective.<sup>13</sup>

Thrive in Five is a roadmap to strengthen existing child and family-serving systems, create new supports and alter systems where needed, coordinate our work across the city for greater impact, and measure and sustain progress over the long term. Detailed implementation plans, realignment of existing resources, and calculation of the full resources needed will be shaped and refined over the next year by the partnerships described in the plan. However, the framework for action provided in this document – the school readiness equation and the goals created by a diverse and extraordinarily committed group of Boston leaders and parents – will remain in place over the next decade so that its participants will know what they, that is we, are working toward, together.

## A Scientific, Economic and Moral Imperative

The *Thrive in Five* approach is built on an extensive research base that illustrates our scientific, economic and moral imperative, including findings that:

- ❖ The human brain is the only organ that is not mature at birth. The brain develops more rapidly from birth through age three than at any other time of life – although brain development does continue throughout life.<sup>13</sup>
- ❖ Children's earliest experiences actually shape the architecture of the brain – the foundation of neural circuits upon which future learning, behavior and health depend; this does not pre-determine a child's future, but creates either a resilient or fragile foundation for learning and for health.<sup>14</sup>
- ❖ The economic benefits of quality early childhood interventions are significant – producing a \$14-\$17 return for every dollar invested.<sup>15</sup> The return includes savings from reduced special education and remedial education, welfare, and criminal justice costs, as well as increased tax revenue produced in the workforce.<sup>16</sup>
- ❖ A child growing up in poverty who has experienced high quality early education is 40% less likely to require special education or to be held back a grade, 30% more likely to graduate from high school, and twice as likely to go to college.<sup>17</sup>
- ❖ The average college graduate contributes 78% more in annual taxes than the average high school graduate. The average person who has not completed high school can expect to take home (net income) under \$20,000 per year, while someone with a college diploma on up through an advanced professional degree can expect to take home an average of anywhere from \$38,000 to \$70,000.<sup>18</sup>
- ❖ Creating an environment that supports healthy development in early childhood is more effective programmatically than treating problems at a later age.<sup>19</sup>
- ❖ Learning is cumulative and basic early childhood skills are a necessary foundation for life long learning.<sup>15</sup>

*The name Thrive in Five reflects our commitment to ensuring that all children flourish in the first five years of life and beyond. It also reflects the importance of all five dimensions of a child's growth.*

<sup>13</sup>Shonkoff, J and Philips, D. (Eds.). (2000). *From Neurons To Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

<sup>14</sup>National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development*. <http://www.developingchild.net>.

<sup>15</sup>Karoly, L.A., Kilburn, M.R., and Cannon, J.S. (2005). *Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

<sup>16</sup>Rolnick, A. and Grunewald, R. (2003). *Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return*. <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/fedgaz/03-03/opinion.cfm>.

<sup>17</sup>Patrick, D. (January 24, 2008). Governor's State of the Commonwealth Address.

<sup>18</sup>Baum, S. and Payea, K. (2005) *The Benefits of Higher Education to Individuals and Society*. [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf).

<sup>19</sup>Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2007). *A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children*. <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>.

The name *Thrive in Five* reflects our commitment to ensuring that all children flourish in the first five years of life and beyond. It also reflects the importance of all five dimensions of a child's growth – language development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, and physical and motor development. In short, successful outcomes for children require support and stimulation that must be consistent and comprehensive, and must begin at birth.

## *Thrive in Five Goals*

The goals of *Thrive in Five* are both simple and urgent:

- ❖ 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.



# Preventing the Achievement Gap in our Next Generation

*By Promoting School Readiness and Ensuring the Healthy Development of Boston's Children*

The link between school readiness and school achievement is well established. Gaps in children's ability not only show up early, but they stay relatively constant after age eight.<sup>20</sup> In fact, researchers now document that half the academic achievement gap evidenced in grade 12 can be attributed to gaps that already existed in first grade.<sup>21</sup>

As students impacted by the achievement gap move into the adult world, gaps in academic performance often translate into gaps in income, health and wellness, productivity, civic engagement and more – with far-reaching effects on society. The average college graduate earns 73% more over her working life than a typical high school graduate, contributes 78% more in taxes, and is more likely to be in good health, less likely to smoke, and more likely to volunteer and vote.<sup>22</sup> Clearly, educational attainment has a huge impact not only on individuals, but on our greater community as well. Therefore, supporting successful learning for all children, starting long before they enter school, is a necessary approach with proven impact.

## The Achievement Gap

Locally, statewide and across the country, leaders are striving to ensure that all children succeed academically, bridging the gap between where ALL students need to be academically – to reach their full potential and compete in a global economy – and where they are now. In addition, school systems are struggling everywhere to deal with specific disparities in academic achievement – racial, economic and special education gaps.

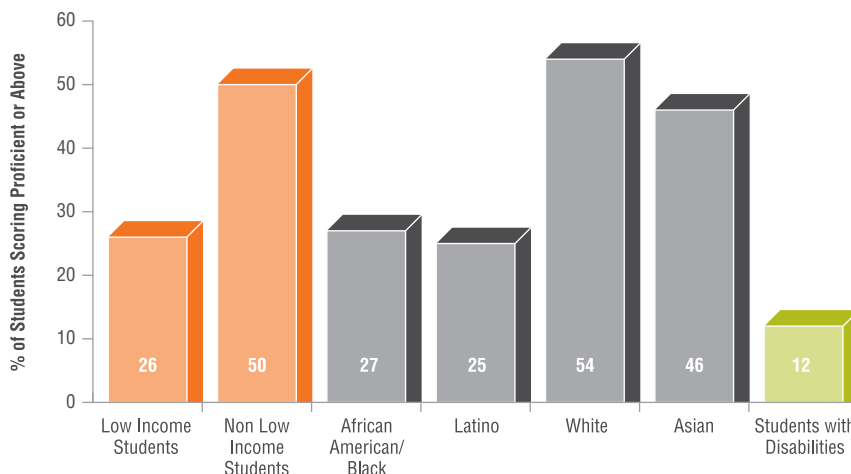
While all Boston Public Schools students have demonstrated progress on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), gaps persist – between low-income and middle-income students, between students who are Black or Latino and students who are White or Asian, and between special education and general education students. These gaps are evident early on. For example, there is more than a 20% gap on the third grade MCAS Reading scores between the performance of White and Asian students and the performance of Black and Latino students. The chart below illustrates a number of gaps.

<sup>20</sup>Heckman, J. (Jan. 10, 2006). Catch 'Em Young. *Wall Street Journal*.

<sup>21</sup>Jencks, C. and Phillips, M. (1998). *The Black-White Test Score Gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

<sup>22</sup>Baum, S. and Payea, K. (2005). *The Benefits of Higher Education to Individuals and Society*. [http://www.collegeboard.com/prod\\_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf](http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/press/cost04/EducationPays2004.pdf).

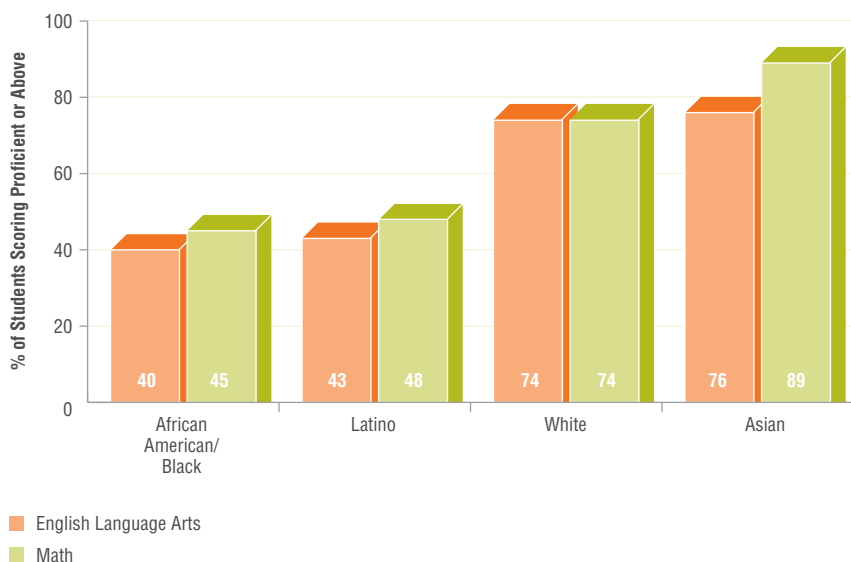
### 2007 3rd Grade MCAS Reading Results



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education. 2007 MCAS Results by Subgroup – Boston. <http://www.doe.mass.edu>.  
 Note: “Low Income” is defined here as students whose family incomes makes them eligible for free or reduced meals, a federal income guideline.

Scores on the 10th grade English Language Arts and Math MCAS exams, which students are required to pass to be eligible for a high school diploma, similarly reveal a gap between the scores of White and Asian students and those of Black and Latino students.<sup>23</sup>

### 10th Grade MCAS Results



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education. (2007). MCAS Results by Subgroup – Boston. <http://www.doe.mass.edu>.

Even school systems such as the Boston Public Schools, that have made significant strides in addressing the academic achievement gap – bringing up the scores and overall performance of low income students, students with disabilities, and students

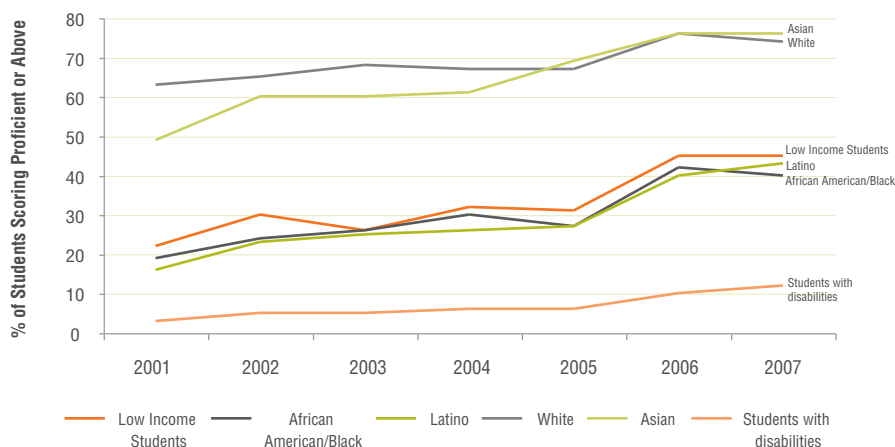
*It is clear that the best hope for eliminating the gap is prevention, starting our work before children enter kindergarten.*

<sup>23</sup>Massachusetts Department of Education. (2007). MCAS Results by Subgroup – Boston. <http://www.doe.mass.edu>.



who are Black and Latino – are finding it extraordinarily difficult to eliminate the gap or even to further narrow it, as shown by the results of 10th grade MCAS English Language Arts scores between 2001 and 2007.

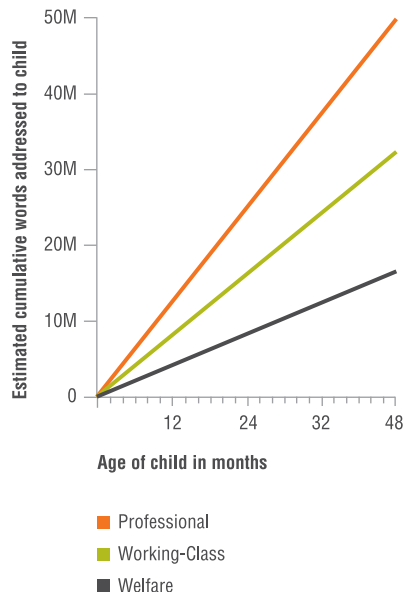
**10th Grade MCAS ELA Scores 2001 - 2007**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education. MCAS Results by Subgroup – Boston. <http://www.doe.mass.edu>.

## Early Disparities

### The Number of Words Addressed to Children Differs Across Income Groups



As documented in the groundbreaking national report *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, “Striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten... and they are predictive of subsequent academic performance.”<sup>24</sup> It is clear that the best hope for eliminating the gap is prevention, starting our work before children enter kindergarten.

The most dramatic example of an early disparity is what has become known as the vocabulary gap – the number of different words a child knows at kindergarten entry. Talking to young children, starting at birth, helps them develop strong language and communication skills, which enables them to better express themselves, listen, read and learn. Children learning to read and write words they have never heard can be as challenging as learning a new language. Just hearing the same words over and over is important for children’s brain development. Research indicates that low-income parents, on average, speak to and talk with their children much less than higher-income parents and about a narrower range of topics. The average low-income child has heard 30 million fewer words than his or her higher income peers by the age of four. Most strikingly, in one key study on this, the vocabulary gap at age three then predicted language scores in third grade.”<sup>25</sup>

Source: Hart, B. and Risley, T.R. (2003). *The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3*. [http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html).

<sup>24</sup>Shonkoff, J and Philips, D. (Eds.). (2000). *From Neurons To Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.

<sup>25</sup>Hart, B. and Risley, T.R. (2003). *The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3*. [http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html).

# Building on Boston's Strengths to Ensure School Readiness



Boston is home to approximately 38,000 children ages birth to five, living in 31,500 households. The communities of Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, East Boston, Allston/Brighton, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park, Roslindale and West Roxbury are each home to 6% to 20% of the city's young children.<sup>26</sup>

## Boston's Young Children and Their Families

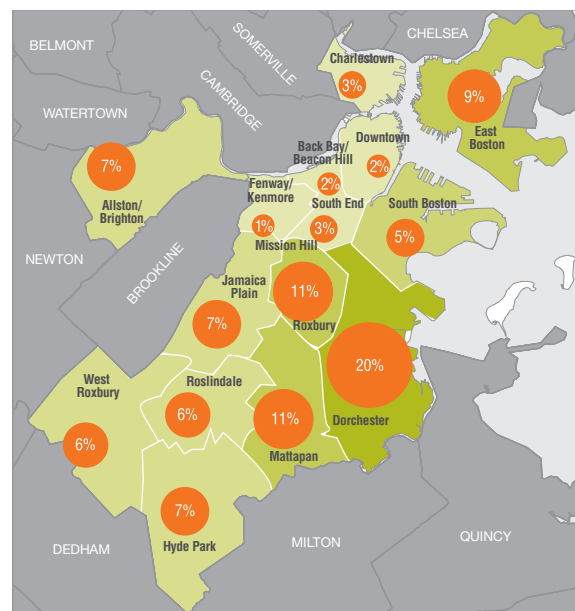
Thirty-four percent of Boston children ages birth to five are African American, 29% are White, 24% are Latino, 7% are of Asian descent and 5% are of multiple racial backgrounds.<sup>26</sup> Most young children in Boston live with their biological parent (83%); however 15% live with another relative. This includes 12% of Boston children ages birth to five who live with a grandparent, a higher percentage than the national average of 9%.<sup>26</sup>

Boston's families are remarkably diverse – economically, racially, linguistically and culturally. **Parents across Boston express a deep and profound desire to do what is best for their children.** Wanting the best for their child is a universal characteristic of all parents; achieving this goal can be difficult for many, particularly those facing linguistic, economic, and educational challenges.

Forty-three percent of Boston families with young children are foreign-born, a much higher share than the citywide average of 26%. The top three countries of origin include the Dominican Republic, Haiti and El Salvador.<sup>26</sup>

Given the large foreign-born population, it is no surprise that English is not the native language for 47% of Boston families with young children. Among those who do not speak English as their native language, 8300 householders (or 26% of all Boston householders with young children) have limited English proficiency, meaning they report not speaking English well or at all. Among the major languages spoken are Spanish, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and Chinese.<sup>26</sup>

Children Ages Birth through Five by Neighborhood

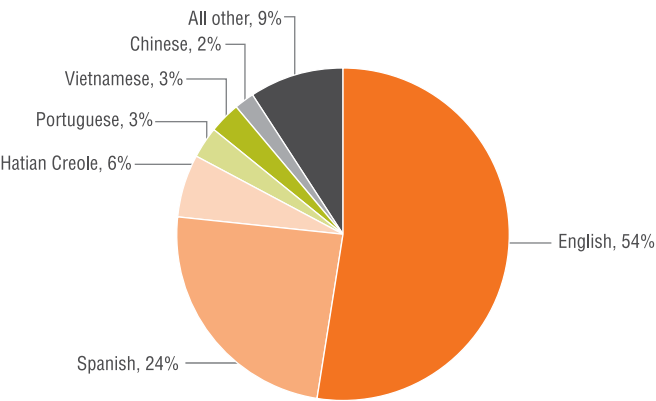


% Percentage of Children Ages Birth through Five by Neighborhood  
Total Number of Children Ages Birth to Five in Boston: 37,947  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2000).

<sup>26</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Public Use Microdata Sample. Analysis: BRA Research Division.

Many parents involved in the development of *Thrive in Five* cited personal experiences that show great resilience in overcoming a host of challenges and obstacles to realize their commitment to their children.

Languages Spoken by Householders with Children Ages Birth to Five



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Public Use Microdata (PUMS) 5% Sample. BRA Research Division Analysis.

One quarter of Boston families with young children live at or below the poverty line.<sup>27</sup> However, Boston’s high cost of living also impacts many families living well above the poverty line. According to the Family Self-Sufficiency Standard, which calculates income necessary to meet basic needs such as housing, child care, health care, food, housing and transportation, Boston’s families need the following incomes to reach self sufficiency:

	For one adult	For one adult with one preschool child	For one adult with one preschooler and one school-age child	For two adults with one preschooler and one school-age child
Hourly	\$12.25	\$23.58	\$27.53	\$14.70 per adult
Annual	\$25,900	\$49,800	\$58,000	\$62,100

Source: Crittenton Women’s Union. (2007). <http://www.liveworkthrive.org/docs/fess2006/2006%20FESS%20Boston.pdf>.

Income is often closely linked to parental educational attainment. Despite being home to many major colleges and universities, more than half (52%) of Boston households with children ages birth to five are headed by adults with no post-high-school education, and 24% of those raising young children do not have the benefit of even a high school diploma.<sup>27</sup>

Many parents involved in the development of *Thrive in Five* cited personal experiences that show great resilience in overcoming a host of challenges and obstacles to realize their commitment to their children. Engaging parents, and addressing these challenges and barriers, is integrated into each *Thrive in Five* goal and strategy.

### Boston’s Services for Young Children and Families

Boston offers a wealth of resources for young children and families. The city’s **network of 1,100 early education and care providers** includes private and community-based centers, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, family child care providers, and school-based programs. Each year they serve approximately 19,000 infants, toddlers, three- and four-year-old preschoolers and kindergarteners.<sup>28</sup> They are supported by

<sup>27</sup>U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). Public Use Microdata Sample. BRA Research Division Analysis.  
<sup>28</sup>Boston EQUIP. (2007). *Boston Early Care and Education Fact Sheet*. Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA. <http://www.bostonequip.org/PDF/ECMarchUpdate.pdf>.

Boston-based organizations that offer technical assistance for early education and care programs seeking accreditation, planning support for the field, and professional development for teachers and administrators. Organizations also work citywide and at the neighborhood level to help families secure affordable care and education for their children. Twelve Boston-based colleges and universities and numerous others in the surrounding region support the field with training, research, policy and advocacy.

Young children enter a **strong Boston Public Schools (BPS) system**. Boston is one of the few large cities with a mayor who has staked his career on the progress in the public schools and who has promoted policies and invested significant public dollars to support early education. School improvement efforts have included strengthening curriculum across the system; providing extensive professional development for teachers and principals; reducing class sizes to ratios that are better than many suburban districts; and committing to strong parent engagement efforts for parents of school-age students. BPS also started a first-in-the nation collaborative initiative with the YMCA, known as Y/BPS, to encourage parents of all races with young children to consider the public schools who might otherwise opt out without investigating BPS. (See Appendix D for more information about Y/BPS.)

In 2006, the Eli Broad Foundation recognized Boston as the leading urban district in the country in improving public education, particularly for its consistent strides in addressing the needs of low-income and minority students.

Boston was one of the first cities in the country to offer universal full school-day kindergarten for five year-olds. The Boston Public Schools system has been deeply engaged in community initiatives to improve early education and care, expanding its own early learning centers and, in just the past three years, investing over eight million dollars to expand pre-kindergarten programs for four year-olds, including a new pilot to serve families in a community-based setting.

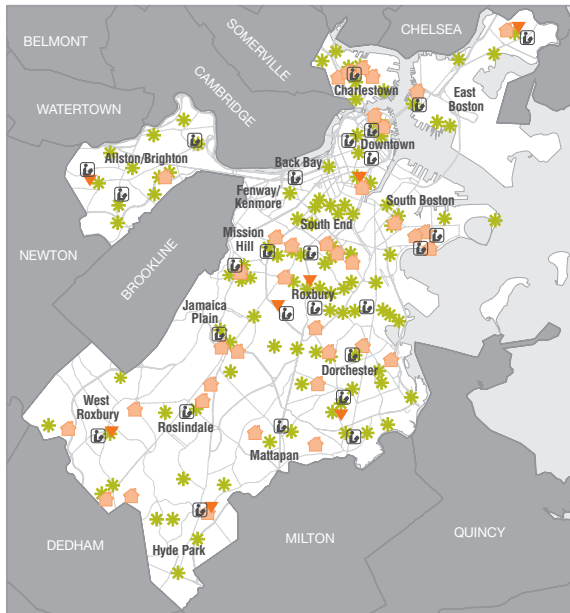
Boston has been recognized nationally for **collaborative public and private sector city-wide initiatives to help prepare children and families** for the transition to kindergarten and promote literacy in the early years of a child's life, such as Countdown to Kindergarten and ReadBoston. Boston is also home to high quality early literacy and comprehensive health initiatives for young children that have been replicated nationally, ranging from Jumpstart to Reach Out and Read to Healthy Steps. These and other organizations provide a wide range of support, such as guidance to parents on introducing children to reading and nurturing their language development, individual adult mentors for preschool children, and information for families about preparing for kindergarten. (See Appendix D for more information about these and other services to support school readiness.)

Boston resources for families also include a **wealth of community-based and human service organizations**. A recent survey by the Mayor's Office identified 150 organizations serving young children and their families with services to meet basic needs, support economic advancement, assist children and families experiencing violence or abuse, serve children with special needs, improve physical and mental health and much more.

*Boston was one of the first cities in the country to offer universal full school-day kindergarten for five year-olds.*

Boston's health care system includes 21 hospitals and 26 community health centers that provide primary and specialty care in neighborhoods throughout the city. In recent years, the Boston Public Health Commission has partnered with local hospitals and health centers on major successful initiatives to improve maternal and child health and reduce racial disparities in health.

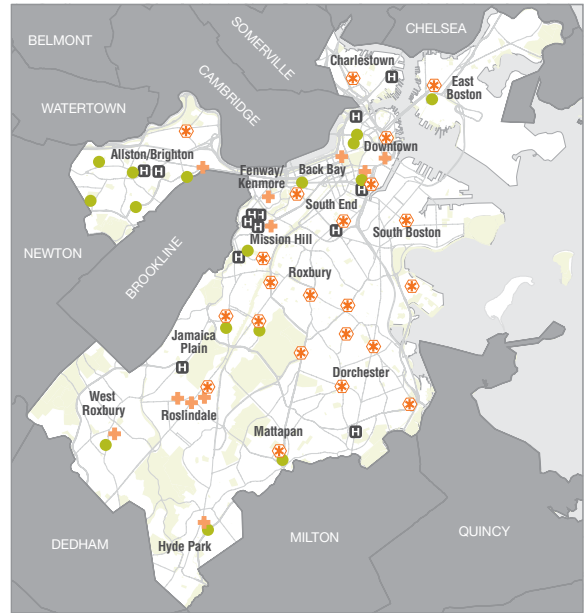
### Citywide Resources for Children Birth through Five and Their Families



- Public Library
- Community Center
- YMCA
- Tot Lot

Sources: Boston Redevelopment Authority, Boston Parks Department.

### Pediatric Providers In Boston



- Hospital
- Medical Provider
- Pediatric Provider
- Health Center

Boston also benefits from a **wide array of cultural and recreational resources** for families with young children – such as the Boston Children's Museum, Museum of Science, New England Aquarium, Franklin Park Zoo, Boston Public Libraries, countless parks and historical sites.

## State and Federal Initiatives and Their Connection to Boston

Boston's citywide assets for young children operate in an environment of many state-level efforts. In 1998, the Massachusetts Department of Education made accreditation and improving the quality of early education and care programs a funding priority. Since then, more than 1,100 programs in Massachusetts have earned accreditation, making the state the first in the nation in accredited programs, which, as explained later in this document, is the national standard of quality.<sup>29</sup> In 2005, Massachusetts established the Department of Early Education and Care to increase the availability, affordability, and quality of early education and care services across the state. The Department sets standards for learning and early education and care quality; administers professional

<sup>29</sup>National Association for the Education of Young Children. <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/search>.



development, technical assistance, and workforce development initiatives; sets rates for subsidized care and administers financial assistance to families; and oversees initiatives to improve early childhood educator compensation and strengthen the ability to recruit and retain high quality teachers and staff.

The Department of Early Education and Care also administers the Universal Pre-Kindergarten Pilot program, launched in 2007 to promote school readiness and inform the longer-term creation of universally accessible, high quality early education in community- and school-based settings. Sharon Scott-Chandler, Vice President for Head Start and Children's Services at Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), chairs the board of the Department of Early Education and Care. She also served on the group that created this *Thrive in Five* plan, Boston's School Readiness Action Planning Team (the APT).

In 2007, not long after the Boston planning process got underway, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick unveiled a vision very similar to Mayor Menino's of a comprehensive, child-centered public education system in the Commonwealth that begins before kindergarten, continues through grade 12 and then through higher education and beyond to workforce development and lifelong learning. Toward this end, the governor launched the Commonwealth Readiness Project to create a strategic plan to continuously improve public education. Boston's APT co-chair Jackie Jenkins-Scott serves as co-chair of the Readiness Project, which includes early education as a key component. An additional 11 members of the APT or its working groups also serve on the Governor's Readiness Project's planning groups, which gives us confidence about a coordinated approach across the city and state.

Massachusetts is also creating a supportive environment for the health and well being of young children and their families. In 2007 the Commonwealth launched a unique effort to ensure that all Massachusetts residents have health insurance coverage. In addition, Massachusetts is currently responding to a court mandate for health providers to routinely screen low-income children for mental health issues in addition to physical health problems. Other Massachusetts state agencies, including the Departments of Social Services, Transitional Assistance, and Public Health, provide many vital benefits and services to support the stability and well being of young children and families. These agencies all have been represented on the APT.

At the federal level, the government invests millions of dollars in support for early childhood related services in Boston, most notably for the recently reauthorized national early childhood programs called Head Start and Early Head Start, which have provided comprehensive support and education services to low-income families and their young children for over forty years.

*Thrive in Five* will operate in the context of these local, state and federal initiatives, understanding that the significant majority of funding for early childhood and family support comes from the state and federal level – and knowing that the work being done to date is not adequately addressing the needs of our youngest citizens, that is, not adequately helping them reach their potential.

*Unfortunately, the whole can be less than the sum of this many parts. One of the intentions of Thrive in Five, sought by the aforementioned organizations and initiatives, is to promote better coordination and collaboration, to identify duplication of services and gaps in services, and to conduct strategic planning under an umbrella that provides the guidance of a citywide vision and goals for early childhood development.*



## A Process of Inclusion, A Foundation of Science

In 2006, representatives from across Boston came together under the leadership of Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley to support the development of a citywide vision to ensure young children's school readiness. Within the City government, staff in the Mayor's Office formed a birth to five achievement gap prevention committee to bring together City departments to coordinate work on behalf of young children. With support from Children's Hospital Boston, the Mayor's Office gathered demographic data about children and families throughout the city and conducted in-depth surveys with more than 60 organizations about their programs and services, as well as the needs of young children and families in Boston. With assistance from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, this information was used to map early education and care providers, health resources, and a wide range of other citywide resources for young children and their families.

Mayor Menino wanted to utilize the city's significant early childhood expertise in order to both jumpstart future planning and to identify immediate interventions for the most at risk families. In the fall of 2006, the Mayor convened a 12-person team of top researchers and practitioners, chaired by Professor Richard Weissbourd, PhD, of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Jason Sachs, PhD, the head of the Boston Public Schools Early Education Department. That team developed a policy paper on early childhood development. (See Appendix I for the committee members.)

In his January 2007 State of the City address, Mayor Menino announced the creation of the School Readiness Action Planning Team (APT), bringing together "the best minds in Massachusetts to develop a 10-year strategic plan" to prevent the achievement gap. Alongside the APT, the Mayor also announced Smart from the Start, a new public-private partnership to provide a neighborhood-based continuum of early childhood services for low income children and their families to promote school readiness, an initiative that was developed out of the researcher and practitioner recommendations.

Smart from the Start is spearheaded by The Family Nurturing Center, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, the Boston Housing Authority, and the Mayor's Office. It is being piloted in three Boston neighborhoods where a housing development and community center are co-located: Mattapan, Charlestown, and Roslindale. Because a number of the leaders of Smart from the Start also served on the APT, and their planning was

occurring simultaneously, Smart from the Start has ended up serving as a tool to pilot many of the APT priorities. (See Appendix D for more information about Smart from the Start.)

*“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. Because by opening up their minds, we can open up their worlds.”*

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

In March 2007, the **School Readiness Action Planning Team** (“the APT”) began. The 65 APT members (see Appendix E) were chosen from more than 250 nominations. The membership included private and public sector representatives from 11 fields.

Mayor Menino charged the APT with developing a 10-year vision and corresponding 5-10 year strategic action plan to promote school readiness and ensure the healthy development of Boston’s youngest children, with the specific intention of preventing an achievement gap among our next generation of students. He asked that the plan include:

- ❖ Short and long term steps,
- ❖ Citywide and targeted efforts,
- ❖ Guidance on maximizing current investments and determining where to invest new dollars,
- ❖ Strategies to ensure sustainability and accountability,
- ❖ Emphasis on prevention and quality, and
- ❖ Public and private partnerships.

APT members were asked to design a plan for which they would serve as ambassadors when the planning process ended – in their own organization, in their own professional sector, and throughout the city.

Concurrently, Mayor Menino convened a **Parents Action Planning Team** (“the **Parents APT**”) whose 34 members (see Appendix F) were nominated by community organizations. The Parents APT included parents, grandparents, foster parents, adoptive parents and other primary caregivers from all Boston neighborhoods and more than 20 cultures. These parents offered a wealth of experience upon which to draw. Each member had a child between the ages of birth and six and, in total, Parents APT members were caring for 91 children during the planning year. Their role was to offer guidance to the APT on key planning issues and to review and help strengthen the APT’s work, grounding it in the reality of families’ lives. A number of Parents APT members went on to serve on the APT’s workgroups and two Parents APT members represented the group at general APT meetings.

The APT and Parents APT conducted their work with a range of notable supports. A grant from the Barr Foundation provided financial assistance for APT and Parents

## The School Readiness Action Planning Team (APT) and Parents Action Planning Team (Parents APT)

Sectors represented on the APT:

- ❖ Early Education and Care
- ❖ Early Childhood Advocacy
- ❖ Research and Higher Education
- ❖ K-12 Education
- ❖ Health and Mental Health
- ❖ Community-Based, Immigrant, and Multi-Service Organizations
- ❖ Parenting Education, Family Support, Family Literacy, and Early Intervention
- ❖ Basic Needs and Human Services
- ❖ Parent Advocacy and Parent/Family Engagement
- ❖ Faith, Arts, Culture and Recreation
- ❖ Foundation and Private Sector

## Guiding Principles

The APT and Parents APT quickly agreed on a set of guiding principles:

**Child responsiveness:** Children will be at the center of our attention. Our actions will reflect an understanding that children develop and learn in different ways, and that the key to every child's progress is her/his relationship(s) with caring adults who can support his/her well being and nurture a love of learning.

**Parent partnership:** We will prioritize respecting and engaging parents in their role as their children's first and most important teachers.

**Early years and early grades:** We will focus our attention on children from the critical ages of birth through their entry into kindergarten. However, many interventions need to begin in the prenatal stage, and continue until children build their foundation for lifelong learning, through the time when they are fully able to read (usually by the end of third grade). Therefore, we must align all early education and care settings that serve children from birth through third grade.

**Cultural and linguistic responsiveness:** We will understand and respond to the culture, language and family structures of the children and families with whom we partner, and draw on Boston's diversity as an asset for learning.

**Equity and focus:** Our actions in support of school readiness will seek to benefit all of Boston's children while focusing resources on those most in need.

**Access:** We will pay special attention to the issues and barriers identified by parents that must be addressed in order to help parents support their children's learning and access the information, services, and support that children and families need. These barriers include, but are not limited to, cost, scheduling, language, and transportation.

**Synergy:** We will ensure that our strategies are mutually reinforcing.

**Accountability:** We will be ambitious, while focusing on what we can accomplish well. Our plan will establish goals, outline measures of success, and define organizational responsibility for all components. We will create the capacity to continuously monitor and improve our efforts, and to mobilize the resources, policies and public support needed to succeed.

APT facilitation, meeting costs, data support, focus group input, and other planning-related needs. United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley served as the fiscal agent for the grant and, in collaboration with the Office of the Mayor, managed the planning process. Financial support also made it possible to provide Parents APT members with a stipend and reimbursement for travel and child care costs, and to offer financial support to small community-based organizations whose staff participated on the APT.

The APT and Parents APT were facilitated by DCA, a local consulting firm with national and international experience developing community-wide school readiness plans, public health initiatives, and other efforts to achieve social progress on a large scale. DCA managed the preparation, logistics, facilitation and follow-up of all APT and Parents APT meetings, including working groups focused on the development of specific strategies, and the drafting of this report. DCA also designed and executed a series of **focus groups** to obtain the perspectives of parents whose voices required special representation because they were coping with domestic violence, language barriers, or challenges associated with being new immigrants.

A **Data and Research Team (DART)**, co-managed by the Mayor's Office and the Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project (Boston EQUIP) provided the APT and its working groups with the pertinent data and best practices to ensure that the resulting strategies were evidence-based and well-grounded in the most recent research findings. (See Appendix H for a list of DART members.) This information painted a picture of the strengths and challenges faced by families and young children in Boston, and helped guide the planning process. Examples of this information include statistics about the number of Boston children exposed to toxic stress, a review of similar early childhood school readiness initiatives around the country, and data about early education and care quality and capacity. The DART was also responsible for creating a system to track progress in the future, ensuring that the status of Boston's children remains a clear focus. This system includes Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators to track readiness on all levels, including the readiness of families, educators, systems, and the city as a whole.

The APT and its working groups benefited from data about early education and care that is regularly collected by Boston EQUIP, as well as two research studies supported by the Barr Foundation prior to planning process.

The Barr Foundation grant made possible additional planning efforts, including the development of a school readiness definition and approach to assessment as well as communications efforts to provide school readiness information to parents and the broader community. The leaders of these communications and parent engagement efforts were ReadBoston and Countdown to Kindergarten. (See Appendix D for more information about these organizations.)

**ReadBoston** received funding to develop **Early Words**, a campaign highlighting the importance of language development through talking to, not just reading to, children starting at birth. Funding and in-kind support from Staples for Early Words will

support a citywide public campaign and targeted messaging and training in specific Boston communities.

**Countdown to Kindergarten** received funding for two key pieces of the planning process: to develop a “**Milestones**” campaign to help all parents understand child development and school readiness in clear and culturally appropriate ways; and to develop a “**You Are Your Child’s First Teacher**” campaign to reach families and the city as a whole to support school readiness after the planning process is completed.

Throughout the planning year, **Goodman Research Group, Inc.** conducted a process evaluation to document the planning process and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

(See Appendix B for a diagram summarizing the major components of the planning Initiative described above.)

Through four group meetings from March through June 2007, the APT established a 10-year vision, guiding principles, initial goals, and a set of strategy options related to each goal area, guided by the initial 12-person researcher and practitioner team’s recommendations. In addition to reviewing and offering input on these APT results, the Parents APT defined children’s school readiness from their perspective and offered guidance on the types of support parents want and need in assisting their children’s progress and transition into school.

The APT plan was informed throughout by the science of early childhood development, particularly by the work of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, which analyzes results of national and international research on neuroscience, child development, pediatrics and economics. The Center’s work documents the profound importance of children’s relationships with adults in shaping their overall development. It also illustrates the different levels of stress that affect children – from “normal stress” to “tolerable stress” to “toxic stress,” the level of sustained anxiety – caused by severe family issues such as substance abuse and domestic violence – that “can damage developing brain architecture and create a short fuse for the body’s stress response systems that leads to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health.”<sup>30</sup>

This work argues for a focus on the stability and strength of children’s relationships with the adults in their lives and on re-examining the systems that impact children – such as early education and health care – in order to achieve deep, lasting change to promote healthy development and prevent or quickly treat toxic stress.

## How the Action Planning Process Unfolded

*The APT plan was informed throughout by national and international research on neuroscience, child development, pediatrics and economics.*

<sup>30</sup>National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2005). *Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain*. <http://www.developingchild.net/reports.shtml>.



## Framework for Action Planning

The APT also developed a framework for action planning based on “what we want for each child,” outlining what children need in order to thrive in their first five years of life, setting the stage for the rest of their lives.

### Children Will Be Ready for Sustained School Success When They Have:

**A family that is in the strongest position to assist their child’s learning and development** *as evidenced by the fact they...*

- ❖ are treated as a full partner by other professionals involved in their child’s development and learning;
- ❖ have knowledge of, and easy access to, validated information about early childhood development and learning, as well as a wide spectrum of affordable opportunities to enrich that development and learning; and
- ❖ have ready access to the services needed to support and strengthen the family, address vital family issues, and support their child’s progress.

**High-quality, well-aligned early childhood education** *that...*

- ❖ includes quality options for all early childhood stages: infant, toddler, preschool, kindergarten and grades one through three;
- ❖ is offered in an accessible setting that meets the family’s needs (location, cost, schedule);
- ❖ is responsive to the child’s family structure, culture and language, building on these as assets;
- ❖ is responsive to special needs, individual development, and varying learning styles;
- ❖ integrates effective engagement of the family in the child’s care and education;
- ❖ provides agreed-upon standards of quality across settings and builds relationships across educators in all settings: family child care, community-based programs, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Boston Public Schools early childhood programs and early elementary school grades; and
- ❖ consciously and effectively prepares for the child to transition to the next setting and the next phase of learning.

**Proactive systems (health care and others) that promote healthy child development** *and...*

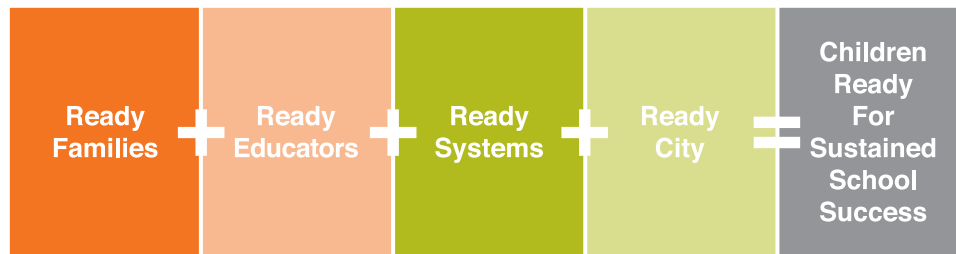
- ❖ build on the strengths of each child and each family;
- ❖ offer well-child care at all stages;
- ❖ provide parents with sound, accessible advice on early childhood development and learning;
- ❖ have the ability to identify and address special needs and physical and social/emotional barriers to learning and development in the child; and
- ❖ provide early screening and referral to identify and address critical issues facing the child and his/her primary caretakers that can cause toxic stress in children, thus impeding their ability to develop and learn.

**A city that makes early childhood development a key civic priority, through...**

- ❖ responsive and effective governance and accountability structures that ensure citywide action in support of children’s school readiness;
- ❖ public and private sector collaboration that integrates an early childhood focus into all relevant policy, planning, and action; and
- ❖ sufficient levels of investment to permanently promote school readiness and healthy early childhood development for all children.

## Boston's School Readiness Equation

This framework led to a school readiness equation that guided all planning efforts:



This equation signifies that while our focus must always be on each child, it is what we adults bring to the equation that ensures success. No one element alone can deliver the citywide results we need, nor can the results be achieved if one element is missing. If all elements are focused on a single goal and guided by a roadmap to keep us on a coordinated path, we as a community of parents and caring adults have the potential to reach the ambitious goal of universal school readiness. Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators, a set of community-wide indicators that align with this equation, will track progress in each area of *Thrive in Five* in addition to evaluation of individual strategies and actions.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2007, working groups – composed of APT members, Parents APT members, members of the DART and other invited experts – developed detailed plans for each component of the school readiness equation. Their plans were discussed throughout the fall at meetings of the working group co-chairs, APT co-chairs, and the full APT and Parents APT. This allowed for a critical review of all strategies to ensure that the various components of the plan reinforced one another and created impact that is greater than the sum of its parts.

*Thrive in Five* is unique in that it ambitiously addresses all dimensions of children's development and learning through the early years and into the early grades while building realistic partnerships between public and private sector institutions to advance clear strategies over the next 10 years through near-term (2008-2009), medium-term (2010-2012) and long-term (2013-2018) actions.

*Thrive in Five* draws on Boston's considerable strengths, including a wide array of early education and care programs; extensive community services for children and families, including an outstanding health system of hospitals and community health centers, many effective neighborhood-based and faith-based organizations and coalitions, and a United Way that is extraordinarily engaged, investing more than \$5M annually in children birth to six; extensive City services for families with young children (libraries, community centers, housing developments, schools, and public health programs, pre-natal and beyond); a diverse population of parents who are deeply devoted to their

*No one element alone can deliver the citywide results we need, nor can the results be achieved if one element is missing. If all elements are focused on a single goal and guided by a roadmap to keep us on a coordinated path, we as a community of parents and caring adults have the potential to reach the ambitious goal of universal school readiness.*

## How We Will Succeed

children; and public and private sector leaders who are making children's school readiness a top priority.

The plan also addresses Boston's challenges, such as the need to help children and families better navigate and benefit from services that can be confusing, complex, and poorly coordinated; strengthen an under-resourced early education and care system; promote not just more services, but high quality and coordinated services for children and families; support families facing serious issues (such as substance abuse, domestic violence and parental depression) that produce levels of "toxic stress" in children; and create solutions that are responsive to the racial, cultural and linguistic diversity of Boston.

*Thrive in Five* will build on the momentum already achieved during the planning stage. We have:

- ❖ Created a team of Boston leaders across sectors who will continue to serve as drivers to help other leaders prioritize young children's school readiness.
- ❖ Developed a method to conduct planning that consistently engages parents across cultures and neighborhoods. (In addition to the ongoing Parents APT, the planners held focus groups with parents facing the most tenacious challenges, such as domestic violence and the experience of immigrating from a country for cultures that do not yet have support systems in Boston.)
- ❖ Reached agreement on a definition of school readiness, the key goals to promote universal school readiness, strategies to reach those goals, and outcomes that indicate children are developing appropriately toward school readiness in early education settings.
- ❖ Briefed and garnered input from 420 community leaders over the course of the past year, including 80 funders – corporate, foundation and government.
- ❖ Incorporated into the planning process new family and educator support and citywide engagement efforts:
  - *United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley* launched the *Mind in the Making* training program for early educators, using video modules that illustrate effective practice based on the science of early childhood.
  - *ReadBoston* launched the "Early Words" campaign to address the most concrete gap evident upon school entry for low-income students: the vocabulary gap.
  - *Countdown to Kindergarten* created an "I'm Ready!" DVD in 6 languages to help families understand what takes place in kindergarten and simple ways in daily life to prepare their children; expanded *play-to-learn groups* that bring 1-3 year olds and their parents, especially low-income and immigrant parents, into school buildings to support early learning; and developed a new "milestones" product to help all parents understand child development.
  - Multiple public and private partners created *Smart from the Start*, a new collaboration to serve the lowest-income families in the city with school readiness support, through a community-mobilization approach that was developed to pilot some of the strategies of the APT.

*Thrive in Five*  
Goals, Building  
Blocks and Strategies





# Defining School Readiness

*“A child’s readiness for school is the result of many things. Can she separate from her parents? Can she manage frustration and express herself through words? Can she handle new environments? It’s not just about what she already knows — it’s about what she is curious to learn.”*

- APT member

## Building Blocks for School Readiness

From 2001 to 2004, 17 states, including Massachusetts, came together to work on generating for each state a definition of school readiness and measurable indicators. Yet still today, confusion persists about what exactly is meant by the term “school readiness.”

A clear definition of school readiness can provide families and early childhood educators in all settings with a shared framework to nurture children’s progress. Accordingly, Boston Community Partnerships for Children (Boston CPC), funded by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, was asked to spearhead the task of developing a measurable definition of school readiness for Boston, building consensus across Boston’s early education and care community and planning for data collection, as well as thinking through the implications for early education and care programs in terms of curriculum and early assessment.

Boston CPC engaged the Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project (Boston EQUIP) and the Boston Child Care Alliance to complete this work. They were assisted by an advisory group with representatives from community-based early education and care programs, family child care, Head Start, Boston Public Schools, Countdown to Kindergarten, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, as well as input from over 100 early education and care professionals. The result is a definition that is both simple and comprehensive.



**Boston's School Readiness Definition:** *School readiness is the state of early development that enables an individual child to engage in and benefit from kindergarten learning experiences, which is a stepping stone for sustained school success. Early development encompasses a child's capacity in language development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, physical well being and motor development.*

This definition aligns with the Massachusetts definition of school readiness, which further explains early development in each of the five domains as:

- ❖ the ability to communicate wants, needs, thoughts, and feelings;
- ❖ physical well being, including being physically healthy, safe, well-rested and well-nourished, and with appropriate motor development;
- ❖ emotional well being as well as an enthusiasm and a curiosity for learning;
- ❖ social knowledge and competence including the skills needed to maintain positive relationships with adults and other children and the skills needed to get along in a group setting; and
- ❖ appropriate knowledge and cognitive skills for school.<sup>31</sup>

The school readiness definition provides for the expectation of forward progress for all children, including children with disabilities. It is defined in such a way that no children are assumed to be behind before they start their path to learning and school success. With this definition, all individuals involved in a young child's life can work from a common framework and understanding of how to support children's progress from one stage to the next, through kindergarten entry. The definition does not tell us what an individual child who is school-ready is able to do, what a school-ready child looks like. The Child Outcomes Framework in Appendix C clarifies the kind of progress we hope to see in each child.

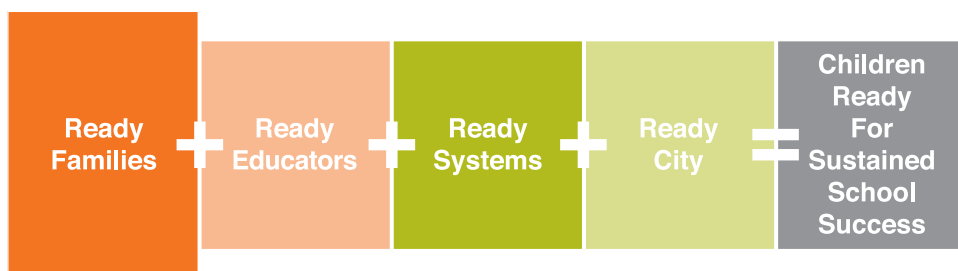
<sup>31</sup>Associated Early Care and Education. (October, 2004). *Getting Children Ready for School. Facts in Action*. <http://factsinaction.org/pageone/p1oct04.htm>.



# 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.



*"There are so many things out there for parents. Sometimes that's the problem — not knowing where to go, how to find the right person. It's overwhelming and it makes you want to give up."*

- Participant in Boston parent focus groups

*"The common assumption is that only certain parents need help and support. We all do! I am a college-educated mom who is a single parent as a result of domestic violence. I have a good job as well, but every time I receive a small raise, I face the possibility of losing either the housing support or childcare support that allows me to provide for my children."*

- Parents APT member

## Scenarios of Progress: Ready Families

*These stories illustrate how children's and families' lives will be different as a result of Thrive in Five — and how the city will be different.*

*"It was great. It got us out of the house for a few hours," the hair-braider says to Laila about the library's story time session that she went to last week with her own two-year-old. Laila, who moved*

*here from Haiti a few years ago, remembers that as a child in her home country, it seemed like everyone knew each other and there were always people around to help out. Now with her three-year-old*

son, she's often home alone with him while her husband works. *"You should go – here are all the times and it's just down the street"* the stylist says. *"It sounds like fun,"* Laila responds and puts the flyer in her bag, not intending to go. She's never been to the library and her English isn't very good.

A few days later, Laila is food shopping with her son. As she's paying, the shop owner asks her son what letters he knows. *"What a smart boy. You should take him to story time,"* he says as he hands her the same library schedule. *"Thanks,"* she says, again putting the flyer in her bag.

The next day, Laila's waiting for the bus when she opens her bag and sees the two flyers. The woman sitting next to her notices the library schedule and says how her daughter loves to look at books. *"I never would have gone in there if it weren't for everyone telling me about how much their kids love it. But now we never miss it – just talking to other parents is nice. Have you been?"* Laila says no, but sees that there's a story time for three-year-olds on Friday.

On Friday, it's raining. Even though she's nervous about it, going to the library sounds a lot better than staying inside all day with her son, arguing

about keeping the TV off. When they get there, her son is captivated by the story in no time, and loves playing with the other kids. Laila shyly chats with the other parents, including the mom from the bus stop. She hears about all sorts of different things to do right in her neighborhood with her son, including a free swim class at the community center. She has always wanted to learn how to swim and hasn't felt safe taking her son to pools or beaches since she can't.

When she stops at the community center to get the swim schedule, she is surprised they also offer free adult computer classes; she knows she needs to get a job soon. Over the next few weeks, she notices posters and information everywhere she goes that give her ideas about activities to do at home. Pretty soon, Laila and her son are out a few days a week – visiting the library, trying the play group at the elementary school, and going to a park with another woman she met from Haiti at the play group and that woman's friend from Guatemala.

Four months later, Laila has an appointment at the hair salon again. She sees three young children running all over as an exhausted-looking mom gets her braids done. The hairstylist smiles as she hears Laila saying to the mom, *"Have you ever been to story time at the library?"*

Research is clear that parent involvement is a key ingredient in school success once children enter their K-12 education. **Getting parents involved in their child's education before school entry has clear, immediate benefits for children's school readiness.**

A logical starting point for engaging parents in their child's education early is Boston's early education and care community, as over eight in 10 young children regularly receive care from a non-parent.<sup>32</sup> A 2002 study from the Harvard Family Research Project found that parents of children enrolled in an early education and care program were 10 times more likely to read to their children everyday than parents of children not participating in early education. Parents in the study also said that they knew more about their child as a learner, their strengths, weaknesses, development and how to support their children's learning at home once they entered school. Parents with children in early education and care were also more likely to visit their child's kindergarten classroom and often networked more with other school parents, creating strong and supportive peer networks.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Zimmerman, C. (2006). *2006 Boston Parent Survey - Release of Findings*. Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA. <http://www.bostonequip.org/PDF/ParentSurvey2006.ppt>.

<sup>33</sup>Kreider, H. (2002). *Getting Parents "Ready" for Kindergarten: The Role of Early Childhood Education*. Family Involvement Network of Educators, Harvard Family Research Project. <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/fine/resources/research/kreider.pdf>.

## Building Blocks for Ready Families

Ensuring that parents have the information, skills and support they need to support school readiness is vital, particularly for families that are new to the country and unfamiliar with the American education system. Rich in diversity, Boston's neighborhoods provide a home for the many unique cultures, languages and traditions of the city's residents. Long known for its strong immigrant communities, the largest foreign-born populations living in Boston in 2000 (the latest Census data available) are from Haiti, the Dominican Republic and China.<sup>34</sup> In recent years Boston has also become a home for many new immigrant groups, including Somalis, Russians and Albanians. With the city's growing diversity, Boston's non-profit and human services community has kept pace with changing demographics. Newcomers are often able to find not only traditional foods from their home country, but also support from organizations within their community for a range of issues. Keeping with the city's neighborhood identities, many of these culture-specific resources exist within the neighborhoods that are home to these diverse cultural communities.

Despite strong neighborhood resources, parents involved in the Parents APT and focus groups identified numerous challenges facing Boston families, including economic pressures, social isolation, and domestic and community violence. Compounding these issues, Boston's extensive network of services can often make finding support a challenge. Parents often expressed frustration about:

- ❖ not knowing where to go for help with these challenges;
- ❖ not knowing where services are located, how to get to them, or how much they cost (a number of immigrant parents did not know that public libraries or public schools were free, for example);
- ❖ an unequal distribution of services and resources across neighborhoods;
- ❖ eligibility requirements that rule out many families struggling to make ends meet, such as "working poor" families who are just above eligibility level for public subsidies; and
- ❖ poor customer service that discourages parents from getting the support they need.

Whenever possible, parents stressed that they would like such information to "come to us" rather than have to search among many sources, **to be woven in to their lives**, in their home, workplace, or neighborhood, rather than being taught as a separate course or offered at a place or time hard for them to access.

*"We all want to know how to support our children's learning, but we're too busy – and sometimes overwhelmed – to constantly go hunting for information. Information needs to come to us, to be part of our daily lives."*

- Parents APT member.

Boston's neighborhoods present an exciting opportunity to do just that. Small enough in scale to be manageable, yet diverse enough to offer most of the resources families need, Boston's neighborhoods provide an ideal testing ground for new efforts to weave information about child development and school readiness throughout a community, bringing support directly to families and better meeting the needs of parents.

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<sup>34</sup>Boston Redevelopment Authority/Research Division. (2005). *New Bostonians 2005*. [http://www.cityofboston.gov/newbostonians/pdfs/demo\\_report\\_2005.pdf](http://www.cityofboston.gov/newbostonians/pdfs/demo_report_2005.pdf).

## The Path Forward for Ready Families

Pilot “Community School Readiness Wiring,” a new process that builds on existing neighborhood leadership in order to integrate into parents’ daily lives – through the workplace, grocery stores, hair salons, playgrounds, etc. – key information on how to support children’s healthy development and school readiness. Partner with both the formal organizations and also community leaders and neighbors with whom families interact daily to ensure that the information reaches those who need it most and is useful, culturally responsive, and high quality.

Community School Readiness Wiring is a neighborhood-based effort to build community capacity to surround families with the information and resources they need to support their child’s healthy development, learning, and readiness for school. It builds on the natural relationships that parents and caregivers have with individuals and organizations in their neighborhood by **engaging all members of the community to offer early childhood information and resources everywhere parents go – from the supermarket to the health center, the bodega to the church, the hair salon to the bank.**

By including partners already interacting with families (early education and care providers, libraries, health centers, schools, social service organizations, community centers and others), as well as vital business and civic organizations in the community, Community School Readiness Wiring will create a seamless, reinforcing web of support for families with young children. Community School Readiness Wiring will be integrated with Community Learning, a new citywide initiative to better align the services of Boston’s public schools, libraries and community centers to support school-age students.

Community School Readiness Wiring offers parents multiple connection points to information and services within their typical day, their physical neighborhood, and their trusted language, social, and/or culture groups. It also allows individual communities to adapt the information and support provided to their neighborhood’s specific assets, challenges, partners, resources, and needs.

In each community, a lead organization/coalition, or “neighborhood hub” will start by gathering information from families and caregivers in the community about where they go regularly in their community, including where they go to access resources and get information about not only issues relating to their children, but on other issues as well. Based on the information gathered, the neighborhood hub will convene partners and form a Neighborhood Readiness Roundtable (or build this work into an existing group if possible). These Roundtables will help information flow in all directions: between parents, among organizations and providers, to parents and caregivers from the organizations that seek to serve them, and from parents and caregivers to organizations to help tailor support to families’ language, cultural and other needs. Roundtable members will provide multiple opportunities and locations for families with young children to access vital information throughout their neighborhood. **Engaging the whole community in this effort will create the “village” necessary to raise children ready for school and lifelong success.**

### Strategy 1

*Community School Readiness Wiring is a neighborhood-based effort to build community capacity to surround families with the information and resources they need to support their child’s healthy development, learning, and readiness for school. It builds on the natural relationships that parents and caregivers have with individuals and organizations in their neighborhood.*

### Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)

- A. Select lead organizations/coalitions (“neighborhood hubs”) to develop Community School Readiness Wiring pilot initiatives in three Boston neighborhoods (one lead for each neighborhood) through a citywide request for proposals process. Lead organizations will have a demonstrated connection to and experience with the community; the capacity to recruit and partner with other neighborhood entities, citywide organizations, and parents and caregivers; the ability to rigorously evaluate the specific activities implemented; and a strong focus on underserved families and groups.
- B. Form Neighborhood Readiness Roundtables, convening all partners involved in Community School Readiness Wiring for training and to further develop and refine the activities to promote school readiness in their neighborhood.
- C. Develop evaluation strategies that include measurable outcomes across all Community Wiring sites that relate to Boston’s School Readiness Progress Indicators (see “Children Ready for Sustained School Success” for more information), as well as outcomes that relate to the specific information and support offered in each neighborhood.

### Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)

- D. Repeat the actions outlined above in additional neighborhoods starting in Year 3 and continuing across the city, following the growth benchmarks outlined below – as much as possible building on and integrating into existing community resources and initiatives, focusing on building community capacity and sustainability.

Number of Neighborhoods Implementing Community School Readiness Wiring (CSRW)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
New CSRW Neighborhoods	3	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
Total Number of Neighborhoods Served	3	3	5	7	9	11	13	13	13	13	13

## Strategy 2 Coordinate and integrate new and existing public education campaigns that provide parents, caregivers and others who work with children and families updated information about early childhood development, school readiness, and parenting.

Boston is fortunate to have many services and programs to help young children and families with a broad array of concerns. However, when looking for information, parents on the Parents APT said they were overwhelmed by all of the advice available and frustrated when information from various sources seemed to conflict. Parents and caregivers want clear, consistent information that is relevant to their family’s needs, culture, and neighborhood.

### Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)

- A. Regularly convene organizations leading public engagement and information campaigns related to early childhood and school readiness to ensure that messages and distribution



plans are aligned and reinforce one another and to determine how they can best align with, and be enhanced by, *Thrive in Five*.

- B.** Implement Countdown to Kindergarten’s “Milestones” and “You Are Your Child’s First Teacher” campaigns, coordinating with information about child development from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.
- C.** Distribute information from ReadBoston’s Early Words campaign to support early childhood vocabulary development, piloting intensive work with low-income families in housing developments.
- D.** Expand Countdown to Kindergarten’s Play to Learn groups which provide child development and parenting information and skills through a structured play group for children ages 1 to 3 and their parent/caregiver (primarily serving children not enrolled in formal early education and care) in Boston Public Schools elementary schools.
- E.** Expand Y/BPS (see Appendix D for more information) to engage families with young children of all races and cultures who might otherwise opt out of the Boston Public Schools without investigating BPS as a solid educational option.

#### **Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)**

- F.** Continue to coordinate and evaluate the success of various campaigns and services and develop new campaigns as needed, including a peer-to-peer parent video that offers culturally diverse advice to new parents from current Boston parents, and connections to activities and opportunities in Boston that support young children’s learning and development.

**Select and promote an on-line screening and information tool that providers can use to guide families and that families can use themselves to obtain health care, housing, food security, income security, and other needed services.**

### **Strategy 3**

Similar to the overwhelming array of parenting information and advice, Boston’s expansive provider community can be challenging for families to access and navigate. While many excellent information and referral resources exist to help families find services, most require the user to have identified what they need (in the proper terminology) before presenting a long list of options.

For providers, keeping up to date with Boston’s ever changing resources and services is a full-time job in itself. As a result, many providers create their own individual resource guides and tools to help simplify referrals for families. Developing and keeping resource guides current requires significant time investments that could often be better spent connecting families to the right service and coordinating care. Broad investment in a single, easy to use and widely accessible tool that will meet the needs of families and providers would make finding services easier and eliminate duplicative efforts.

### Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)

- A.** Agree upon and support the development and implementation throughout *Thrive in Five* of an online screening and information tool that is accessible to both providers (to guide families) and to families directly. The tool must be user-friendly, available in multiple languages, able to be updated easily, customized to meet specific needs, and provide detailed referrals for services.

### Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)

- B.** Evaluate the success of the online screening and referral tool and recommend changes as necessary. Expand accessibility of the tool across the city and explore expanding its capacity to include the ability to securely store personal medical information, which would allow (with a user's consent) for providers to share information about a child or family more easily with one another.

**Strategy 4** Ensure access to Boston's wealth of cultural institutions for young children and families through specific programming at the institutions and in the community to support young children's learning and development, as well as resources to make admission more affordable and accessible for all families.

Children's lives are greatly enriched by exposure to a broad range of experiences and people. Diverse experiences and activities stimulate children's desire to learn and deepen their view of the world around them. Boston is fortunate to have an outstanding array of world class cultural institutions and opportunities, including the Museum of Fine Arts, the Museum of African American History, the Franklin Park Zoo, the Museum of Science, the Institute for Contemporary Art and the New England Aquarium. Boston is also home to the Boston Children's Museum, a nationally-renowned museum with a deep commitment to engaging Boston's diverse families and communities, a museum that has often taken the lead in building collaborations with other cultural institutions to support young children and their families.

Even with the many outstanding institutions in Boston, Parents APT members frequently noted that the location and high cost of visiting a museum or attending a cultural event is a major barrier to accessing these opportunities. While many cultural institutions have free entry hours or free and discounted entry passes, these offers sometimes conflict with family schedules, often require advance planning, and are not spread throughout the city, as shown by the map of free events.

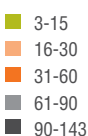
Many approaches are being explored to promote easier access for all children and families to Boston's cultural opportunities, including:

- ❖ Developing a "young families" track for programming and activities at local cultural institutions;

Free Events in Boston by Neighborhood, 2001-2004



Number of Events



Source: Boston Office of Cultural Affairs

- ❖ Developing cultural opportunities for Boston's families with young children that are closer to where families live rather than concentrated downtown; and
- ❖ Better promoting cultural opportunities through Community School Readiness Wiring and other information campaigns directed at families.

Additionally, communities around the country have successfully engaged cultural institutions in citywide partnerships to increase access to museums and events, such as New York's Cool Culture program.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, Boston's rich cultural community should be a right for all residents, particularly for our city's youngest children.

#### **Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)**

- A.** Convene local cultural institutions to gather information about their activities and programs for young children and families and develop strategies to better disseminate information about these opportunities to families with young children.
- B.** Offer technical assistance and support to help cultural organizations develop programming to engage young children and families.
- C.** Develop partnerships between cultural institutions and neighborhood-based organizations, including libraries, community centers, YMCAs, etc., to bring activities into Boston communities beyond the downtown area.
- D.** (See Ready Educators Strategy 2 for information on a model pre-school/kindergarten classroom to engage parents of young children at the Boston Children's Museum.)

#### **Medium-term actions (2010 – 2012)**

- E.** Develop and implement a cultural access card that allows reduced price entry for Boston families at cultural institutions – particularly for events geared towards young children – and that allows a family to share with their early education providers and kindergarten teachers what experiences their children have had prior to school entry. (Such a “passport” is used widely in some other countries.)

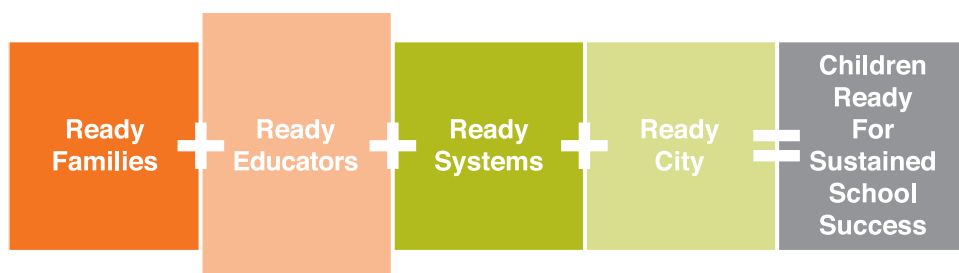
<sup>35</sup>For more information about Cool Culture, visit <http://www.cool-culture.org>.



# 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.



## Scenarios of Progress: Ready Educators

*These stories illustrate how children's and families' lives will be different as a result of Thrive in Five – and how the city will be different.*

Racquel always liked kids. A few years after high school, as a single mother with a young child of her own, she decided to become a family child care provider, taking care of her daughter and up to five other kids at a time in her apartment. Now she has her license from the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and has earned a reputation in the neighborhood for being great with children. She knows that children need a lot of stimulation and a consistent schedule. She tries to take them out to the park regularly, especially now that the tot lot has been re-done and neighbors have taken on working with city officials to keep it clean and safe. But she is still shy about talking to other people at the park, and sometimes it doesn't seem worth all the trouble to get coats and boots on six children. Yet she feels lonely at home on her own with the kids.

A few months ago, Racquel heard from four different people about a neighborhood networking meeting for child care providers and finally decided to check it out. It was surprisingly fun to meet other women doing the same job. She even went to a few education workshops with them. At the last meeting, Racquel heard about an initiative in Boston to ensure that all child care is high quality. "I went back to school and got my Child Development Associate credential," said the presenter. "I thought I knew everything I needed to know, but this has helped me understand the stages kids go through, why they do what they do, and how to help my kids be ready for kindergarten. I tell you, I never thought I would be taking college classes!"

Racquel decides to apply for the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and enrolls in the next round of a training program offered at a local

college. After taking the classes and demonstrating what she's learned, she earns her CDA credential and college credit. Getting her CDA has helped build her skills and develop the confidence to continue her education – and she has noticed a difference in how much she enjoys her job and how she works with her kids. Her CDA advisor helps her

apply to a college program and get a scholarship to cover tuition. In the fall, she starts taking classes towards an Associate's degree. Racquel finds it hard to balance going to school and caring for kids while supporting her own child. But for the first time in her life, getting a college degree seems possible and worth the work.

Decades of rigorous research has confirmed that high quality early education and care programs have large positive effects on children's cognitive development and academic skills at school entry, which last through children's school careers.<sup>36</sup> Strong early education and care has an even greater impact on disadvantaged children.

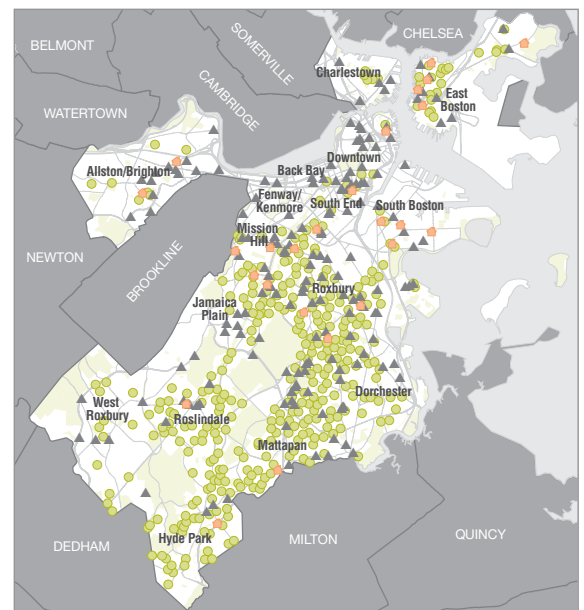
There is also growing national recognition of the value of a mixed delivery system that reflects the culture, language, time schedule, location, and type of care that is most appropriate for the family.<sup>37</sup> The preservation of a healthy, high quality system is the foundation for broad access to early education and care and strong parent engagement and satisfaction.

Boston is fortunate to have a large and diverse array of early education and care options for children and their families. The more than 1,100 early education and care providers in Boston include private and community-based centers, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, family child care providers, and school-based preschool and kindergarten programs. Altogether, they serve more than 19,000 children each year. Additionally, the field has been growing steadily: Over the past nine years, early education and care capacity across all settings has increased by 4,700 spaces as programs strive to meet demand.<sup>38</sup>

At the citywide level, Boston Community Partnerships for Children, a grant program of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, supports planning and coordination throughout the city's early education and care community and provides funding for early education and care for low income children and children with special needs as well as programs that support accreditation and professional development. A governing council, with direct ties to Boston neighborhoods and representation from different types of providers,

## Building Blocks for Ready Educators

Early Education and Care Providers



Type of Provider:  
 ▲ Center-based  
 ■ Head Start  
 ● Family Child Care

Source: Child Care Choices of Boston

<sup>36</sup>Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Do You Believe in Magic? What Can We Expect from Early Childhood Intervention Programs? *SRCD Social Policy Report*, 17(1): 3-14. Ramey, S. L. & Ramey, C. T. (2000). The Effects of Early Childhood Experiences on Developmental Competence. In S. Danziger & J. Waldfogel (Eds.), *Securing the Future: Investing in Children from Birth to College* (pp 122-150). New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Ramey, S. L., Ramey, C. T., & Lanzi, R. G. (2004). The Transition to School: Building on Preschool Foundations and Preparing for Lifelong Learning. In E. Zigler & S. J. Styfco (Eds.), *The Head Start Debates* (pp 397-413). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. Ramey, S. L., Ramey, C. T., Phillips, M. M., Lanzi, R.G., Brezaussek, C., Katholi, C. R., et al. (2000). *Head Start Children's Entry into Public School: A Report on the National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Study*. Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>37</sup>Schumacher, R., Ewen, D., Hart, K., & Lombardi, J. (2005). *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-Kindergarten*. Center for Law and Social Policy/The Children's Project. [http://www.clasp.org/publications/all\\_together\\_now.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf).

<sup>38</sup>Boston EQUIP. (2007). *Early Care and Education Capacity 1999-2007*. Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA. <http://bostonequip.org/PDF/ECECap9807.pdf>.

parents, and community-based organization, provides the infrastructure for planning, coordination and collaboration at both the citywide and local community levels.

Early childhood educators in Boston tend to have a strong connection with the children and families they serve. Staff in community-based and Head Start programs reflect the racial and linguistic diversity of Boston families<sup>39</sup> and surveys show there is a consistent emphasis on family communication.<sup>40</sup> A telephone survey of parents with young children conducted in 2006 by the statewide initiative Strategies for Children, found that Boston families reported satisfaction with their early education and care arrangements, with over 80% rating them good or excellent in terms of location and hours of operation, and more than 65% saying their arrangements are affordable.<sup>41</sup>

Even with its many strengths, Boston's early education and care field faces a number of challenges that directly affect the children and families they serve. Cost remains a major barrier for many families. **Budget experts recommend that child care costs equal about 10% of a family's budget, yet the cost of early education and care in Boston ranges from 16% to 32% of families' incomes, for just one child's arrangements.**<sup>42</sup> Subsidy support is available but is insufficient to meet demand. This causes families with specific risk factors to be prioritized, leaving families that are income eligible without other risk factors on the wait list. Cost is also a challenge for providers, who struggle with inadequate funding, resulting in low staff compensation that contributes to staff turnover.

## The Path Forward for Ready Educators

### Strategy 1 **Across all early education and care settings, pursue universal accreditation, the nationally agreed-upon determinant of high quality for early education and care.**

The single most comprehensive step an early education and care program can take to ensure quality is to achieve national accreditation or, for family child care providers, obtain a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are the nation's major accreditation entities. They provide detailed guidelines for the full range of factors that contribute to quality: curriculum, teaching, relationships with children and their families, cultural responsiveness, assessment of children's progress, levels of staff education, physical environment, instructional resources and business practices. Family child care providers may also earn a CDA, which provides for the development of similar core competencies as well as on-site guidance to improve quality.

As of March 2007, 55% of the capacity in Boston's Head Start and other community-

<sup>39</sup>Connaghan, K., & Zimmerman, C. (2007). *Demographics of the Early Care and Education Workforce*. Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA. <http://www.bostonequip.org/PDF/DemographicsECEWorkforce.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup>Marshall, N.L. Dennehy, J. & Roberts, J. (2007). *Boston Quality Inventory: Family Child Care Homes*. Wellesley Centers for Women. Marshall, N.L. & Roberts, J. (2007). *Boston Quality Inventory: Preschool Classrooms in Community Programs*. Wellesley Centers for Women. Roberts, J. & Marshall, N.L. (2007). *Boston Quality Inventory: Infant and Toddler Classrooms in Community Programs*. Wellesley Centers for Women.

<sup>41</sup>Zimmerman, C. (2006). *2006 Boston Parent Survey - Release of Findings*. Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA.

<sup>42</sup>Zimmerman, C. & Connaghan, K. (2007). *"Where are the kids?!"* Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA.



based early education and care centers were accredited. However, only seven percent of capacity in Boston Public Schools offering early education and care was accredited and only 10% in family child care (measuring providers who had achieved accreditation or attained a CDA).<sup>43</sup> While Boston's overall accreditation rate is high compared to other cities, improvement is needed. Boston can and should be a leader in high quality early education and care.

Massachusetts has made accreditation/CDA a priority, including it as a requirement for funding from the Community Partnerships for Children and Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs and providing funding for accreditation-related fees, educational materials, and technical assistance. However, these dollars are not nearly adequate to meet the full scale of need and much more must be done to encourage providers to pursue accreditation and offer assistance to achieve it.

#### **Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)**

- A.** Offer information about NAEYC accreditation to community-based early education and care centers and NAFCC accreditation or CDA attainment to family care providers throughout Boston – what it is, what it involves, and why it is important – through citywide communications, quarterly informational events, and direct contact with providers.
- B.** Convene Boston's accreditation and CDA facilitation organizations – Associated Early Care and Education's Quality Assurance Department, the Innercity Network of Early Education Professionals, and Action for Boston Community Development Head Start and Children's Services – to better coordinate and expand their work.
- C.** Match Boston's accreditation and CDA facilitation organizations to early education and care providers to assess the type and level of assistance required, provide support throughout the accreditation process, and help maintain accreditation status.
- D.** Support providers in obtaining accreditation-related financial aid through advocacy with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and funding from the private sector.
- E.** Support plans in the Boston Public Schools to achieve NAEYC accreditation in all of its early childhood programs, beginning with an initial group of 15 schools in Year 1.
- F.** Recognize and reward providers, programs and schools that have achieved accreditation or CDA at an annual early education and care excellence event. This will draw attention to high quality providers and underscore their competitive advantage for families that are seeking outstanding education and care for their children.
- G.** Determine sustainable funding mechanisms to support universal accreditation, aiming for the following growth benchmarks:

<sup>43</sup>Analysis: Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education.

### % of Early Education and Care Capacity in Accredited Programs/Providers with CDA

	Baseline (2008- 2009)	2010-2012	2013-2018	2019-2023*
Community-Based and Head Start Programs	55%	68%	90%	100%
Family Child Care	10%	25%	75%	100%
Boston Public Schools	7%	25%	75%	100%

\*Accreditation is a multi-year process, typically taking 3 years. Realizing the significant scope of this work, the planners believe that universal accreditation is possible with adequate funding and technical assistance within a longer time frame than covered by *Thrive in Five*.

## Strategy 2 Create a collaboration across the four types of early education and care settings to promote joint planning, foster stability of high quality programs, and promote alignment in curriculum, standards and assessment as children move from infant and toddler care, to preschool, to kindergarten.

Building the capacity for strong collaboration among center-based programs, Head Start/Early Head Start, family child care providers, and school-based early education programs is essential to optimize quality and stability across the entire field. Boston's early education and care system, while diverse and responsive to family needs, is hindered by poor communication and coordination between different provider groups. This lack of coordination results in an over-capacity of care for some age groups and under-capacity for others and destabilizes business for many providers, even those providing high quality services.

Improving the alignment of curricula and assessments used in early education and care programs is also important. As children progress from infants and toddlers to preschoolers to kindergarteners and through the early grades, they should experience a seamless transition and logical continuum of learning so that they are successful at each stage and prepared for the next.

### Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)

- A. Create a forum within Community Partnerships for Children for citywide planning to support stability across the early education and care system and to implement initiatives to improve alignment across the system using the framework set forth by Boston's School Readiness Definition.
- B. Support the development of a neutral, permanent physical space at the Boston Children's Museum for early educators across settings to come together in a model "Countdown to Kindergarten" preschool/kindergarten classroom. Use the space for training, sharing of best practices, and engagement of parents on what to look for in early education and care.
- C. Link planning with the Massachusetts Departments of Early Education and Care, Education, Social Services, Mental Health, and other state level agencies that support young children.

## Strategy 3

**Enhance professional development for early educators to ensure high quality teaching and learning across settings, focusing on curriculum, assessment and best practices to promote early learning and healthy child development.**

Research shows that teachers' education, training and compensation levels are the main determinants of early education program quality, which has a direct and positive effect on children's healthy development.<sup>44</sup> The Boston Quality Inventories recently reported that 52% of community-based preschool classrooms had a teacher who had attained at least a Bachelor's degree. However, only 24% of infant and 28% of toddler teachers and 17% of family child care providers had a Bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>45</sup> Although early educators in Boston Public Schools are required to hold a Bachelor's degree and must be licensed in early education or elementary education, they do not necessarily have specialized training in early childhood education. Providers need hands-on guidance in determining and pursuing the professional development they need to achieve excellence and advance their careers.

In 2005 Massachusetts initiated the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program to increase access for early childhood educators to post-secondary education in Massachusetts. The scholarships provide funding for early educators with at least one year in the field to take up to three courses a semester towards an Associate's or Bachelor's degree with early childhood-specific training at an approved higher education institution. The Massachusetts legislature increased the program's allocation from an initial \$1 million to \$3 million in 2007. However, it took only three months in the second year of the program to award the entire \$3 million to early educators across the state – an indicator of success, but also of the urgency for more assistance to meet the full scope of need in the field.

Professional development activities for early childhood educators in Boston should include training on:

- ❖ Aligning curricula and practice with Boston's School Readiness Definition to support children's progress;
- ❖ Assessing children's progress and tailoring instruction to each child's needs using assessment information; and
- ❖ Other areas of need identified through current and future Boston Quality Inventories, including support for instruction, literacy, social emotional development and health practices.

When possible, professional development should be open to early educators across settings to bring providers together for joint training in order to strengthen relationships and build a more cohesive early education and care system.

<sup>44</sup>Campbell, F., Ramey, C., Pungello, E., Sparling, J., & Miller-Johnson, S. (2002). Early Childhood Education: Young Adult Outcomes From the Abecedarian Project. *Applied Developmental Science*, 6(1), p. 42-57. Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Team. (1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Go To School*. Chapel Hill: Frank Porter Graham Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Bowman, B., Donovan, M.S., & Burns, M.S. (Eds.) (2000). *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers*. National Research Council, Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy, Washington: National Academy Press. *Securing Our Future: Planning What We Want for Our Youngest Children*. Future Trends, Volume VI. (2001). Massachusetts Department of Education. Barnett, W.S. (2003). Better Teachers, Better Preschools: Student Achievement Linked to Teacher Qualifications. NIEER Policy Briefs. 2. <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/2.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup>Marshall, N.L. & Roberts, J. (2007). *Boston Quality Inventory: Preschool Classrooms in Community Programs*. Wellesley Centers for Women. Roberts, J. & Marshall, N.L. (2007). *Boston Quality Inventory: Infant and Toddler Classrooms in Community Programs*. Wellesley Centers for Women. Roberts, J. & Marshall, N.L. (2007). *Boston Quality Inventory: Family Child Care Homes*. Wellesley Centers for Women.

### Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)

- A. Promote the importance of professional development through continuous skill building and/or obtaining a bachelor's degree in early education or a CDA with community-based early childhood educators.
- B. Incorporate and coordinate support for professional development assistance into accreditation by helping early educators and administrators determine individual learning goals and objectives and identify colleges, universities or programs that will best meet their needs.
- C. Provide training for Boston Public Schools early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals in early childhood education, including best practices, curricula and assessment that improve reading skills, reduce language gaps, build math skills and promote social skills.
- D. Strengthen partnerships with local adult basic education, ESOL and GED programs to support the overall learning needs of early childhood educators.

### Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)

- E. Work with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to develop a comprehensive professional development plan that offers a variety of pathways to strengthen educational attainment for all early childhood educators.
- F. Advocate for a significant increase in the Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program to increase funding for professional development.
- G. Work with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to help higher education institutions determine how they can expand and enhance their services for adult learners and create more connections among their programs.
- H. Determine sustainable funding mechanisms to support professional development, aiming for the following growth benchmarks:

% of Lead Teachers* and Providers with a BA or Higher (in Early Education and Care or in a Related Field with Specialized Training in Early Childhood)				
	Baseline	2010-2012	2013-2018	2019-2023
Community-Based and Head Start Programs	37%	45%	75%	100%
Family Child Care	17%	22%	50%	100%
Boston Public Schools**	To be determined	To be determined	To be determined	100%

\* Lead Teacher is the primary teacher in a classroom and includes "Lead Teacher" and "Teacher" in Head Start programs.  
\*\* All Boston Public Schools teachers have a BA degree or higher. BPS is focused on meeting the "highly qualified teacher" requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires that all early childhood teachers have either early education or elementary education licensure. Baseline data and comparable benchmarks to assess degrees and specialized training in early childhood for BPS teachers are under development.

## Improve early education and care facilities to ensure safe, stimulating learning environments for all children.

## Strategy 4

Due to severe budget limitations, early education and care programs across public and private settings struggle to provide optimal materials, furnishings, and physical space to support children's learning and development. Many community-based programs use public playgrounds that lack adequate fencing or play equipment that is age appropriate, accessible to all children, safe, and well maintained.

### Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)

- A. Oversee a capital inventory of facilities across Boston's entire early education and care field, including and in partnership with the Boston Parks Department, the Boston Public Library and the Boston Public Schools.
- B. Lead the development of citywide standards for early childhood environments, starting with playgrounds and tot lots.
- C. Link planning with the Massachusetts Departments of Education and Early Education and Care and the Massachusetts School Building Authority and identify strategies that can be implemented by the public and private sectors to improve facilities.

### Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)

- D. Identify and advocate for vehicles to address the costs of facility improvements, potentially including:
  - ❖ Educating providers about the impact of facilities on program quality and the advantages of using debt as part of a financing strategy for facilities improvements or expansion;
  - ❖ Linking providers planning capital projects to the real estate expertise and technical assistance resources of the Children's Investment Fund;
  - ❖ Subsidizing interest rates for child care facilities loans available through the Children's Investment Fund;
  - ❖ Working with the State legislature to create long-term, no-interest financing to support early childhood facilities improvements; and
  - ❖ Considering tax credit financing for large scale early education and care constructions projects (\$2.5 million and above).

## Improve compensation to support recruitment and retention of highly-qualified and well prepared early educators.

## Strategy 5

Inadequate and inequitable staff compensation (for educators in community-based settings versus school-based settings) is a serious problem that directly affects the quality and stability of early education and care. Salaries in community-based settings range from two to three times less than those in school-based settings.<sup>46</sup> **Low wages, inadequate educational opportunities and poor working conditions have led to annual turnover**

<sup>46</sup>Zimmerman, C. & Connaghan, K. (2005). *Early Childhood in Boston. Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education*. Boston: MA.

rates of nearly 30% among Massachusetts early educators.<sup>47</sup> Conversely, adequate compensation linked to experience and educational attainment can provide strong incentives for staff to seek professional development and remain in the early education and care field.

#### Near to medium-term actions (2008 – 2012)

- A. Develop a viable compensation initiative that can provide near-term benefit to Boston early educators. A potential model is WAGE\$, a model used in North Carolina which provides education-based salary supplements to low paid teachers, directors and family child care providers.<sup>48</sup>
- B. Work with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to develop and implement an equitable pay scale across the field (encompassing infant, toddler, and pre-k providers in all community and school-based settings) that reflects education background, tenure in the field and experience.
- C. Explore loan forgiveness as an option for early childhood educators who earn degrees and maintain employment with the same provider over time.

### Strategy 6 **Improve access to early education and care for all children and families by decreasing financial barriers and ensuring adequate supply of services to meet demand at the infant, toddler, preschool and kindergarten stages.**

Access to quality early education and care services is a challenge for many families with young children in Boston. The city's high cost of living means that the cost of early education and care totals as much as \$25,000 a year for a family with an infant and a preschool child in a center-based program. For the average family, this represents 35% of their total income, far more than the 10% recommended.<sup>49</sup>

Financial support for early education and care exists through a range of sources. Approximately 13,000 Boston infants, toddlers and preschoolers are currently receiving early education and care subsidized by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, Head Start, or the Boston Public Schools.<sup>50</sup> However, income eligibility requirements often limit access for many families in need. For example, in order to be eligible for Head Start, families can generally earn no more than 100% of the federal poverty level, or \$21,200 for a family of four, which is very low given Boston's high cost of living. Subsidies that are currently available also do not meet demand. The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care estimates that there are 3052 infants, toddlers and preschool children in the Boston area eligible for and waiting for a subsidy.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Vecchiotti, S. (October, 2007). Kindergarten: The Overlooked School Year. *The Foundation for Child Development, Working Paper Series*. Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services. (2000). *Massachusetts Child Care Center and School-Age Program Salary and Benefits Report*. Conducted by the Massachusetts Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

<sup>48</sup>For more information about WAGE\$, visit <http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/wage.html>.

<sup>49</sup>Zimmerman, C. & Connaghan, K. (2007). "Where are the kids?!" Boston EQUIP, Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA.

<sup>50</sup>Zimmerman, C. & Connaghan, K. (2005). *Early Childhood in Boston*. Boston EQUIP/Associated Early Care and Education. Boston: MA.

<sup>51</sup>MA Department of Early Education and Care. (December 2007). *EEC at a Glance*. Boston: MA.



Additionally, while the supply of early education and care meets demand for preschool-age children, currently there is only capacity for about 29% of infants and toddlers. Universal demand estimates for this age group are about 50%, suggesting the need for more services for younger children.<sup>52</sup> In BPS, approximately 2300 four-year old children are enrolled in kindergarten.<sup>53</sup> While some individual schools have developed solutions to provide extended hours care to complement the regular school day – a necessity for most working parents – there is currently no systemic way to address the need for wrap-around services.

### Near to medium-term actions (2008 – 2012)

- A. Advocate with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to
  - ❖ Develop and implement a sliding fee scale and co-pays that are more reflective of families' incomes and ability to pay;
  - ❖ Increase access to subsidies to families earning at least 85% of the state median income; and
  - ❖ Increase funding for public subsidies for low-income and at-risk children.
- B. Assess the supply and demand for various types of services, with particular attention to infant and toddler care, services for children with disabilities, nontraditional hours care, and wrap-around school services. Use the information gathered to drive planning across the system to adjust capacity to meet demand.

### Long-term actions (2013 – 2018)

- C. Explore public/private financing mechanisms to ensure universal access to high-quality early education and care for all Boston children ages birth to five.

**Further analyze for potential application to Boston existing models that provide high quality early education to children while integrating health, social services and high-level family engagement.**

## Strategy 7

Around the country, the field of early education is responding to research that overwhelmingly supports comprehensive approaches to early education and care. Studies now tracking participants through age 40 show the huge benefits to individuals and cost savings to society of providing high quality care with intensive family support, particularly to low income children and children of color.<sup>54</sup> Many models exist, including:

- ❖ **Head Start and Early Head Start** – the national, federally administered preschool and infant/toddler early education and care program that offers comprehensive health and mental health, nutrition, and family support and involvement services to low income children and their families.
- ❖ **The Harlem Children's Zone** – a community building initiative serving a 100-block area of New York City with services designed to improve outcomes for children, youth and

<sup>52</sup>Presentation to the Ready Educators Work Group by the Data and Research Team.

<sup>53</sup>Personal communication with Margaret Angell, Department of Early Childhood, Boston Public Schools. (February 20, 2008).

<sup>54</sup>Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40. Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation*, 14. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

families living in the area, including the Baby College, workshops for parents and caregivers of children ages birth to three about early childhood development.<sup>55</sup>

- ❖ **Educare** – a national model with multiple sites around the country that provides early education and care, along with family support staff and social workers who partner with each family to ensure that their comprehensive needs are addressed. Well child health services are typically provided on-site through a partnership with a health care provider. In addition, each classroom has a Bachelor’s degree level teacher, an Associate’s degree level assistant teacher, and an aide from the community in each classroom, all supervised by teachers with Master’s degrees in early childhood.<sup>56</sup>

In Boston, many programs and providers directly offer or form partnerships with community-based organizations to provide a range of comprehensive services to support children and families. Building on this local work and incorporating national models and best practices offers enormous opportunities.

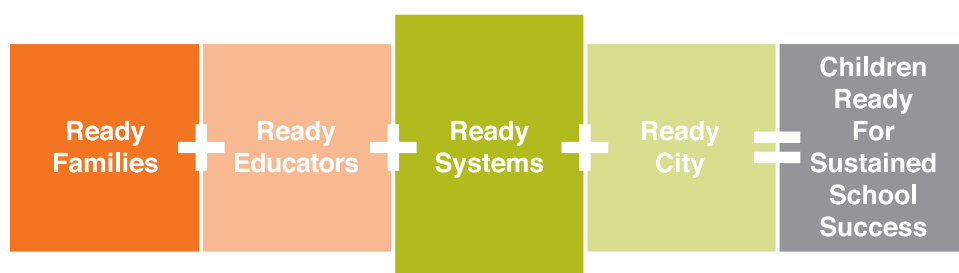
#### **Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)**

- A. Through the Ready Educators partnership, examine opportunities to implement comprehensive models throughout Boston’s early education and care system to improve services and incorporate best practices.

<sup>55</sup>For more information about the Harlem Children’s Zone, visit <http://www.hcz.org>.

<sup>56</sup>For more information about Educare, visit <http://buffettearlychildhoodfund.org/educare.html>.

# Ready Systems



## Scenarios of Progress: Ready Systems

*These stories illustrate how children's and families' lives will be different as a result of Thrive in Five – and how the city will be different.*

When Anthony picks up the phone, he immediately recognizes Mrs. Rodriguez's voice. She's been a client at the health center where Anthony works. Anthony got to know her when she started caring for her four-year-old grandson, Paolo, full time. Paolo's father, Mrs. Rodriguez's son-in-law, abused Paolo when he was an infant, and even though his physical development is normal, Paolo's social skills and emotional development are behind. Anthony became Paolo's "care coordinator" when Mrs. Rodriguez was given custody of her grandson. He met with her at her church for a welcome visit he provides to families he works with whenever a new baby or child comes in to the family. Mrs. Rodriguez knows that she can call Anthony anytime she has a question about Paolo, and they speak regularly in Spanish.

A year ago, Anthony found a preschool for Paolo that would provide on-site support for his social and emotional issues. He sees a therapist at the

preschool two times a week and it has been going well. Paolo will be going to kindergarten next year. That's what Mrs. Rodriguez is worried about.

*"I have all this paperwork to fill out and I don't understand it," she says, "and honestly I am worried about him making a change, going to a new place."*

They set up a time to meet later that week at Paolo's preschool so that Anthony, Mrs. Rodriguez, and Paolo's therapist and preschool teacher can go over the forms and work together to make sure Paolo has a smooth transition between preschool and kindergarten, thinking about how to work with him over the summer.

By the following November, after a few rough weeks here and there, Paolo loves kindergarten. When Mrs. Rodriguez brings him in to the health center for a physical, Paolo rattles on and on to Anthony about his new teacher and friends. *"His*

### 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.

*teacher went over this thing called an assessment with me last week. He's right where he should be in most areas, but is a little behind the other kids socially. We came up with a plan of what we'll both do to help him be where he needs to be by the end of the year, really*

*ready for first grade," says Mrs. Rodriguez. "I am still a little worried," she admits. But she also gives Anthony a pat on the shoulder on her way out, sighing, "I never could have gotten him here without your support."*

## Building Blocks for Ready Systems

As the needs of children and families grow ever more complex, the roles of pediatricians and family support providers have expanded to include both a greater range of services and a greater depth of care. Pediatricians and others now must regularly focus not only on the specific health needs of the individual child, but also on the social-emotional, family, and environmental factors that impact their growth and development.

This shift in practice has developed a different approach to health care, "the 'Medical Home,' that centers on wellness, prevention, and early intervention practices in the young child while promoting optimal child development physically, mentally, and socially within a comprehensive, integrated system of care."<sup>57</sup> Research documents that providing this model through health settings increases the effectiveness of services and improves outcomes for children, enhancing school readiness while reducing health disparities and health care costs, particularly for children with special health concerns.<sup>58</sup>

**Both Massachusetts and Boston stand out across the country as health care leaders with a strong record of improving the health of young children.** In fact, Boston's children fare better than those in many other urban areas on a number of indicators of health and welfare. Boston's health care achievements include:

- ❖ In 2003, 85% of Boston births were to women with adequate prenatal care compared to a national average of 76%.<sup>59</sup>
- ❖ The percentage of children testing positive for elevated blood lead levels has dropped by over 88% in the last 11 years.<sup>60</sup>
- ❖ Boston's infant mortality rate decreased by 35% between 1994 and 2004.<sup>60</sup>
- ❖ Boston leads the nation in childhood immunization rates, with over 90% of young children immunized.<sup>61</sup>

**However, more progress is needed to address the other risk factors that threaten children's healthy development.** Despite efforts throughout the city to eliminate racial health disparities, a number of challenges remain. While hospitalizations caused by asthma have decreased steadily in recent years, rates have not dropped to the same degree for Black and Latino children under age five. The infant mortality rate among

<sup>57</sup>Sia, C.J., Wilson, L.B., & Taba, S. (2006). *The Medical Home and Early Child Development in Primary Care*. Department of Pediatrics, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii at Manoa. <http://www.aap.org/commpeps/cpti/MedicalHome%202006.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup>Sia, C.J., Wilson, L.B., & Taba, S. (2006). *The Medical Home and Early Child Development in Primary Care*. Department of Pediatrics, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii at Manoa. <http://www.aap.org/commpeps/cpti/MedicalHome%202006.pdf>. Gordon, J.B., Colby, H.H., Bartlet, T., Jablonski, D., Krauthoefer, M.L., & Havens, P. (2007). A Tertiary Care-Primary Care Partnership Model for Medically Complex and Fragile Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 161: 937-944.

<sup>59</sup>Boston Public Health Commission Research Office. (2005). *Boston Natality 2005: A Review of 2003 Birth Data*. Boston, MA.

<sup>60</sup>Boston Public Health Commission Research Office. (2007). *The Health of Boston 2007*. Boston, MA.

<sup>61</sup>Walsh, M.B. & Washington, L. (April, 2000), Protecting Your Children: The Importance of Childhood Immunization. *Boston Health Notes*. Boston Public Health Commission & Mayor Thomas. M. Menino. Boston: MA.

Black Bostonians remains twice as high as the rate for Whites, and a higher proportion of Black infants are born underweight than other ethnic groups.<sup>62</sup>

**Unmet mental and environmental health needs are also a serious concern.** Nationally, the prevalence of developmental delays is estimated to be at least 10%, while in Massachusetts only about 6% of children from birth to three years old and a significantly smaller portion of those three to five years old receive services to address these concerns.<sup>63</sup> The Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Children's Hospital Boston estimate that more than 100,000 children ages birth through 18 in Massachusetts do not receive the mental health care they need.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, many young children live in highly stressed family situations. In Boston, estimates of the number of young children at risk for experiencing toxic stress – resulting from exposure to domestic violence, abuse/neglect, and/or caregiver substance abuse or mental illness – range from 26% to 65%.<sup>65</sup>

Currently, major steps are underway to address the shortage of mental health care through a new statewide requirement that children with subsidized health care receive mental health assessments as part of their well child care. A decision from a class action lawsuit filed against the state on behalf of children in Massachusetts with serious psychiatric or emotional concerns calls for significant changes in the way mental health services are provided to children and their families. The settlement, known as Rosie D., requires the state's Medicaid system to improve its detection of and services for children's mental health issues. Providers are quickly adjusting practices to meet these new requirements, however many are already noting the need for increased capacity to screen for and a shortage of services to address mental health concerns.<sup>66</sup>

Once a child is screened and referred to services, often there are significant gaps in coverage and poor alignment of eligibility requirements that make consistent access to necessary support services challenging. For example, data reveals a sharp decline in the number of two-year-old children enrolled in Early Intervention (EI) and the number of three- and four-year-old children with disabilities enrolled in preschool special education in the Boston Public Schools, suggesting that transitions from EI, which ends at a child's third birthday, into preschool special education present challenges.<sup>67</sup>

Among these strengths and challenges are significant opportunities. After examining the many systems in place to support child and family needs, two sectors emerged with great potential for major impact: **pediatric health care and systems of early intervention** (including Early Intervention, early childhood mental health services, preschool special education, and Head Start and Early Head Start).

<sup>62</sup>Boston Public Health Commission Research Office. (2007). *The Health of Boston 2007*. Boston, MA.

<sup>63</sup>Sices, L. (2007). *Developmental Screening in Primary Care: The Effectiveness of Current Practice and Recommendations for Improvement*. The Commonwealth Fund. [http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=605625](http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/publications_show.htm?doc_id=605625).

<sup>64</sup>Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children & Children's Hospital Boston. (2006). *Children's Mental Health in the Commonwealth: The Time is Now*. <http://www.msppc.org/site/DocServer?docID=382>.

<sup>65</sup>Estimates prepared by Data and Research Team and Systems Work Group of Boston's Birth to Five School Readiness Initiative.

<sup>66</sup>For more information about the Rosie D. decision and its implications, visit [http://www.massmedicaid.org/pdfs/2007-10-12\\_rosie-d.pdf](http://www.massmedicaid.org/pdfs/2007-10-12_rosie-d.pdf).

<sup>67</sup>MA Department of Public Health. *Massachusetts Community Health Information Profile*. <http://masschip.state.ma.us>. MA Department of Education. *Special Education by Age Enrollment Data for Boston 2005-2006*. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/InfoServices/reports/enroll/sped06/age.xls>.

Pediatric health care is almost universal in Massachusetts, creating an ideal access point for entry into all systems of support for young children and their families. Massachusetts has the highest concentration of pediatricians across the country.<sup>68</sup> Pediatric settings are also non-stigmatizing and are already a major source of information and support for parents. Systems of early intervention are widespread and have a strong record of reaching at-risk children and families with the services needed to support healthy development.

In addition to strong service delivery systems, promising models exist within these systems to ensure optimal supports for all children and families. One strong model is Healthy Steps, an approach in use nationally that was developed in Boston. It focuses on the importance of early child development in the first five years of life by embedding a developmental specialist in pediatric practices. It emphasizes a close relationship among pediatricians, developmental specialists, and parents to address the physical, emotional, and intellectual growth and development of young children. The Healthy Steps approach is grounded in the pediatric office and ensures children receive enhanced pediatric care, developmental screening, treatment, referrals that connect families with needed services, follow up, and parent support and education. Operating since 1995, there are currently over 59 Healthy Steps sites nationwide. Rigorous evaluation of Healthy Steps reveals that important benefits shown at five years old persist well beyond a child's participation in the program and that the Healthy Steps approach improves the quality of care and the satisfaction of those receiving and providing it.<sup>69</sup>

## The Path Forward for Ready Systems

### Strategy 1

Conduct pilots in pediatric settings to:

- ❖ Expand and coordinate current efforts to achieve universal “welcome newborn” visits (in a location chosen by the new parents);
- ❖ Conduct universal screening for physical, behavioral, developmental, and environmental and family risk factors;
- ❖ Provide parents with information about child development and parenting;
- ❖ Offer coordination services to ensure that children and families access and benefit from existing services to support children's growth and development.

Prioritize methods that incorporate infant and early childhood specialists into pediatric settings, including paraprofessionals to support pediatric providers and engage and educate parents.

Research shows that young children and families clearly benefit from models that build strong relationships between pediatric providers and parents.<sup>70</sup> By supporting access to an infant and early childhood specialist team through pediatricians, families will develop a long-term relationship to ensure that non-medical factors impeding a child's healthy development are identified and addressed early and effectively. The team will

<sup>68</sup>Pediatricians are plentiful, new study finds, but not in poorer states. (July 2, 2004). <http://www.med.umich.edu/opm/news-page/2004/pedsupply.htm>.

<sup>69</sup>Minkovits, C., Strobino, D., Hughart, N., Scharfstein, D.O., Guyer, B. & the Healthy Steps Evaluation Team. (2001). Early Effects of the Healthy Steps for Young Children Program. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 155, 470-479. Minkovits, C.S., Strobino, D., Mistry, K.B., Scharfstein, D.O., Grason, H., Hou, W., Jalongo, N., & Guyer, B. (2007). Healthy Steps for Children: Sustained Success at 5.5 Years. *Pediatrics*, 120, e658-668.

<sup>70</sup>Sia, C.J., Wilson, L.B., & Taba, S. (2006). *The Medical Home and Early Child Development in Primary Care*. Department of Pediatrics, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii at Manoa. <http://www.aap.org/commppeds/cpti/MedicalHome%202006.pdf>.



be made up of a supervising child development specialist (professional) and a family advocate (paraprofessional). The team will increase support offered by the pediatrician, providing appropriate outreach, screening, referral, coordination of service delivery, follow-up and education for issues such as development delays, behavioral issues and other family level concerns.

The teams will have four main responsibilities:

- ❖ Providing a welcome newborn visit to the family of every Boston newborn in a setting chosen by the family. The visit will provide information, offer support, screen for challenges to development and school readiness, and begin a relationship with the family that will last throughout early childhood. These welcome newborn visits will build on those done by Healthy Baby/Healthy Child, the “Welcome Baby!” program of the Family Nurturing Center, the Healthy Families program of the Children’s Trust Fund, Smart from the Start and others throughout Boston by enhancing their scope and quality, expanding the target population, and enhancing screening, referrals, and linkages to other services by tying them into the Infant and Early Childhood Specialist Teams.
- ❖ Providing **behavioral, developmental, and environmental screening** as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics at well child visits to detect and address threats to optimal development and school readiness.
- ❖ Providing parents with **information regarding child development and developmentally appropriate parenting** that is sensitive to cultural norms. Family advocates will cultivate long-term relationships with parents to establish trust and become a resource for the family.
- ❖ Ensuring appropriate and effective referrals and **care coordination** among systems involving the child and family to maximize the benefit of all services children and families receive.

#### **Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)**

- A.** Select a minimum of two community health centers in Boston in which to pilot sustainable efforts to incorporate a deep connection to infant and early childhood specialists.
- B.** Develop a protocol for welcome newborn visits, criteria and procedures for strong care coordination, and a methodology to track referrals and services provided to children and families and evaluate their impact. The team will have access to an on-line screening and referral tool (see Ready Families for more information) to assist them in identifying appropriate services and supports for children and families. The team will also collaborate with community-based organizations and when possible, Community School Readiness Wiring neighborhood hubs to reach out to parents, share information about services and develop relationships to promote better coordination, collaboration and alignment among providers.

### Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)

- C.** Assess the performance and impact of the health center pilots and their services (including welcome newborn visits; developmental, behavioral, and environmental screenings; parenting education; and care coordination) and recommend changes as needed to improve delivery of services and outcomes.
- D.** Determine funding mechanisms to support expansion, aiming for the following growth benchmarks to reach universal coverage:

Number of Families with Newborns Offered a Visit (based on approximately 8,000 Boston births per year)									
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014*	2015*	2016*	2017*	2018*
1,000	2,000	3,500	5,000	6,500	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000

\*Actual target will vary with births in each year, with 100% of families offered a newborn visit

Number of Children Receiving Recommended Screenings at Well Child Pediatric Visits (based on approximately 40,000 children in Boston ages birth to 5)									
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1,000	3,000	6,500	11,500	18,000	25,000	31,000	35,500	38,500	40,000

Number of Children/Families Receiving Care Coordination Services from an infant and early childhood specialist/team									
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
1,000	3,000	6,000	10,000	15,500	21,000	26,000	29,000	29,500	30,000

Note: It is estimated that 25% of families will either not need this service or will choose not to have this service.

**Strategy 2** Enhance the various systems of early intervention to expand and align eligibility for services, ensuring smooth transitions between services in the infant, toddler, preschool and kindergarten stages, and including a greater focus on identifying and responding to social, emotional and behavioral issues.

Boston has many programs for young children whose development and school readiness are at risk due to child, family or environmental issues. These include:

- ❖ **Early Intervention (EI)** – administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for children ages birth to three years old. It serves children who have identified special needs, measurable developmental delays, or 4 out of a list of 20 birth or environmental risk factors for development. EI professionals provide developmental, therapeutic, and supportive services to the child and family through home visits and services in early education and care programs or other settings that are part of the child and family's every day life.

- ❖ **Preschool special education** – offered by Boston Public Schools, Head Start and many community-based early education and care programs, provides early education and care for children with special needs. Specialized referral services for families and training and technical assistance for providers to support these programs are offered by Child Care Choices of Boston.
- ❖ **Head Start and Early Head Start** – the national, federally administered preschool and infant/toddler early education and care program that offers comprehensive health and mental health, nutrition, and family support and involvement services to low-income children and their families.
- ❖ **Infant and early childhood mental health services** – offered by many community-based programs, includes assessment of young children, training and technical assistance for parents, early educators, and EI professionals, as well as direct services to parents and children.

These programs play a critical role in ensuring that all children have an equal opportunity to thrive and achieve. However, a number of concerns must be addressed to ensure that all children who need services receive them consistently throughout the early years. Currently, these programs and services have different eligibility requirements, so that children receiving services may lose them when they enter a new setting or reach three years old, even though they may still benefit from these services.

Families with issues that undermine children's well being – such as child abuse or neglect, domestic violence, parental substance abuse, or mental health problems, especially maternal depression – may not meet eligibility criteria for services due to early intervention's scope of treatments, though children's development and school readiness would benefit from appropriate interventions. Additionally, providers need training and support to effectively address these needs. These programs must work together to create a unified, comprehensive, seamless approach to serving children and families.

#### **Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2009)**

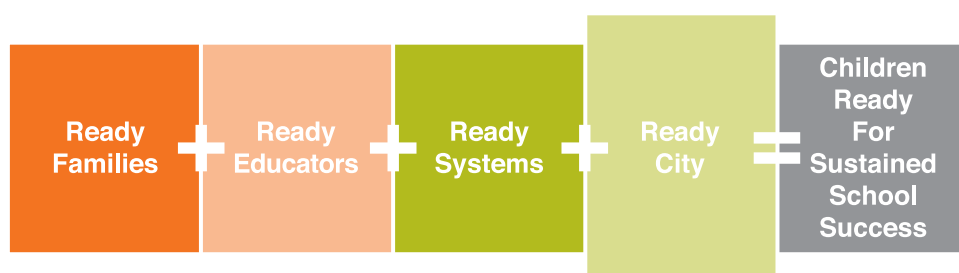
- A.** Convene Boston Early Intervention providers, preschool special education managers, Head Start and Early Head Start programs and infant and early childhood mental health providers to establish an ongoing forum for collaboration to address transition and alignment issues both at a systemic and individual case level.
- B.** Working with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, select an Early Intervention program to develop and pilot expanded eligibility requirements, including: 1) automatic eligibility for children in families facing any of these four toxic stress risk factors: child abuse or neglect, substance abuse, caregiver mental health issues, or domestic violence (as well as appropriate referrals for the family to address these issues while receiving EI services) and 2) the ability to extend children's eligibility beyond age three. Additionally, the selected EI program will increase capacity and staff training on infant and early childhood mental health, both to provide improved services for children and families and to support early education and care and other service providers dealing with these issues.

- C.** Select a preschool special education program(s) to develop and pilot enhancements similar to those identified for EI above, including automatic eligibility for children in families facing any of the four toxic stress risk factors and increased capacity and staff training on infant and early childhood mental health.
- D.** Offer training, consultation and support on infant and early childhood social, emotional and behavioral issues to early educators across all settings.

**Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)**

- E.** Assess and report pilot results, determine funding requirements and sources, and incorporate this information into an expansion plan.

# Ready City



## Goal:

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

## Scenarios of Progress: Ready City

*These stories illustrate how children's and families' lives will be different as a result of Thrive in Five – and how the city will be different.*

Paul O'Brien has always been committed to making his company's "family-friendly" policy more than just words on the corporate values poster behind the receptionist's desk. As the head of his department at the bank, and a father of four himself, he is flexible with the managers and employees that he supervises, approving time off for meetings at school and doctor's appointments with their kids, in line with a newly-revamped corporate policy.

As he hears his wife talk about their friend Cara, Paul is relieved that his company isn't the only one providing more flexibility for employees. Cara, a friend from their college days who works as an architect, had to leave her husband recently because of domestic violence and she is struggling to work full-time and raise three young children. Her employer has allowed her to switch to flex time and she is relieved that most pediatricians' offices now offer evening and weekend hours for well-child and sick-child visits.

Many of Paul's employees have young kids, so it's pretty common to hear stories around the office about the frustrations of raising children. A few weeks ago, Paul read about the latest *Thrive in Five* School Readiness Summit in the paper. He was impressed that over the past six years, Boston had raised by 40% the number of kids who were ready for school when they entered kindergarten. The article mentioned how many resources are available for companies to support their employees, everything from information about what to look for when choosing a school or child care center to ways to support language development in very young children. Some companies were now offering workshops for employees during lunch about parenting and child development.

A few weeks later, after lots of informal outreach techniques that the presenter suggested, especially to get dads to come, the bank's conference room is

packed with employees interested in hearing about constructive discipline techniques for toddlers and preschoolers. “I am embarrassed to admit it,” says one dad of twins at the end of the 90-minute session, “but I had no clue what to do when my kids acted up and I just relied on what my dad did growing up –

*and I won’t even go into what that was! I don’t have time to go to a parenting class and honestly, I never saw myself doing something like this.”* Paul stands in the back, impressed by the turnout and committed to doing this more often, also a bit surprised about what he himself just learned from the presenter.

## Building Blocks for a Ready City

As our previous recommendations have demonstrated, ensuring children’s school readiness requires the consistent engagement of all partners in a child’s life to fully support his or her development across all the domains of learning. Similarly, our long-term structure to lead, support and sustain this work must engage the broad base of partners – including corporate and business leaders, government officials, educators, private funders, community and non-profit organizations, faith leaders, health providers, parents and more – needed to effectively implement our holistic and comprehensive approach. Boston’s Birth to Five School Readiness Initiative has been unprecedented in bringing together sectors from across Boston to date, and this comprehensive engagement of all stakeholders must continue for the resulting *Thrive in Five* plan to succeed.

In addition to broad participation and engagement, there are many other factors related to implementation that must be addressed to ensure long-term success and sustainability. To aid the Ready City working group, the Mayor’s Office and United Way conducted a review of eight major city and state school readiness initiatives around the country, including:

- ❖ Leadership in Action Program (B-LAP), Baltimore, MD;
- ❖ First 5, California;
- ❖ Metropolitan Council on Early Learning, Kansas City, KS and MO;
- ❖ Smart Start, NC;
- ❖ Ready to Learn, Providence, RI;
- ❖ Mayor’s Policy Council for Children, Youth and Families, San Francisco, CA;
- ❖ Cherish Every Child, Springfield, MA; and
- ❖ SOAR, King County, WA.

This research uncovered several factors to consider when designing an infrastructure to support implementation of a comprehensive plan such as *Thrive In Five*, including:

- ❖ A diverse and stable funding base to ensure sustainability;
- ❖ A stable, neutral institutional home to support the work that is respected by all stakeholders in the community;
- ❖ Adequate staffing to move the work forward and effectively manage coordination, communication, research and evaluation, resource development, and policy and advocacy work; and
- ❖ Involvement across all levels, including organizational leaders, managers, and direct care staff, as well as diverse parents and caregivers themselves, to ensure responsiveness to the needs of families and a deep understanding of the issues facing communities.



## The Path Forward for a Ready City

Track and analyze all existing public and private funding streams for early childhood in Boston, and promote comprehensive evaluation results among public and private funders to ensure long-term sustainability.

### Strategy 1

Stable, proactive, appropriately allocated funding is essential to support school readiness over the long term. Many sources of funding are available; the challenge is aligning various sources for the greatest impact.

As of December 2006, there were numerous separate federal streams of funding for early education and care efforts alone, including:

- ❖ Head Start
- ❖ Child Care and Development Fund
- ❖ Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)
- ❖ Preschool Grants Program for Children with Disabilities
- ❖ Even Start
- ❖ Title I Preschool
- ❖ Social Services Block Grant
- ❖ Early Reading First
- ❖ Child Care Means Parents in School<sup>71</sup>

In addition to managing many of the federal grants listed above, Massachusetts also offers a wide range of other funding sources that are essential to *Thrive in Five*, including subsidies for early education and care for low income children and financial support for professional development for early educators.

In the private sector, a recent report on funding for school-connected services found that very little information about the funds invested from private sources exists, making it difficult to quantify the current total investment in services for school-age children and determine what other support is needed.<sup>72</sup> This same issue is even more present in early childhood, where children and families receive services from an even broader array of providers that have no single connection point from which to assess the level of investment.

Understanding and tracking various funding sources is necessary to determine which areas need more support and which are having the greatest impact. Developing a system where individual program outcomes translate into broader impact on citywide priorities creates an environment in which funders can make decisions about how to align their investments with effective services and the whole community can understand the impact of investing in young children.

<sup>71</sup>National Child Care Information Center. (December, 2006). *Data on Federal Funding for Early Care and Education by State*. <http://www.nccic.org/poptopics/fedfunding-ece.html>.

<sup>72</sup>Bundy, A., Fersh, L., Deich, S. Hayes, C., Szekeley, A., Restuccia, D., & Sherman, R. (2007). *Investing in Student Success: Financing School-Connected Initiatives in Boston*. Prepared for Boston After School and Beyond and The Full-service Schools Roundtable by Community Matters and The Finance Project.

### Near to long-term action (2008 - 2018)

- A. Identify and analyze public and private funding streams impacting early childhood and implement strategies to target and align current funding and advocate for increased and new funding to support *Thrive in Five's* goals and strategies.
- B. Coordinate evaluations of *Thrive in Five's* strategies with one another and with Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators (see next section, Children Ready for Sustained School Success, for more information) to align individual services with citywide outcomes and priorities. Report and use evaluation results to create an environment in which funders have detailed information about individual program outcomes that relate to *Thrive in Five's* citywide priorities.

## Strategy 2

Create a public-private governance and operational structure to oversee the success of *Thrive in Five* and help fuel a broader movement to support Boston's youngest children. The structure will include:

- ❖ A leadership team/board – with a cross-section of Boston sectors as well as State representation – for oversight, funding alignment and fundraising, and accountability;
- ❖ An Executive Director and 1-2 additional staff housed at United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley;
- ❖ Coordination from the Mayor's Office to ensure the involvement of all City departments that serve children and families;
- ❖ A lead organization for each of the plan's components that will convene (and provide staff for) a diverse set of "implementation partners" who will refine and implement each *Thrive in Five* strategy;
- ❖ A continued DART (data and research team) to serve all the partnerships and report on the indicators of success; and
- ❖ An ongoing parent advisory group.

### Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018):

- A. Establish and support a strong private and public sector managing partnership, known as *Thrive in Five*, between the Mayor's Office and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley. United Way will serve as the home for the *Thrive in Five* core management staff and will draw upon strong connections to businesses, philanthropies, and neighborhood-based non-profit organizations throughout the city. The Mayor's Office will assist and coordinate all activities of the plan that involve the resources of the City of Boston, as well as bring the Mayor's role as a champion and convener to *Thrive in Five's* work on behalf of young children and families.
- B. Recruit and sustain a Leadership Team/Board, composed of local leaders from a variety of sectors, including business, faith, early education and care, K-12 education, philanthropy, city and state government, health and social services, community-based stakeholders, and parents. The Leadership Team will govern *Thrive in Five*, providing general oversight and leadership on resource development and policy and advocacy. The Leadership Team will have the influence needed to sustain school readiness as a top priority across the city, hold partners accountable for their

performance, and secure philanthropic and public sector support as needed for *Thrive in Five*.

- C. Through the Leadership Team, support Lead Organizations to implement the strategies outlined in the Ready Families, Ready Educators, and Ready Systems areas of *Thrive in Five*, building a model of distributed leadership that allows for those with specific areas of expertise to play a major role in implementing strategies within their core focus areas. Each Lead Organization will be responsible for:
- ❖ Identifying and funding at least one dedicated staff person to pursue implementation and engage partners;
  - ❖ Assessing and reporting progress to ensure that each area of the plan is meeting growth benchmarks and is addressing implementation challenges effectively;
  - ❖ Developing evaluation strategies to ensure quality and measure the long-term benefit of individual strategies on the target population; and
  - ❖ Communicating resource and policy needs to the *Thrive in Five* Leadership Team and staff.

Lead Organizations will commit to support their component of *Thrive in Five* for at least three-to-five years and dedicate senior staff to manage their role in implementation.

Lead Organizations will also convene and coordinate Partnerships for Ready Families, Ready Educators, and Ready Systems. The Partnerships will include representatives from Boston organizations, both public and private, who are necessary allies to implement the strategies outlined in each area of the plan.

Each Partnership will be responsible for:

- ❖ Carrying out the strategies and actions in the corresponding section of the plan;
- ❖ Linking activities across different areas of the plan;
- ❖ Developing methods and standards to ensure high quality implementation of each strategy;
- ❖ Developing strong evaluation and accountability measures for each strategy; and
- ❖ Advocating in partnership with the *Thrive in Five* Leadership Team and staff for the resources and policies needed to achieve success.

- D. Develop and oversee a core management staff, housed in and managed by United Way, who report to and support the Leadership Team. Staff will help coordinate the *Thrive in Five's* activities, support partnerships, and ensure strong linkages with local, city and state initiatives related to children and families.
- E. Sustain the Data and Research Team, co-managed by the Mayor's Office and Boston EQUIP with appropriate representation from Boston's data gathering sources and higher education, to
- ❖ Collect data to regularly track and report on Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators (see next section, Children Ready for Sustained School Success);
  - ❖ Oversee original research to inform planning and practice;
  - ❖ Incorporate research and best practices into implementation;

- ❖ Coordinate and align evaluation across *Thrive in Five's* strategies to show collective impact; and
  - ❖ Explore the opportunities for one or more longitudinal studies to assess the long-term benefit of *Thrive in Five's* work.
- F.** Sustain parent involvement through a Parent Advisory Group that will serve as a vehicle to assess how school readiness efforts are playing out at the neighborhood level and recommend how services, systems and policies can be adjusted to better support families with young children. Parents will also be included in the Partnerships outlined in each section of the plan.

### **Strategy 3** *Align the work of City departments that serve families with young children to collaborate with one another and to support the goals and strategies of this plan. Coordinate all programming and initiatives of *Thrive in Five* with existing neighborhood-based work.*

The City of Boston operates many programs, services and initiatives that touch all residents in all neighborhoods, particularly young children and families, including, but not limited to, the following:

- ❖ Boston Public Schools
- ❖ Boston Public Library
- ❖ Boston Housing Authority
- ❖ Boston Centers for Youth and Families
- ❖ Boston Public Health Commission
- ❖ Emergency Shelter Commission
- ❖ Elderly Commission
- ❖ Women's Commission
- ❖ Parks Department
- ❖ Office of Human Services

In addition, the City spearheads many community organizing initiatives, including the "VIP program," a neighborhood-based initiative to connect residents with youth services and promote civic engagement; and Smart from the Start, a new public-private collaboration to serve the lowest-income families in the city near their homes with school readiness support. Aligning existing and new City of Boston programs and services with *Thrive in Five* will infuse a focus on prevention and early childhood throughout City government. Similarly, coordinating *Thrive in Five* with existing state and private sector initiatives such as the Governor's Readiness Project and the Home for Little Wanderer's Early Childhood System of Care, will align and connect work, allowing for greater impact.

*Thrive in Five* proposes some new initiatives, including pilots of Community School Readiness Wiring and Infant and Early Childhood Specialist Teams. To the extent possible, *Thrive in Five* will seek to have at least one neighborhood where all pilots are

implemented to better understand the strengths and challenges of a multi-faceted approach in a single community.

In addition, it is important to ensure that individual strategies benefit all of our work, for example, supporting the development of a single online screening and information tool that all providers connected to *Thrive in Five* can use; offering joint professional development across sectors on early childhood mental health; and providing uniform information and materials to families through Community School Readiness Wiring and pilots in pediatric health settings.

#### Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)

- A. Regularly convene City departments and services to align and coordinate their existing work with *Thrive in Five*.
- B. Provide technical assistance and support City departments and services to develop new activities to further the goals of *Thrive in Five*.
- C. Coordinate strategies and pilot projects implemented by *Thrive in Five* whenever possible to ensure maximum benefit.
- D. Regularly connect with state and private sector initiatives to align and support the work of *Thrive in Five*.

Develop citywide campaigns to help the general public understand the importance of early childhood, and understand concrete roles for various people, organizations and sectors to support young children's school readiness. **Strategy 4**

Parents, early educators and others who work with young children are more likely to clearly understand the importance of supporting school readiness. In addition, *Thrive in Five* includes information campaigns directed at these groups to help guide their actions with young children. However, many other Boston residents without a connection to young children are unlikely to see the benefit of, and their important role in, the lives of children and families. The support of these individuals is crucial to creating a city that is truly able to promote universal school readiness.

#### Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)

- A. Develop a campaign that highlights the roles all members of the community can play in promoting children's school readiness, including local business owners, college students, young professionals, older adults, major employers, and others.
- B. Coordinate and collaborate with existing campaigns, such as ReadBoston's Early Words, the Children's Trust Fund's One Tough Job, and campaigns under development by Countdown to Kindergarten and United Way, to ensure that all target audiences are reached and that messages complement and reinforce each other.

#### Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)

- C. Develop and implement a program that encourages employers and major Boston institutions to publicly support school readiness through specific actions that benefit employees, such as offering paid time off to meet with a child's early education provider, participate in childcare or school volunteer activities, or visit area schools and register children for kindergarten; and bringing parenting and school readiness information into the workplace during the work day.

### Strategy 5 Strengthen linkages with efforts to address broader community needs that impact the stability of families: transportation, housing, safety, adult education, employment, substance abuse and economic security.

To be ready for school, children need stable families; and families need stable communities in which to raise their children. Partnering with the many organizations and initiatives to address basic needs and quality of life issues will further the goals of *Thrive in Five*, as will raising awareness in these arenas about child development and school readiness.

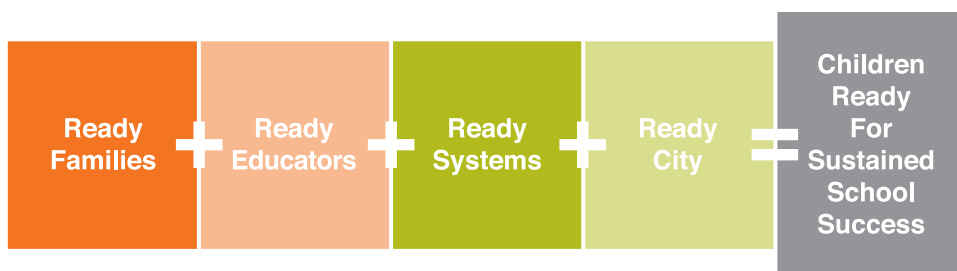
#### Long-term actions (2008 – 2018)

- A. *Thrive in Five* will work with a wide range of constituencies to consider strategies to better support families with young children. Just a few of the suggested strategies to pursue that emerged from this planning process include:
  - ❖ Integrating child-friendly spaces into future development;
  - ❖ Promoting family friendly transportation, for example making it much easier to move around the city with strollers;
  - ❖ Promoting a commitment to being a city that welcomes and acknowledges the presence of young children, by creating more age-appropriate visual images and art accessible to young children, and, conversely, re-examining advertising (such as billboards) and products for the appropriateness to be seen and accessed by young children;
  - ❖ Promoting current Individual Development Account and Earned Income Tax Credit initiatives to expand economic support for families.



# Children Ready for Sustained School Success

*Assessing, Understanding and Tracking Progress*



## Goal:

*Thrive in Five* will track and report on Boston's success in ensuring universal school readiness.

## Scenarios of Progress: Children Ready for Sustained School Success

*These stories illustrate how children's and families' lives will be different as a result of Thrive in Five – and how the city will be different.*

Geneva was nervous about the parent-teacher conference. Her daughter, Lakeisha, had just started kindergarten a month ago. At the conference, the teacher wanted to talk about the “assessment” he had just finished of her daughter’s development. To Geneva, it sounded like a test, and she was worried that Lakeisha wouldn’t do well.

As Geneva walks into her daughter’s classroom, she notices all the drawings along the wall. Mr. Jenkins, the kindergarten teacher, points out Lakeisha’s: “*She has a great imagination!*”

As they discuss Lakeisha’s assessment, Mr. Jenkins explains that it isn’t really a test at all. “*I watch a small group of kids in the class for a few days and then write up a summary of where they are in different areas of development. They don’t do anything different*

*from the rest of the class, and really, don’t even know that I am assessing them.*”

“*So, it’s not like a test, you’re just watching to see what she can do?*” asks Geneva.

“*Yes. But even if she can’t do something yet, I look to see if she’s almost there,*” explains Mr. Jenkins. “*Each child is different. By knowing where they are in their development, I can help them get to the next step. Let’s talk about where your daughter is.*”

As they talk through the assessment, Geneva hears much of what she already knows about Lakeisha. Her daughter’s vocabulary is great – her preschool teacher encouraged Geneva to chat with Lakeisha a lot at home, while cooking or grocery shopping – and Lakeisha is very creative. In most areas, she

is progressing as she should be, but she needs to work on her fine motor skills and on dealing with disagreements with other kids without yelling or running out of the classroom. Mr. Jenkins says they are working on this at school and suggests some activities Geneva and Lakeisha can do at home. He also talks about how Lakeisha's grandma and grandpa, who came to live with them when Geneva's husband died last year, can help too. *"With your help, in the spring when we do the assessment again, I'm confident that Lakeisha will be right where we all want her to be."*

As Geneva leaves, she admits to herself that she feels a little embarrassed that Lakeisha still has some trouble with anger, but she's proud of her daughter's accomplishments, optimistic about what to do next, and relieved that the next steps aren't all on her shoulders. She is also hopeful that everything Lakeisha learns will have a positive effect on her little brother who is 18 months old, since the two of them play together often and Lakeisha is now teaching him some letters and colors.

## Building Blocks for Children's School Readiness

Boston's School Readiness Definition provides a common base for all of the adults in a young child's life to work together to promote their growth and development. To advance this clear, common framework, it is important to break down Boston's School Readiness Definition into a set of indicators, or a set of descriptions to know what a "school-ready" child would act, think, and feel like.

The indicators of children's school readiness chosen by *Thrive in Five* are based on the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, a set of research-based child-level indicators that are in broad use nationally. As a result, these indicators are well tested and align with many of the major child outcome assessment tools. The Head Start Child Outcomes Framework encompasses all of the domains of child development: Language Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Creative Arts, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, and Physical Health and Development. Each of these domains has a more specific domain element, and then four to six indicators of development.

For example, this is the Language Development domain:

Domain	Domain Element	Indicators of Development
Language Development	Listening and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems</li> <li>■ Shows progress in understanding and following simple and multiple-step directions</li> <li>■ Understands an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary</li> <li>■ For non-English speaking children, progresses in listening to and understanding English</li> </ul>

(See Appendix C for the full Head Start Child Outcomes Framework.)

Many of the indicators use terms like "progressing" or "increasing," as young children are constantly moving from one stage to the next and each child's developmental progression is unique. Accordingly, the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework should be viewed as building blocks that are important for school success; however, it is not

an exhaustive list of everything a child should know or be able to do by the end of preschool, nor is it intended to be used directly as a checklist for assessing children.

Assessment is a powerful tool that, when used appropriately, enables teachers, parents and other child-serving professionals to collaborate on a child's behalf. Early education and care programs serving young children can benefit greatly from using a child assessment system that aligns with their curriculum, gathers data on children's progress in each of the domains of learning and development, and communicates the information to families.

Despite its strengths, there are some challenges associated with assessing young children. To address these concerns, a number of national organizations have developed policy statements offering the following criteria for assessments, including that they:

- ❖ Benefit children and the adults who work with children;
- ❖ Be valid, reliable, and age appropriate, using naturalistic observations to collect information as children interact in "real-life" situations;
- ❖ Be holistic, collecting information on all developmental domains;
- ❖ Be linguistically and culturally appropriate; and
- ❖ Collect information through a variety of process and multiple sources (collection of children's artwork, observations of children, interviews with children, parent reports, etc.).<sup>73</sup>

In assessing children's progress, it is essential to carefully summarize observations made of a child's strengths and needs over time. This ensures that assessment is not a test, but rather, a deeply informed guide to best support the child going forward.

## The Path Forward for Children's School Readiness

**Choose and implement within BPS kindergarten classrooms a comprehensive, age-appropriate assessment of children's readiness upon school entry. Align the chosen assessment with early education and care assessments, and with other current and new BPS K-12 assessments, ensuring all BPS assessments provide information to teachers, to parents, to the school system and city as a whole. Annually aggregate and report school readiness results.**

### Strategy 1

Boston Public Schools is currently choosing assessment tools to use in all grades, kindergarten through grade 12, to measure student progress and better tailor support to individual student needs. Implementing a standard assessment throughout all Boston Public Schools' kindergarten classrooms will enable Boston to reliably assess how the city is doing on preparing its children for school. Since 75% of Boston children attend BPS, using a standard assessment in this setting will collect data across all domains of learning and development on a significant majority of Boston children. In addition, Boston Public Schools is a single system, making it easier to mandate a single assessment tool and provide common professional development to ensure sound data collection and use.

<sup>73</sup>Saluja, G., Scott-Little C. & Clifford, R. (Fall 2000). Readiness for School: A Survey of State Policies and Definitions. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*. <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v2n2/saluja.html>.

Over the past year, the Boston Public Schools has piloted an assessment tool named Work Sampling in several kindergarten classrooms. Work Sampling is a research-based tool that enables teachers to assess the progress of kindergarteners on all domains of school readiness and use that information to tailor support to the learning and development needs of each child. Work Sampling is *not* a test, but rather a summary of a teacher's observations of a child from the classroom environment, guided by a framework that aligns with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework described above.

#### **Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)**

- A.** Choose a kindergarten assessment tool (by the fall of 2008) and train all BPS kindergarten teachers to use the tool to inform classroom instruction.
- B.** Conduct assessments multiple times during each child's kindergarten year in order to gain a clear, ongoing understanding of each child's progress and respond accordingly.

#### **Medium to long-term actions (2010 – 2018)**

- C.** Analyze and report aggregate data from the assessment chosen to provide citywide data about children's readiness upon school entry. Report data by developmental domain, gender, race/ethnicity, income (Free/Reduced Price Lunch), special education, English language learners, and prior care arrangement type (Head Start, family child care, etc.) in a regular school readiness report and summits. Use this data to help families, early educators, and the broader community identify and address gaps in children's learning and development through information campaigns and workshops for parents, professional development for early educators and other professionals, and other activities.

### **Strategy 2** **Create citywide understanding of Boston's School Readiness Definition and *Thrive in Five's* goals and strategies among parents, early education and care providers and others working with young children and families.**

With a clear definition and set of school readiness indicators, it is possible to help all adults and programs supporting young children – their parents, caregivers, educators and other professionals who serve them – have a common understanding of what school readiness is and how to support children's progress from one developmental stage to the next. This will not only guide their efforts individually, but also help them work together effectively on behalf of each child.

#### **Near-term actions (2008 – 2009)**

- A.** Bring early education and care providers and administrators from all settings together for joint briefings on the school readiness definition and indicators of children's school readiness.

- B.** Incorporate Boston's School Readiness Definition and related indicators into:
- ❖ Professional development for early educators and others working with young children and families;
  - ❖ Information for parents provided through Community School Readiness Wiring, Infant and Early Childhood Specialist Teams, and other parent information campaigns; and
  - ❖ Other appropriate areas of *Thrive in Five* and related activities.

**Regularly measure, track and report on Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators to understand the impact of *Thrive in Five*.**

## Strategy 3

Boston's School Readiness Equation lays out *Thrive in Five's* approach to ensuring children's school readiness and sustained school success. Central to the equation is understanding that progress on the left side of the equation creates progress on the right side of the equation: Children's school success is the result of collective action and partnership between families, educators, systems, and the city. Boston's School Readiness Definition and indicators of children's school readiness help us know what success looks like on the right side of the equation.

To understand progress across the areas on the left side of the equation, the Data and Research Team developed a set of indicators to measure and track progress across Boston. Regularly tracking these indicators will provide a snapshot of *Thrive in Five's* progress toward ensuring that all children are ready for school, as well as allow us to target efforts to support readiness in the areas on the left side of the equation.

To select Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators, the DART reviewed indicators being used by other school readiness initiatives, brainstormed indicators appropriate for Boston, and consulted child development research. From this, a list of more than 60 potential indicators was narrowed down using three criteria:<sup>74</sup>

- ❖ **Communication Power** – Does the indicator communicate to a broad range of audiences? Could you stand in City Hall Plaza and describe this to anyone and they would understand what you mean?
- ❖ **Proxy Power** – Does the indicator say something of central importance to the result? Does it bring along the rest of the data “herd”?
- ❖ **Data Power** – Is quality data available on a timely basis?

Each indicator was rated as high, medium, or low in these three areas, seeking indicators that scored high on all criteria. A set of progress indicators emerged that were vetted by numerous researchers. The DART decided it was also important to know more about the environment surrounding our young children and families in Boston. So alongside Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators, important “context data” will be tracked to understand “the story behind the curve” that gives deeper meaning to the progress indicators. Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators and related context data are on the following pages.

<sup>74</sup>Results-Based Accountability Implementation Guide. [http://www.raguide.org/RA/2\\_7.htm](http://www.raguide.org/RA/2_7.htm).

**Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)**

- A.** Further refine and develop data sources for any progress indicators or context data without a current, reliable data source.
- B.** Produce a regular report to measure and track Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators and related context data.

**Strategy 4** In years 2, 4, 7 and 10 of the plan, hold an early childhood summit to ensure accountability and report on *Thrive in Five's* progress as a whole.

**Near to long-term actions (2008 – 2018)**

- A.** Regularly produce a report that outlines the activities undertaken by *Thrive in Five*.
- B.** Hold a School Readiness Summit in 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2018 to report progress, promote best practices, share information about programs and services, and draw the attention of civic, philanthropic and public sector leaders to needed investments and policy changes.



# Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators

In addition to benchmarks and performance measures to ensure accountability for each component of *Thrive in Five*, these are a sampling of broader progress indicators that will be tracked over time, demonstrating overall progress and providing a picture of the state of school readiness in Boston.



## Context Data

This information will be tracked and reported regularly to better understand the environment surrounding young children and families in Boston, and the environment in which *Thrive in Five* is operating.

### Key Data about Families in Boston:

- ❖ Educational Attainment – Percentage of heads of households with children ages birth to five who have at least a high school diploma/GED
- ❖ Standard of Living – Income of householders with children ages birth to five
- ❖ Country of Origin – Birthplaces of householders with children ages birth to five
- ❖ Native Language – Primary languages spoken by householders with children ages birth to five and fluency in English of non-native speakers

### Key Data about Educators in Boston:

- ❖ Number of Early Education and Care Programs – Number of providers by type
- ❖ Amount of Early Education and Care – Number of spaces by age of child and type of provider
- ❖ Access to Early Education and Care –
  - Ratio of spaces to children ages birth – 2.8 and 2.9 – 5 in public and private settings
  - Ratio of accredited spaces to children ages 0 – 2.8 and 2.9 – 5
- ❖ Educator Compensation – Average hourly salary for BPS and community-based early educators
- ❖ Affordability – Average cost of early education and care
- ❖ Ready Schools Data – To be determined

### Key Data about Systems in Boston:

- ❖ Health Insurance – Percentage of children ages birth to five with health insurance coverage
- ❖ Early Intervention – Percentage of children served by Early Intervention (EI)
- ❖ Preschool Special Education – Percentage of children served by preschool special education
- ❖ Boston Public Schools Special Education – Percentage of children served by BPS special education in K2 and throughout K-12
- ❖ Dental Insurance – Percentage of children ages birth to five with dental insurance coverage

### Key Citywide Data about Boston:

- ❖ Child Safety – Percentage of DSS-involved children ages birth to five (reported and substantiated)
- ❖ Playgrounds – Ratio of tot lots in Boston to children ages birth to five by neighborhood
- ❖ Domestic Violence – Percentage of children exposed to domestic violence
- ❖ Caregiver Mental Health – Percentage of young children with a parent or primary caregiver with mental health issues
- ❖ Substance Abuse – Percentage of young children with a parent or primary caregiver with substance abuse issues
- ❖ Measure of an Educated Community – Educational attainment of heads of households with children ages birth to five and/or Boston Public Schools four-year high school graduation rate
- ❖ Measure of a Safe Community – To be determined

### Key Data about Young Children in Boston:

- ❖ Number of Children – Number of children ages birth to five in Boston
- ❖ Race/Ethnicity of Children – Race and ethnicity of children ages birth to five in Boston
- ❖ Density – Number of children ages birth to five in each Boston neighborhood
- ❖ Student Mobility – Number of transfers within BPS at non-terminal grades (any grade other than the last grade available at an individual school)
- ❖ Healthy Environment –
  - Lead Poisoning – Percentage of children ages birth to five with high lead levels
  - Asthma – Number of children ages birth to five hospitalized for asthma
- ❖ Healthy Birth Weight – Percentage of children born at healthy birth weight
- ❖ Adequate Nutrition – Percentage of children ages birth to five receiving adequate nutrition

“If you want to know the end, look at the beginning.”

- African Proverb

## Conclusion



*“The biggest gap we are facing is the gap between what we know and what we do.”*

- Dr. Jack P. Shonkoff, Director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University,  
guest lecture at the April 2007 APT meeting

This roadmap serves to clarify **what we know** – about the early years and about the needs and strengths of children, families, educators and communities – and **what we must do** to ensure children are ready for school entry and for sustained school success.

Why will this roadmap lead us to the right place? We have come together across sectors and jointly set out a plan of action. We have come to understand the costs – economic and moral – of inaction. Boston has a wealth of assets on which to draw and committed partners who will move forward together, including:

- ❖ Parents who want the best for their children;
- ❖ Effective community-based organizations that are committed to reaching families most in need of supports;
- ❖ Early educators who are prepared to mount a multi-year campaign toward universal accreditation;
- ❖ Innovative health care providers and their community partners who are ready to pilot sustainable comprehensive models to support children’s healthy development;
- ❖ University researchers who are enhancing workforce development and assessing program quality;
- ❖ Strong leadership at our school department and in our early education and care community;
- ❖ A City government that is aligning across departments to improve support for young children and families;
- ❖ A State government that is soon to report on its Readiness effort, which should align state agency efforts and articulate a method for sustained early childhood investment; and
- ❖ Private funders who are increasingly interested in prevention and early childhood.

We aim to achieve more than just successful execution of a strategic plan. We will build a long-term movement on behalf of children that benefits the entire city. Let us be clear and focused in our specific objectives, yet let us also envision for all children what they can see from Boston’s harbor: unlimited horizons.

*We have come to understand the costs – economic and moral – of inaction.*



# Appendices

## Appendix A: Next Steps

As noted earlier, some of the APT's strategies involve strengthening and expanding existing work, some ensure better coordination of existing work, and some represent new initiatives. *Thrive in Five* will ensure far more effective use of Boston's existing resources, but will also require new investment in order to succeed.

Included in the Ready City strategies is a summary of the *Thrive in Five* governance and leadership structure moving forward, which includes an implementation partnership for each component. The Responsible Entities listed in the chart below refers to those partnerships, each of which will have a convener. Already organizations are stepping forward to offer to lead and/or be part of those partnerships. The APT developed criteria for each of these important roles, which will be filled by mid-2008.

## 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.

Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
Pilot Community School Readiness Wiring, a new process that integrates into parents' daily lives key information on how to support children's healthy development and school readiness.	Pilot and evaluate Community School Readiness Wiring in three neighborhoods.	Ready Families Partnership	2008 – 2010	\$
	Evaluate and expand Community School Readiness Wiring to all neighborhoods throughout Boston, integrating with other neighborhood-based initiatives.	Ready Families Partnership	2011 – 2018	\$\$
Coordinate and integrate existing and planned public education and engagement campaigns about early childhood development, school readiness, and parenting.	Regularly convene organizations leading early childhood public engagement and information campaigns.	Countdown to Kindergarten	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
	Finish development of and implement Countdown to Kindergarten's "milestones" and "You Are Your Child's First Teacher" campaigns.	Countdown to Kindergarten	2008 – 2012	\$
	Distribute information from ReadBoston's Early Words campaign to support early childhood vocabulary development.	ReadBoston	2008 – 2012	Modest/None
	Expand Countdown to Kindergarten's Play to Learn groups in Boston Public Schools elementary schools.	Countdown to Kindergarten	2008 – 2012	\$ - \$\$

Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
	Expand Y/BPS to engage families with young children of all races and cultures who might otherwise opt out of the Boston Public Schools without investigating BPS as a solid educational option.	YMCA and BPS	2008 – 2012	\$
	Develop new campaigns and tools as needed, including a parent peer-to-peer video.	Ready Families Partnership	2010 – 2012	\$
Select and promote an on-line screening and information tool that providers can use to guide families and that families can use themselves to obtain health care, housing, food security, income security, and other needed services.	Select and pilot an online screening and information tool.	Ready Families and Systems Partnerships	2008 – 2009	\$
	Evaluate and expand access to the online screening and information tool.	Ready Families and Systems Partnerships	2010 – 2012	\$
	Make online screening and information tool available citywide.	Ready Families and Systems Partnerships	2013 – 2018	\$\$
Improve access to Boston's cultural organizations and other community resources.	Convene local cultural institutions and develop strategies to better disseminate information about programs and services to families with young children.	Ready Families Partnership	2008 – 2009	Modest/None
	Offer technical assistance to help cultural organizations develop programming for young children and families.	Ready Families Partnership	2008 – 2012	Modest/None
	Develop partnerships between cultural institutions and neighborhood-based organizations to bring activities out to Boston communities.	Ready Families Partnership	2008 – 2012	Modest/None
	Develop and implement a cultural access card that allows reduced price entry for Boston families at cultural institutions.	Ready Families Partnership	2010 – 2018	\$

## 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.

Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
Across all early education and care settings, pursue universal accreditation (granted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the National Association for Family Child Care, or Child Development Associate [CDA] credentialing).	Provide information about accreditation/CDA attainment to early education and care providers.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	\$
	Convene Boston's accreditation and CDA facilitation organizations to better coordinate their work.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
	Match Boston's accreditation and CDA facilitation organizations to early education and care providers.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
	Secure and maintain accreditation-related financial aid through the public and private sectors.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	\$\$\$\$
	Support accreditation throughout Boston Public Schools elementary schools.	Boston Public Schools	2008 – 2018	\$\$

Key to Anticipated Annual Cost of Strategies: Modest/None = \$0 - 50,000; \$ = \$50,000 - 250,000; \$\$ = \$250,000 - 500,000; \$\$\$ = \$500,000 - 1,000,000; \$\$\$\$ = Over \$1,000,000; TBD = to be determined

Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
	Annually recognize and reward providers, programs and schools that have achieved accreditation or CDA.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	Modest/ None
Create a collaboration across the four types of early education and care settings to promote joint planning, foster stability of high-quality programs, and promote alignment in curriculum, standards and assessment.	Create a Ready Educators subcommittee for citywide planning to support stability, improve alignment, and link planning with State agencies.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	Modest/ None
	Develop a neutral, permanent physical space at the Boston Children's Museum for early educators across settings to come together in a model "Countdown to Kindergarten" preschool/kindergarten classroom – for training, sharing of best practices, and engagement of parents on what to look for in early education and care.	The Boston Children's Museum	2008 – 2012	\$-\$\$
Enhance professional development for early educators.	Coordinate support for professional development with accreditation technical assistance.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	\$
	Provide training for Boston Public Schools early childhood teachers and para-professionals in early childhood education best practices, curricula and assessment.	Boston Public Schools	2008 – 2018	\$
	Strengthen partnerships with local adult basic education and GED programs to support the learning needs of early childhood educators.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	Modest/ None
	Develop with the State a comprehensive professional development plan that offers a variety of pathways to strengthen educational attainment for all early childhood educators.	Ready Educators Partnership	2010 – 2012	Modest/ None
	Advocate with the State for significant increases in the Massachusetts Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program.	Ready Educators Partnership, <i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2018	Modest/ None
	Determine and obtain sustainable public and private sector funding sources to support professional and career development.	Ready Educators Partnership, <i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2018	TBD
Improve early education and care facilities to ensure safe, stimulating learning environments for all children.	Oversee a capital inventory of facilities in Boston's early education and care field, as well as the Boston Parks Department, Boston Public Library, and Boston Public Schools.	Ready Educators Partnership, City of Boston	2008 – 2009	\$
	Develop, in partnership with the State, standards for early childhood indoor and outdoor settings.	Ready Educators Partnership, City of Boston	2008 – 2009	Modest/ None
	Identify and advocate for public and private sector funding to address the costs of facility improvements.	Ready Educators Partnership, <i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2010 – 2018	Modest/ None
Improve compensation to support recruitment and retention of highly-qualified and well prepared early educators.	Develop a viable compensation initiative that can provide near-term benefit to Boston early educators.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2012	TBD
	Develop an equitable pay scale across the field (encompassing infant, toddler, and pre-k providers in all community and school-based settings).	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2012	TBD
	Examine loan forgiveness as an option for early childhood educators who earn degrees and maintain employment with the same provider for a period of time.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2012	Modest/ None



Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
Improve access to early education and care for all children and families by decreasing financial barriers and ensuring adequate supply of services to meet demand at the infant, toddler, pre-school and kindergarten stages.	Advocate for changes to State funding – reimbursement and vouchers – for early education and care.	Ready Educators Partnership, <i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2012	Modest/None
	Assess and adjust supply and demand for various types of early education and care.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2012	Modest/None
	Explore public and private sector funding sources to ensure universal access to high-quality early education and care for all Boston children birth to five.	Ready Educators Partnership, <i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2013 – 2018	Modest/None
Further analyze existing models that provide high quality early education to children while integrating health, social services and high-level family engagement.	Explore opportunities to implement comprehensive models throughout Boston's early education and care system to improve services and incorporate best practices.	Ready Educators Partnership	2008 – 2018	Modest/None

## 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.

Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
Conduct pilots in pediatric settings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- expand and coordinate current efforts to achieve universal “welcome newborn” visits;</li> <li>- conduct universal screening for physical, behavioral, developmental, and environmental and family risk factors;</li> <li>- provide parents with information about child development and parenting;</li> <li>- offer coordination services to ensure that children and families access and benefit from services.</li> </ul>	Pilot and evaluate models to implement welcome newborn visits, universal screening, parent information, and coordination services in a minimum of two community health centers in Boston. Prioritize methods that incorporate infant and early childhood specialists into pediatric settings, including para-professionals to support pediatric providers and engage and educate parents.	Ready Systems Partnership	2008 – 2010	\$\$
	Evaluate and expand piloted models as appropriate throughout Boston.	Ready Systems Partnership	2011 – 2018	TBD
Enhance the various systems of early intervention to expand and align eligibility for services.	Convene systems of early intervention in Boston to establish an ongoing forum to address transition and alignment issues and promote increased coordination and collaboration.	Ready Systems Partnership	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
	Select an Early Intervention (EI) program and preschool special education program(s) to pilot expanded eligibility requirements and increased staff training on infant and early childhood social, emotional and behavioral issues.	Ready Systems Partnership	2008 – 2009	\$\$
	Evaluate pilot results and provide increased eligibility to EI and preschool special education throughout Boston.	Ready Systems Partnership	2010 – 2018	TBD
	Offer training, support and consultation on infant and early childhood social, emotional, and behavioral issues to early education and care providers.	Ready Systems Partnership	2008 – 2018	\$

## Ready City

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

Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
Track and analyze public and private funding streams for early childhood and promote comprehensive evaluation results among public and private funders.	Identify, analyze, and develop recommendations to better align and coordinate public and private funding streams to support <i>Thrive in Five</i> strategies.	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership, DART	2008 – 2009	\$
	Coordinate evaluation throughout <i>Thrive in Five</i> 's components and report results to increase accountability and support.	DART	2008 – 2018	\$
Create a public-private governance and operational structure to oversee the success of <i>Thrive in Five</i> and help fuel a broader movement to support Boston's youngest children.	Establish a strong private-public sector managing partnership, known as <i>Thrive in Five</i> , between the Mayor's Office and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, staffed by an Executive Director and 1 to 2 additional staff.	United Way of MA Bay and Merrimack Valley, City of Boston	2008 – 2009	\$
	Recruit a cross-sector Leadership Team to serve as a governing board for <i>Thrive in Five</i> , providing general oversight and leadership on resource development and policy and advocacy.	United Way of MA Bay and Merrimack Valley, City of Boston	2008 – 2009	Modest/None
	Select lead organization for each of the plan's components to convene (and staff) a diverse set of "implementation partners" who will refine and implement each strategy.	United Way of MA Bay and Merrimack Valley, City of Boston	2008 – 2009	Modest/None
	Support the Data and Research Team, co-managed by the Mayor's Office and Boston EQUIP, to collect and report data, oversee evaluation and original research, and report results.	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2018	\$
	Implement a Parent Advisory Group as part of the <i>Thrive in Five</i> leadership to facilitate ongoing parent involvement.	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
Align and coordinate new and existing work of City departments to support <i>Thrive in Five</i> .	Regularly convene City departments and services to align and coordinate their existing work with <i>Thrive in Five</i> .	City of Boston	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
	Provide technical assistance and support to City departments to align existing work and develop new activities as needed to further the goals of <i>Thrive in Five</i> .	City of Boston	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
	Coordinate City strategies and initiatives with projects implemented by <i>Thrive in Five</i> whenever possible.	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership, City of Boston	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
	Connect with State and private sector initiatives to align and support the work of <i>Thrive in Five</i> .	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2018	Modest/None
Develop citywide campaigns to help the general public understand the importance of and take part in supporting young children's school readiness.	Develop a campaign that highlights the roles all members of the community can play in promoting children's school readiness (possibly integrated into the Ready Families work).	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2009	\$
	Develop and implement a program that encourages employers and major Boston institutions to publicly support school readiness through specific actions that benefit employees.	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2010 – 2018	TBD

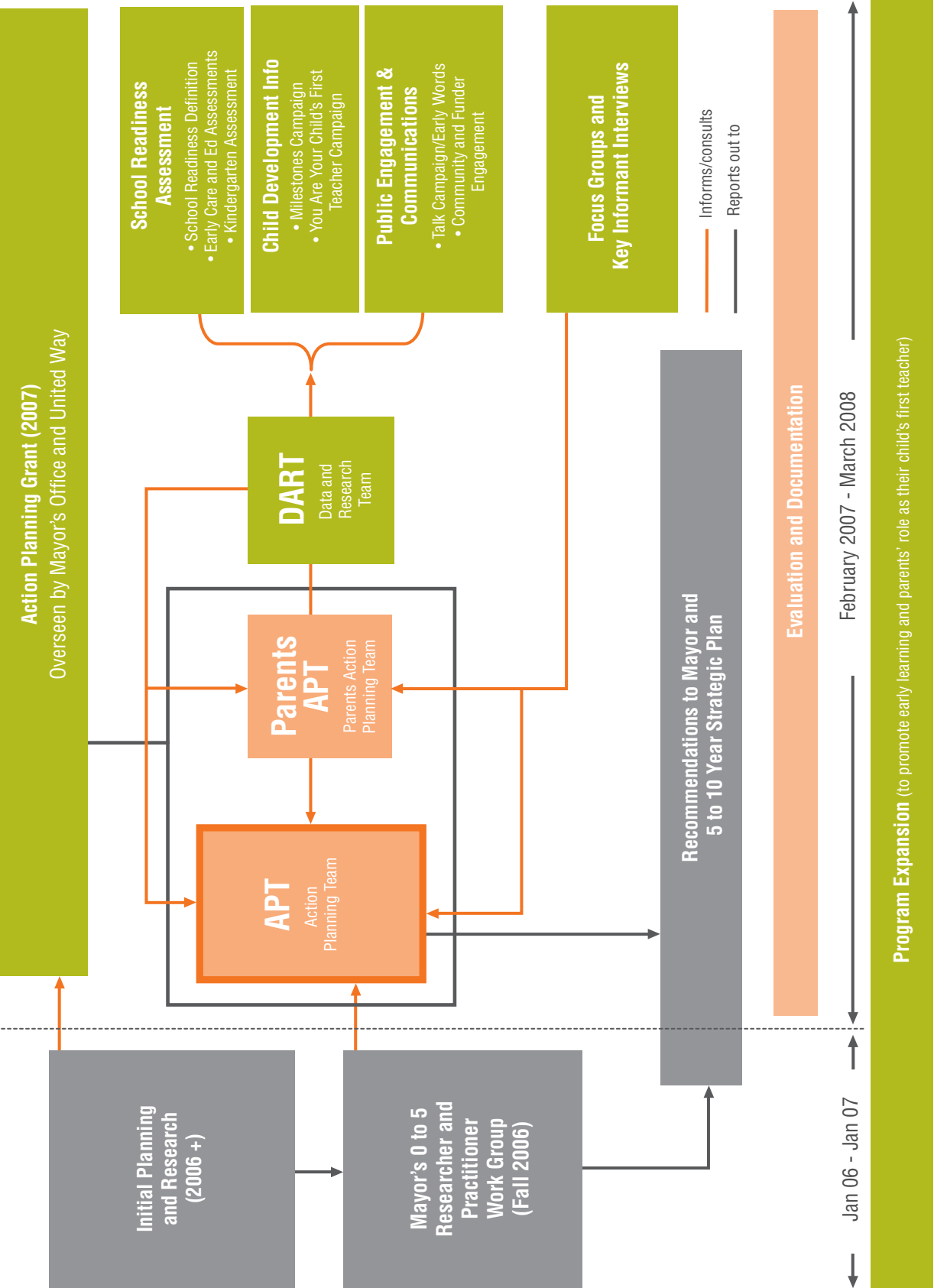
Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
Strengthen linkages with initiatives to address broader community needs that impact the stability of families.	Partner with initiatives that address transportation, housing, safety, adult education, employment, substance abuse and economic security.	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2008 – 2018	Modest/None

## Children Ready for Sustained School Success

**Goal:** *Thrive in Five* will track and report on Boston's success in ensuring universal school readiness.

Strategy	Next Steps	Responsible Entity	Time Frame	Anticipated Level of Investment
Choose and implement within BPS kindergarten classrooms a comprehensive, age-appropriate assessment. Align the chosen assessment with other current and new K-12 assessments and annually aggregate and report school readiness results.	Train all kindergarten teachers to use the assessment chosen to inform instruction and provide citywide data about children's readiness upon school entry.	Boston Public Schools	2008 – 2018	\$\$
	Conduct assessments multiple times during each child's kindergarten year in order to gain a clear, ongoing understanding of each child's progress and respond accordingly.	Boston Public Schools	2008 – 2018	\$
	Analyze and report aggregate data from the assessment chosen.	DART, Boston Public Schools	2010 – 2018	\$
Create city-wide understanding of Boston's School Readiness Definition and <i>Thrive in Five</i> 's goals and strategies.	Bring early education and care providers and administrators from all settings together for joint briefings on the school readiness definition and sharing of best practices.	Ready Educators Partnership, Boston Public Schools	2008 – 2009	\$
	Incorporate Boston's School Readiness Definition and related indicators into information for parents and training and professional development for professionals.	Ready Families, Educators, and Systems Partnerships	2008 – 2009	\$
Regularly measure, track and report on Boston's broader School Readiness Progress Indicators to understand the impact of <i>Thrive in Five</i> .	Further refine existing sources and develop new tools and sources to gather information for Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators and/or context data.	DART	2008 – 2012	\$
	Produce an annual report to measure and track Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators, context data, and the activities undertaken by <i>Thrive in Five</i> .	DART	2008 – 2018	\$
Hold an early childhood summit to ensure accountability and report on the plan's progress as a whole.	Hold a <i>Thrive in Five</i> School Readiness Summit in 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2018.	<i>Thrive in Five</i> Leadership	2010 – 2018	\$

# Appendix B: Boston's Birth to Five School Readiness Initiative Information Flow Chart



## Appendix C: Head Start Child Outcomes Framework

The indicators of children’s school readiness chosen by *Thrive in Five* are based on the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework<sup>75</sup>, a set of research-based child-level indicators that are in broad use nationally. As a result, these indicators are well tested and align with many of the major child outcome assessment tools. The Head Start Child Outcomes Framework encompasses all of the domains of child development: Language Development, Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Creative Arts, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Learning, and Physical Health and Development.

Many of the indicators use terms like “progressing” or “increasing,” as young children are constantly moving from one stage to the next and each child’s developmental progression is unique. Accordingly, the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework should be viewed as building blocks that are important for school success; however, it is not an exhaustive list of everything a child should know or be able to do by the end of preschool, nor is it intended to be used directly as a checklist for assessing children. The indicators that follow relate to three- and four-year-old children.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	Listening & Understanding	Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems.
		Shows progress in understanding and following simple and multiple-step directions.
		Understands an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.
		For non-English-speaking children, progresses in listening to and understanding English.
	Speaking & Communicating	Develops increasing abilities to understand and use language to communicate information, experiences, ideas, feelings, opinions, needs, questions and for other varied purposes.
		Progresses in abilities to initiate and respond appropriately in conversation and discussions with peers and adults.
		Uses an increasingly complex and varied spoken vocabulary.
		Progresses in clarity of pronunciation and towards speaking in sentences of increasing length and grammatical complexity. For non-English-speaking children, progresses in speaking English.
LITERACY	Phonological Awareness	Shows increasing ability to discriminate and identify sounds in spoken language.
		Shows growing awareness of beginning and ending sounds of words.
		Progresses in recognizing matching sounds and rhymes in familiar words, games, songs, stories and poems.
		Shows growing ability to hear and discriminate separate syllables in words. Associates sounds with written words, such as awareness that different words begin with the same sound.
	Book Knowledge & Appreciation	Shows growing interest and involvement in listening to and discussing a variety of fiction and non-fiction books and poetry.
		Shows growing interest in reading-related activities, such as asking to have a favorite book read; choosing to look at books; drawing pictures based on stories; asking to take books home; going to the library; and engaging in pretend-reading with other children.
		Demonstrates progress in abilities to retell and dictate stories from books and experiences; to act out stories in dramatic play; and to predict what will happen next in a story.
		Progresses in learning how to handle and care for books; knowing to view one page at a time in sequence from front to back; and understanding that a book has a title, author and illustrator.
	Print Awareness & Concepts	Shows increasing awareness of print in classroom, home and community settings.
		Develops growing understanding of the different functions of forms of print such as signs, letters, newspapers, lists, messages, and menus.

<sup>75</sup>For more information about the Head Start Outcomes Framework, visit <http://www.hsnrc.org/CDI/pdfs/UGCOf.pdf>.

LITERACY Continued.	(Continued) Print Awareness & Concepts	<p>Demonstrates increasing awareness of concepts of print, such as that reading in English moves from top to bottom and from left to right, that speech can be written down, and that print conveys a message.</p> <p>Shows progress in recognizing the association between spoken and written words by following print as it is read aloud.</p> <p>Recognizes a word as a unit of print, or awareness that letters are grouped to form words, and that words are separated by spaces.</p>
	Early Writing	<p>Develops understanding that writing is a way of communicating for a variety of purposes.</p> <p>Begins to represent stories and experiences through pictures, dictation, and in play.</p> <p>Experiments with a growing variety of writing tools and materials, such as pencils, crayons, and computers.</p> <p>Progresses from using scribbles, shapes, or pictures to represent ideas, to using letter-like symbols, to copying or writing familiar words such as their own name.</p>
	Alphabet Knowledge	<p>Shows progress in associating the names of letters with their shapes and sounds.</p> <p>Increases in ability to notice the beginning letters in familiar words.</p> <p>Identifies at least 10 letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name.</p> <p>Knows that letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named.</p>
MATHEMATICS	Number & Operations	<p>Demonstrates increasing interest and awareness of numbers and counting as a means for solving problems and determining quantity.</p> <p>Begins to associate number concepts, vocabulary, quantities and written numerals in meaningful ways.</p> <p>Develops increasing ability to count in sequence to 10 and beyond.</p> <p>Begins to make use of one-to-one correspondence in counting objects and matching groups of objects.</p> <p>Begins to use language to compare numbers of objects with terms such as more, less, greater than, fewer, equal to.</p> <p>Develops increased abilities to combine, separate and name “how many” concrete objects.</p>
	Geometry & Spatial Sense	<p>Begins to recognize, describe, compare and name common shapes, their parts and attributes.</p> <p>Progresses in ability to put together and take apart shapes.</p> <p>Begins to be able to determine whether or not two shapes are the same size and shape.</p> <p>Shows growth in matching, sorting, putting in a series and regrouping objects according to one or two attributes such as color, shape or size.</p> <p>Builds an increasing understanding of directionality, order and positions of objects, and words such as up, down, over, under, top, bottom, inside, outside, in front and behind.</p>
	Patterns & Measurement	<p>Enhances abilities to recognize, duplicate and extend simple patterns using a variety of materials.</p> <p>Shows increasing abilities to match, sort, put in a series, and regroup objects according to one or two attributes such as shape or size.</p> <p>Begins to make comparisons between several objects based on a single attribute.</p> <p>Shows progress in using standard and non-standard measures for length and area of objects.</p>
SCIENCE	Scientific Skills & Methods	<p>Begins to use senses and a variety of tools and simple measuring devices to gather information, investigate materials and observe processes and relationships.</p> <p>Develops increased ability to observe and discuss common properties, differences and comparisons among objects and materials.</p> <p>Begins to participate in simple investigations to test observations, discuss and draw conclusions and form generalizations.</p> <p>Develops growing abilities to collect, describe and record information through a variety of means, including discussion, drawings, maps and charts.</p> <p>Begins to describe and discuss predictions, explanations and generalizations based on past experiences.</p>



SCIENCE Continued.	Scientific Knowledge	Expands knowledge of and abilities to observe, describe and discuss the natural world, materials, living things and natural processes.
		Expands knowledge of and respect for their body and the environment.
		Develops growing awareness of ideas and language related to attributes of time and temperature.
		Shows increased awareness and beginning understanding of changes in materials and cause-effect relationships.
CREATIVE ARTS	Music	Participates with increasing interest and enjoyment in a variety of music activities, including listening, singing, finger plays, games, and performances.
		Experiments with a variety of musical instruments.
	Art	Gains ability in using different art media and materials in a variety of ways for creative expression and representation.
		Progresses in abilities to create drawings, paintings, models, and other art creations that are more detailed, creative or realistic.
		Develops growing abilities to plan, work independently, and demonstrate care and persistence in a variety of art projects.
		Begins to understand and share opinions about artistic products and experiences.
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Movement	Expresses through movement and dancing what is felt and heard in various musical tempos and styles.
		Shows growth in moving in time to different patterns of beat and rhythm in music.
	Dramatic Play	Participates in a variety of dramatic play activities that become more extended and complex.
		Shows growing creativity and imagination in using materials and in assuming different roles in dramatic play situations.
	Self Concept	Begins to develop and express awareness of self in terms of specific abilities, characteristics and preferences.
		Develops growing capacity for independence in a range of activities, routines, and tasks.
		Demonstrates growing confidence in a range of abilities and expresses pride in accomplishments.
	Self Control	Shows progress in expressing feelings, needs and opinions in difficult situations and conflicts without harming themselves, others, or property.
		Develops growing understanding of how their actions affect others and begins to accept the consequences of their actions.
		Demonstrates increasing capacity to follow rules and routines and use materials purposefully, safely, and respectfully.
	Cooperation	Increases abilities to sustain interactions with peers by helping, sharing and discussion.
		Shows increasing abilities to use compromise and discussion in working, playing and resolving conflicts with peers.
		Develops increasing abilities to give and take in interactions; to take turns in games or using materials; and to interact without being overly submissive or directive.
	Social Relationships	Demonstrates increasing comfort in talking with and accepting guidance and directions from a range of familiar adults.
		Shows progress in developing friendships with peers.
	Knowledge of Families and Communities	Progresses in responding sympathetically to peers who are in need, upset, hurt, or angry; and in expressing empathy or caring for others.
		Develops ability to identify personal characteristics including gender, and family composition.
		Progresses in understanding similarities and respecting differences among people, such as genders, race, special needs, culture, language, and family structures.
		Develops growing awareness of jobs and what is required to perform them.
		Begins to express and understand concepts and language of geography in the contexts of their classroom, home and community.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING	Initiative and Curiosity	Chooses to participate in an increasing variety of tasks and activities.	
		Develops increased ability to make independent choices.	
		Approaches tasks and activities with increased flexibility, imagination and inventiveness.	
		Grows in eagerness to learn about and discuss a growing range of topics, ideas and tasks.	
	Engagement & Persistence	Grows in abilities to persist in and complete a variety of tasks, activities, projects and experiences.	
		Demonstrates increasing ability to set goals and develop and follow through on plans.	
		Shows growing capacity to maintain concentration over time on a task, question, set of directions or interactions, despite distractions and interruptions.	
	Reasoning & Problem Solving	Develops increasing ability to find more than one solution to a question, task or problem.	
		Grows in recognizing and solving problems through active exploration, including trial and error, and interactions and discussions with peers and adults.	
		Develops increasing abilities to classify, compare and contrast objects, events and experiences.	
	PHYSICAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT	Fine Motor Skills	Develops growing strength, dexterity and control needed to use tools such as scissors, paper punch, stapler, and hammer.
			Grows in hand-eye coordination in building with blocks, putting together puzzles, reproducing shapes and patterns, stringing beads and using scissors.
Progresses in abilities to use writing, drawing and art tools including pencils, markers, chalk, paint brushes, and various types of technology.			
Gross Motor Skills		Shows increasing levels of proficiency, control and balance in walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching and galloping.	
		Demonstrates increasing abilities to coordinate movements in throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing balls, and using the slide and swing.	
Health Status & Practices		Progresses in physical growth, strength, stamina, and flexibility.	
		Participates actively in games, outdoor play and other forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness.	
		Shows growing independence in hygiene, nutrition and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth and toileting.	
		Builds awareness and ability to follow basic health and safety rules such as fire safety, traffic and pedestrian safety, and responding appropriately to potentially harmful objects, substances and activities.	

## Appendix D: Examples of Current Community-Wide Supports for School Readiness

### Boston Children's Museum

Started in 1913, the Boston Children's Museum has grown into a nationally-renowned institution to help children explore and enjoy the world in which they live, through hands-on exhibits, classes and special events. Through partnerships with local organizations, schools, and communities, the Museum provides high quality early museum experiences, as well as extensive professional development for Boston-area educators and providers. To expand on the commitment the Museum began as a founder of Countdown to Kindergarten, the Museum is planning Countdown to Kindergarten: The Exhibit to engage Boston parents of young children and to serve as a model preschool/kindergarten classroom for training and collaboration-building among local early educators.

### Boston Community Partnerships for Children

Community Partnerships for Children (CPC), a grant program of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, provides funding for planning and coordination at the local level, early education and care for low income children and children with special needs, and programs focused on provider quality improvement, workforce development, and family education and support. The Boston CPC includes neighborhood-based groups or "clusters" and is governed by a citywide council representing parents, the Boston Public Schools, Head Start, private and community-based programs, family child care, and community based organizations that support early education and care. Boston received over \$9 million dollars in CPC funding in FY2008.

### Countdown to Kindergarten

Countdown to Kindergarten is a collaborative initiative, now housed at the Boston Public Schools, to prepare young children and families for school and to ensure an effective transition from home, preschool and Head Start into BPS. Countdown provides information and training to parents and providers and promotes policy changes to ensure schools are welcoming and engaging new students and families. Some of Countdown's work includes the "I'm Ready!" DVD, Play to Learn Groups, and the "Milestones" and "You Are Your Child's First Teacher" campaigns.

### Early Childhood System of Care

The Early Childhood System of Care, led by The Home for Little Wanderers and funded by United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, is a new pilot project in Allston-Brighton to build a comprehensive network of early childhood mental health services to better meet the multiple and changing needs of young children and their families. The network includes partnerships with pediatric practices, newborn and infant home visits, and training on developmentally appropriate and strengths-based practices with children and families.

### Early Education for All

The statewide Early Education for All Campaign advocates to ensure voluntary, universally accessible, high-quality pre-kindergarten delivered through a mix of public and private programs and full school-day public kindergarten for every child in Massachusetts. The campaign also advocates for improved training, education and compensation of the early childhood workforce.

### Early Intervention

Early Intervention (EI) is a statewide program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for children ages birth to 3 years old. It serves children who have identified special needs, measurable developmental delays, or 4 out of a list of 20 birth or environmental risk factors for development. EI

professionals provide developmental, therapeutic, and supportive services to the child and family through home visits and services in early education and care programs or other settings that are part of the child and family's every day life.

### Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start are national, primarily federally-funded early education and care programs for low income children that provide comprehensive health and mental health, nutrition, home visiting and family support and involvement services offered in Dorchester through Dimock Community Health Center and in every neighborhood in Boston for over forty years through Action for Boston Community Development.

### Home Visiting

Many home visiting programs operate in Boston, providing single visits to ongoing case management and support to young children and families. **Healthy Baby Healthy Child**, a program of the Boston Public Health Commission, provides ongoing home visiting to ensure positive birth outcomes, reduce infant mortality and support family unity for pregnant and parenting families with a child under age 3. **Healthy Families** is a statewide program of the Children's Trust Fund which provides strengths-based, family-centered, intensive home visiting services for all first-time parents ages 20 and under. "**Welcome Baby!**", a program of the Family Nurturing Center, provides families of newborns in three Boston neighborhoods with gifts, information, and a community resource directory to link families to a variety of community supports.

### Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a national nonprofit organization that trains caring adults (college students and older adults) to work one-to-one in exclusive yearlong relationships with preschool children from low-income communities to improve their cognitive and emotional development, aiming for them to enter kindergarten prepared to succeed at grade level. In 2004, Jumpstart launched the School Readiness for All Initiative, a community-based growth effort focused on providing a Jumpstart mentor for every four-year-old child in need in four of Boston's lowest-income communities (Roxbury, South Boston, North Dorchester, and Jamaica Plain).

### Mind in the Making

Mind in the Making, supported in Boston by United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, is a national training program for early childhood educators that uses video modules to illustrate effective practice based on the science of early childhood.

### Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read is a program created by Boston Medical Center in which pediatricians and their staff provide parents of children ages six months to 5 years old with free age-appropriate books and guidance on how to introduce children to the world of books – and in so doing, nurture emotional development, language development and desire to learn. Reach Out and Read has grown to be a nationwide program with over 1,000 sites, and is available in a number of pediatric settings in Boston.

### ReadBoston

ReadBoston is a non-profit organization founded by Mayor Thomas M. Menino to support citywide literacy programs for children from birth through elementary school – with the specific goal that all children will read at grade level by the end of third grade. ReadBoston's new Early Words campaign helps parents and other adults understand and act on the importance of nurturing the spoken language development of young children.

### The Readiness Project

In early August, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick created the Readiness Project, a council whose mission is to develop a strategic plan to implement the Governor's vision for education in the Commonwealth, including specific action steps, timelines, benchmarks and cost estimates. The Project aims to implement the Governor's broader vision with the goal of ensuring that each individual has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential and be a productive, engaged and contributing citizen.

### Smart from the Start

Building on the initial recommendations of 0-5 planners in Boston, and coordinating with the APT, Smart from the Start is a family support and community engagement initiative that promotes low-income children entering school with a strong foundation of cognitive, language, physical, and social/emotional strengths. Created by the Office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, the Boston Housing Authority, the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Public Health Commission, the Family Nurturing Center and key community organizations, Smart from the Start expands and strengthens early learning opportunities, promotes parents' role as their children's first teacher and builds neighborhood will, understanding and capacity to support school readiness.

### Y/BPS

Y/BPS is a partnership among the YMCA of Greater Boston, the Boston Public Schools, and the Office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino to help families answer the question, "Why should I consider the Boston Public Schools for my child's education?" With the goals of increasing civic engagement in and commitment to the public schools and ensuring the schools reflect the diversity of families living in Boston, Y/BPS places project managers in YMCA branches throughout the city to engage families of all races and cultures who might otherwise opt out of BPS without investigating the school system. Y/BPS employs direct parent-to-parent outreach techniques such as one-to-one meetings, workshops and house parties; a speakers bureau of current BPS parents; and outreach grants and technical assistance to excellent schools that are not well known.

## Appendix E: Boston's School Readiness Action Planning Team Members by sector

Co-Chairs: Jackie Jenkins-Scott, Wheelock College President, and Sandra Fenwick, Children's Hospital Boston Chief Operating Officer

	Early Education and Care (family child care, private/community-based centers, Head Start/Early Head Start, school-based early education, and State agencies)	Early Childhood Advocacy	Research and Higher Education	K-12 Education	Health and Mental Health
TOTAL #	10	4	2	4	6
<p><i>Criteria for APT membership:</i></p> <p><i>In a position to <b>implement</b> the developed plan</i></p> <p><i>and</i></p> <p><i>will contribute significantly as <b>thinker</b> or as well-respected <b>leader</b> in his/her field of expertise or community</i></p> <p>.....</p> <p><i>Representative of the diversity of Boston's children and families.</i></p> <p><i>Significant representation from Boston residents &amp; people considered new/emerging leaders.</i></p>	<p><b>Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.</b> ABCD Head Start and Children's Services</p> <p><b>Doug Baird, BS</b> and <b>Wayne Ysaguirre, MPM</b> Associated Early Care and Education</p> <p><b>Mary Dooley</b> Boston Community Partnerships Council</p> <p><b>Jason Sachs, PhD</b> Boston Public Schools</p> <p><b>Mary Grace Casey</b> Shattuck Child Care Center</p> <p><b>Gail DeRiggi</b> MA Department of Early Education and Care</p> <p><b>Min-Hua Chen, EdD</b> MA Department of Education</p> <p><b>Lourdes Sariol</b> Child Care Project/ Associated Early Care and Education</p> <p><b>Mary Kinsella, BS</b> Colonel Daniel Marr Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester</p>	<p><b>Margaret Blood</b> Strategies for Children/Early Education for All</p> <p><b>Sandra Fenwick</b> Children's Hospital Boston</p> <p><b>Mary Reed, MEd</b> Bessie Tarrt Wilson Children's Foundation</p> <p><b>Pat Xavier, MA</b> Boston Child Care Alliance</p>	<p><b>Jackie Jenkins-Scott</b> Wheelock College</p> <p><b>Hiro Yoshikawa, PhD</b> Harvard Graduate School of Education</p>	<p><b>Valerie Gumes</b> Haynes Early Education Center</p> <p><b>Mayra Cuevas, MEd</b> Boston Public Schools</p> <p><b>Marchelle Raynor, MSW, LCSW</b> Boston School Committee/ Gertrude Townsend Head Start</p> <p><b>Carolyn Riley, MEd</b> Boston Public Schools</p>	<p><b>Enrico Mezzacappa, MD</b> Children's Hospital Boston</p> <p><b>Roderick King, MD</b> Harvard Medical School/ Massachusetts General Hospital Disparities Solutions Center</p> <p><b>Margot Kaplan-Sanoff, EdD</b> Boston University School of Medicine</p> <p><b>Beth Burlingame, LICSW</b> Bayview Associates/ MA Association of Family Centered Service Providers</p> <p><b>Alexy Arauz Boudreau, MD</b> Massachusetts General Hospital</p> <p><b>Michelle Bordeu, MPH</b> and <b>Patricia Whitworth, RN, BS</b> Boston Public Health Commission</p>



Community-based, Immigrant and Multi-Service Organizations	Parenting Education, Family Support, Family Literacy, and Early Intervention	Basic Needs and Human Services (food, housing, safety)	Parent Advocacy and Parent/Family Engagement	Faith, Arts, Culture and Recreation	Foundation and Private Sector
8	6	6	5	5	9
<p><b>Rev. Cheng Imm Tan</b> Mayor's Office of New Bostonians</p> <p><b>Yvette Rodriguez, BA</b> Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción</p> <p><b>Nicole St. Victor, MA</b> Yawkey Center/ Haitian Multi Service Center</p> <p><b>Wendy Luk, MEd</b> Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center</p> <p><b>Randal Rucker, MCP</b> Family Service of Greater Boston</p> <p><b>Denise Gonsalves</b> Cape Verdean Community UNIDO</p> <p><b>Pam Ogletree, MBA</b> Children's Services of Roxbury, Inc.</p> <p><b>Farrell Gonsalves, MSW, LICSW</b> Greater Boston Catholic Charities</p>	<p><b>Crista Martinez, MSW, MBA</b> Families First Parenting Programs</p> <p><b>Matt LiPuma, LICSW</b> Family Nurturing Center of MA</p> <p><b>Erin Cox Weinberg, BA</b> Jumpstart for Young Children</p> <p><b>Sharon Goldstein, LICSW, MA</b> The Home for Little Wanderers</p> <p><b>John Lippitt, PhD</b> MA Department of Public Health</p> <p><b>Laurel Burnham Deacon, MA</b> MA Children's Trust Fund</p>	<p><b>Deborah Collins-Gousby</b> Casa Myrna Vasquez</p> <p><b>Doris Brown, MEd</b> Crittenton Women's Union</p> <p><b>Christine Araujo and Janet Fender, MS</b> MA Department of Transitional Assistance</p> <p><b>Barbara Curley, MSW, LICSW</b> MA Department of Social Services</p> <p><b>Sandra Henriquez, BA</b> Boston Housing Authority</p> <p><b>Brad Kramer</b> Horizons for Homeless Children</p>	<p><b>Caprice Taylor Mendez, MEd</b> Boston Parent Organizing Network</p> <p><b>Deborah Gray, MSHS</b> Boston Public Schools</p> <p><b>Charlotte Spinkston, MEd</b> Urban PRIDE</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>Parents APT Representatives:</b></p> <p><b>Gloria Weekes, BA</b> Parent</p> <p><b>Andrea Lesser-Gonzalez, MEd</b> Parent/Panda's Playcare Family Childcare</p>	<p><b>Nia Alimayu, BS</b> The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston</p> <p><b>Wendy Zinn</b> YMCA of Greater Boston</p> <p><b>Rubi Simon, MLIS</b> Boston Public Library</p> <p><b>Jeri Robinson, MS</b> Boston Children's Museum</p> <p><b>Jóse Massó, BA</b> WBUR 90.9 FM</p>	<p><b>Peg Sprague, MS</b> United Way of MA Bay and Merrimack Valley</p> <p><b>Nicholas Donohue, MEd and Lynn D'Ambrose, MPS, MEd</b> Nellie Mae Education Foundation</p> <p><b>Carol Fulp</b> John Hancock</p> <p><b>Nishith Acharya</b> The Deshpande Foundation</p> <p><b>Richard Ward and Elizabeth Pauley, MEd</b> The Boston Foundation</p> <p><b>Charles Desmond, PhD</b> Trefler Foundation</p> <p><b>Kimberly Haskins</b> Barr Foundation</p>

## Parents APT

## Staff

Parents APT			Staff	
<b>Tieteasha Adderley</b> Jamaica Plain	<b>Kacy Hughes</b> Jamaica Plain	<b>Odaliza Rivera</b> South Boston	<b>Steve Greeley</b> <b>APT Facilitator/ Strategic Planner</b> <i>President</i> DCA, Inc.	<b>Denise Snyder</b> <i>Director</i> Countdown to Kindergarten
<b>Dynell Andrews-Blake</b> Dorchester	<b>Janet Iraola</b> South Boston	<b>Kristin Shapiro</b> Jamaica Plain		<b>Mary Waldron</b> <i>Project Assistant</i> DCA, Inc.
<b>Ivette Arias</b> Mattapan	<b>Krista Kett</b> Brighton	<b>Kalda Smith</b> Dorchester	<b>Laurie Sherman,</b> <b>MMHS, Project Director</b> <i>Mayoral Advisor for Education, Health, and Human Services</i> Office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino	<b>Kate Weldon</b> <b>LeBlanc, MSPA</b> <i>City and Community Relations Manager</i> <i>Aide to Sandra Fenwick</i> Children's Hospital Boston
<b>Crystal Beck</b> South End	<b>Andrea Lesser- Gonzalez*</b> Roslindale	<b>Melinda Stewart</b> Roxbury		
<b>Paulo De Barros</b> Dorchester	<b>Alicia Lopes</b> Mission Hill	<b>Ann Walsh</b> Dorchester	<b>Cassandra Baxter</b> <i>Policy Specialist, Aide to Jackie Jenkins-Scott</i> Wheelock College	<b>John Williams, MPA</b> <i>Lead Facilitator</i> DCA, Inc.
<b>Arnita DeJesus</b> Dorchester	<b>Mary McFadden</b> Dorchester	<b>Zina Ward</b> West Roxbury		
<b>Loyna DeJesus</b> Roxbury	<b>Colleen McGuire</b> Allston	<b>Gloria Weekes*</b> Hyde Park	<b>Katie Britton, MSW</b> <i>Senior Assistant for 0 to 5 Strategic Planning</i> Office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino	<b>Laura Yenchman</b> <i>Project Assistant</i> DCA, Inc.
<b>Christy dela Paz</b> Brighton	<b>Heather Mook</b> Roslindale	<b>Julie Ann Williams</b> East Boston		<b>Corey Zimmerman</b> <i>Research and Policy Director</i> Boston EQUIP at Associated Early Care and Education
<b>Heather Duverna</b> Dorchester	<b>Yajaira Moore</b> Allston	*Served as Parents APT Representatives on the APT.	<b>Katey Connaghan,</b> <b>PhD</b> <i>Senior Research Associate</i> Boston EQUIP at Associated Early Care and Education	
<b>George Ejim</b> South End	<b>Ming Nagasawa</b> Dorchester			
<b>Heidi Fritz</b> South Boston	<b>Kelly Pellagrini</b> Charlestown			
<b>Michael Harrington</b> Dorchester	<b>Gina Prantil</b> Fenway			
<b>Tra'neal Holloman</b> Roxbury	<b>Clare Reilly</b> Jamaica Plain		<b>Christine Robinson</b> <i>DCA Consultant</i> Stillwaters Consultation	

## Appendix F: Boston's School Readiness Action Planning Team (APT) – alphabetically

*Launched: March 2007*

### Co-Chairs:

**Jackie Jenkins-Scott**  
*President*  
Wheelock College

**Sandra Fenwick**  
*Chief Operating Officer*  
Children's Hospital Boston

### Members:

**Nishith Acharya**  
*Executive Director*  
The Deshpande Foundation

**Mary Grace Casey**  
*Co-Director*  
Shattuck Child Care Center

**Janet Fender, MS**  
*Director of Domestic Violence Unit*  
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

**Nia Alimayu, BS**  
*Technical Assistance Specialist*  
The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston

**Min-hua Chen, EdD**  
*Education Specialist, Elementary School Services*  
Massachusetts Department of Education

**Carol Fulp**  
*Vice President of Community Relations*  
John Hancock

**Christine Araujo**  
*Director of Project Management*  
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

**Deborah Collins-Gousby**  
*Interim Co-Executive Director, Director of Residential Services*  
Casa Myrna Vasquez

**Sharon Goldstein, LICSW, MA**  
*Co-Director of the Early Childhood Center*  
The Home for Little Wanderers

**Alexy D. Arauz Boudreau, MD**  
*Assistant in Pediatrics*  
Massachusetts General Hospital

**Erin Cox Weinberg, BA**  
*Executive Director*  
Jumpstart for Young Children

**Farrell L. Gonsalves, LICSW, MSW**  
*Director of Social Services*  
Greater Boston Catholic Charities

**Douglas S. Baird, BS**  
*President*  
Baird Associates, Inc.

**Mayra Lydia Cuevas, MEd**  
*Early Childhood Program Director*  
Boston Public Schools

**Denise Gonsalves**  
*Former Executive Director*  
Cape Verdean Community UNIDO

**Margaret Blood**  
*President*  
Strategies for Children/Early Education for All

**Barbara Curley, MSW, LICSW**  
*Dimock Street Area Director*  
Massachusetts Department of Social Services

**Deborah Gray, MSHS**  
*Special Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent for Family and Community Engagement*  
Boston Public Schools

**Michelle Bordeu, MPH**  
*Bureau Director for Women and Children*  
Boston Public Health Commission

**Lynn D'Ambrose, MPA, MEd**  
*Senior Program Officer*  
Nellie Mae Education Foundation

**Doris Yevtte Brown, MEd**  
*Assistant Vice President of Housing Services*  
Crittenton Women's Union

**Gail DeRiggi**  
*Director of Family Engagement and Support*  
Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care

**Valerie Gumes**  
*Principal*  
Rev. Dr. Michael E. Haynes Early Education Center

**Beth Burlingame, LICSW**  
*Program Director of Outreach and Family Support and Stabilization/President*  
Bayview Associates/  
Massachusetts Association of Family Centered Service Providers

**Charles F. Desmond, PhD**  
*Executive Vice President*  
Trefler Foundation

**Kimberly Haskins**  
*Senior Program Officer*  
Barr Foundation

**Laurel Burnham Deacon, MA**  
*Healthy Families Massachusetts Resource Liaison*  
Children's Trust Fund

**Nicholas Donohue, MEd**  
*President and CEO*  
Nellie Mae Education Foundation

**Sandra B. Henriquez, BA**  
*Administrator/CEO*  
Boston Housing Authority

**Mary Dooley**  
*President/Program Director*  
Boston Community Partnership Council/East Boston Head Start

**Margot Kaplan-Sanoff, EdD**  
*Associate Professor of Pediatrics*  
Boston University School of Medicine

**Roderick King, MD, MPH**  
*Senior Faculty*  
Massachusetts General Hospital Disparities Solutions Center

**Mary Kinsella, BS**  
*Vice President of Child Care Services*  
Colonel Daniel Marr Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester

**Brad Kramer**  
*Director of Policy and Advocacy*  
Horizons for Homeless Children

**Andrea D. Lesser-Gonzalez, MEd**  
*Parents APT and Family Child Care Provider*  
Panda's Playcare Family Childcare, Roslindale

**John A. Lippitt, PhD**  
*Project Director*  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

**Matt LiPuma, LICSW**  
*Executive Director*  
Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts

**Wendy Luk, MEd**  
*Program Director, Family Child Care*  
Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center

**Crista Martinez, MSW, MBA**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Families First Parenting Programs

**Jóse Massó, BA**  
*Host/Producer of Con Salsa!*  
WBUR 90.9 FM

**Enrico Mezzacappa, MD**  
*Director of Residency Training, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*  
Children's Hospital, Boston

**Pamela Ogletree, MBA**  
*President and CEO*  
Children's Services of Roxbury, Inc.

**Elizabeth Pauley, MEd**  
*Senior Program Officer, Education*  
The Boston Foundation

**Marchelle Raynor, MSW, LCSW**  
*Head Start Program Director/ School Committee Member*  
Gertrude E. Townsend Head Start/Boston School Committee

**Mary Reed, MEd**  
*President*  
Bessie Tarrt Wilson Children's Foundation

**Carolyn Riley, MEd**  
*Senior Director, Unified Student Services*  
Boston Public Schools

**Jeri Robinson, MS**  
*Vice President of Family and Early Childhood Learning*  
Boston Children's Museum

**Yvette Rodriguez, BA**  
*Chief Operating Officer*  
Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción

**Randal D. Rucker, MCP**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Family Service of Greater Boston

**Jason Sachs, EdD, MA**  
*Director, Department of Early Childhood*  
Boston Public Schools

**Lourdes R. Sariol**  
*Vice President Family Child Care Programs/*  
Associated Early Care and Education

**Sharon Scott-Chandler, Esq.**  
*Vice President*  
ABCD Head Start and Children's Services

**Rubi Simon, MLIS**  
*Assistant Neighborhood Services Manager*  
Boston Public Library

**Charlotte R. Spinkston, MEd**  
*Executive Director/Founder*  
Urban PRIDE

**Peg Sprague, MS**  
*Vice President Community Impact*  
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

**Nicole St. Victor**  
*Director of Early Childhood Services*  
Yawkey Center/Haitian Multi Service Center

**Rev. Cheng Imm Tan**  
*Director*  
Mayor's Office of New Bostonians

**Caprice Taylor Mendez, MEd**  
*Director*  
Boston Parent Organizing Network

**Richard Ward**  
*Director of Grantmaking*  
The Boston Foundation

**Gloria Weekes, BA**  
*Parents APT Representative*  
Hyde Park

**Patricia Whitworth, RN, BS**  
*Director of Client Services, Healthy Baby Health Child*  
Boston Public Health Commission

**Pat Xavier, MA**  
*Director*  
Boston Child Care Alliance

**Hirokazu Yoshikawa, PhD**  
*Professor of Education*  
Harvard Graduate School of Education

**Wayne Ysaguirre, MPM**  
*Acting President and CEO*  
Associated Early Care and Education

**Wendy Zinn**  
*District Vice President*  
YMCA of Greater Boston

## Appendix G: Action Planning Team Working Groups

### Ready Families Working Group

#### Co-Chairs:

**Charlotte R. Spinkston**  
*Director*  
Urban PRIDE

**Wendy Zinn**  
*District Vice President*  
YMCA of Greater Boston

#### Members:

**Nia Alimayu**  
*Technical Assistance Specialist*  
The Black Ministerial Alliance  
of Greater Boston

**Melanie Griffin**  
*Director*  
Children's Community Early  
Intervention Program

**Elizabeth Pauley**  
*Senior Program Officer,  
Education*  
The Boston Foundation

**Laurel Burnham Deacon**  
*Healthy Families Massachusetts  
Resource Liaison*  
Children's Trust Fund

**Matt LiPuma**  
*Executive Director*  
Family Nurturing Center of  
Massachusetts

**Loretta Prendeville**  
*Support Services Coordinator*  
Child Care Choices for Boston

**Barbara Curley**  
*Dimock Street Area Director*  
Massachusetts Department of  
Social Services

**Wendy Luk**  
*Program Director - Family  
Child Care*  
Boston Chinatown  
Neighborhood Center

**Jeri Robinson**  
*Vice President of Family and  
Early Childhood Learning*  
Boston Children's Museum

**Christy dela Paz**  
*Parents APT*

**Artie Maharaj**  
*Data and Research Team Intern*  
Boston EQUIP/Associated Early  
Care and Education

**Yvette Rodriguez**  
*Chief Operating Officer*  
Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción

**Heather Duverna**  
*Parents APT*

**Crista Martinez**  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Families First Parenting  
Programs

**Nicole St. Victor**  
*Director of Early  
Childhood Services*  
Yawkey Center/Haitian Multi  
Service Center

**Farrell Gonsalves**  
*Director of Social Services*  
Greater Boston Catholic  
Charities

**Deborah Gray**  
*Special Assistant to the Deputy  
Superintendent for Family and  
Community Engagement*  
Boston Public Schools

**Bernadette Moitt**  
*Director of Child and  
Adolescent Mental Health*  
Boston Public Health  
Commission

**Caprice Taylor Mendez**  
*Director*  
Boston Parent Organizing  
Network

**Corey Zimmerman**  
*Research and Policy Director*  
Boston EQUIP/Associated  
Early Care and Education

### Ready Educators Working Group

#### Co-Chairs:

**Marchelle Raynor**  
*Head Start Program Director*  
Gertrude E. Townsend Head Start

**Pat Xavier**  
*Director*  
Boston Child Care Alliance

#### Members:

**Doug Baird**  
*President*  
Baird Associates, Inc.

**Min-hua Chen**  
*Education Specialist,  
Elementary School Services*  
Massachusetts Department  
of Education

**Dean Elson**  
*Senior Director of Evaluation*  
Jumpstart

**Margaret Blood**  
*President*  
Strategies for Children/Early  
Education for All

**Mary Dooley**  
*President/Program Director*  
Boston Community  
Partnership Council/East  
Boston Head Start

**Laurie Glassman**  
*Director*  
Child Care Choices of Boston

**Mary Grace Casey**  
*Co-Director*  
Shattuck Child Care Center

**Michael Harrington**  
*Parents APT*

*Ready Educators Working Group,  
Continued*

**Kimberly Haskins**  
*Senior Program Officer*  
Barr Foundation

**Barbara Jacobs**  
*Director of Program*  
*Development and Evaluation*  
ABCD Head Start and  
Children's Services

**Janet Jones**  
*Program Director*  
Bartholomew Family  
Child Care

**Mary Kinsella**  
*Vice President of Child Care*  
*Services*  
Colonel Daniel Marr Boys and  
Girls Club of Dorchester

**Andrea Lesser-Gonzalez**  
*Parents APT*

**Mav Pardee**  
*Program Manager*  
Child Care Capital  
Investment Project

**Mary Reed**  
*President*  
Bessie Tarrt Wilson Children's  
Foundation

**Margaret Ris**  
*Board Co-Chair*  
Sophia's Hearth Family Center

**Marta Rosa**  
*Director of Government affairs*  
Wheelock College

**Jason Sachs**  
*Director, Department of Early*  
*Childhood*  
Boston Public Schools

**Lourdes Sariol**  
*Vice President Family Child*  
*Care Programs/Co-Chair*  
Associated Early Care and  
Education/Boston CPC Family  
Child Care Committee

**Corey Zimmerman**  
*Research and Policy Director*  
Boston EQUIP/ Associated  
Early Care and Education

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## Ready Systems Working Group

### Co-Chairs:

**Alexy Arauz Boudreau**  
*Assistant in Pediatrics*  
MGH Center for Child and  
Adolescent Health Policy

**John Lippitt**  
*Project Director*  
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

### Members:

**Nishith Acharya**  
*Executive Director*  
Desh and Jaishree Deshpande  
Foundation

**Michelle Bordeu**  
*Bureau Director for Women*  
*and Children*  
Boston Public Health  
Commission

**Beth Burlingame**  
*Program Director of*  
*Outreach and Family*  
*Support and Stabilization*  
Bayview Associates/Massa-  
chusetts Association of Family  
Centered Service Providers

**Deborah Collins-Gousby**  
*Interim Co-Executive Director,*  
*Director of Residential Services*  
Casa Myrna Vasquez

**Katey Connaghan**  
*Senior Research Associate*  
Boston EQUIP/Associated Early  
Care and Education

**Barbara Curley**  
*Dimock Street Area Director*  
Massachusetts Department of  
Social Services

**Sharon Goldstein**  
*Co-Director of the*  
*Early Childhood Center*  
The Home for Little Wanderers

**Toby Guevin**  
*Data and Research Team Intern*  
Boston EQUIP/Associated Early  
Care and Education

**Margot Kaplan Sanoff**  
*Associate Professor of Pediatrics*  
Boston University School of  
Medicine

**Heather Mook**  
*Parents APT*

**Gina Prantil**  
*Parents APT*

**Sandy Sachs**  
*Child Development Specialist*  
Family Nurturing Center of  
Massachusetts

**Priscilla Samuel**  
*Early Intervention*  
*Regional Specialist*  
Boston Massachusetts  
Department of Public Health

**Janice Ware**  
*Associate Director,*  
*Developmental Medicine Center*  
Children's Hospital Boston

**Gloria Weekes**  
*Parents APT*



## Ready City Working Group

### Co-Chairs:

**Charles Desmond**  
*Executive Vice President*  
Trefler Foundation

**Peg Sprague**  
*Vice President Community Impact*  
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

### Members:

**Barbara Berke**  
*Advisor to the Mayor*  
Office of Mayor Thomas  
M. Menino

**Katie Britton**  
*Senior Assistant for 0-5  
Strategic Planning*  
Office of Mayor Thomas M.  
Menino

**Laurel Burnham**  
*Healthy Families Massachusetts  
Resource Liaison*  
Children's Trust Fund

**Erin Cox Weinberg**  
*Executive Director*  
Jumpstart for Young Children

**Elaine Fersh**  
*Partner*  
Community Matters

**Mary Gunn**  
*Executive Director*  
Generation Incorporated

**Talia Gursky**  
*Graduate Intern*  
United Way of Massachusetts  
Bay and Merrimack Valley

**Deborah Hirsch**  
*Executive Director*  
Boston Higher Education  
Partnership

**Nigel Jacob**  
*Special Assistant to the Mayor, MIS*  
Office of Mayor Thomas  
M. Menino

**Brad Kramer**  
*Director of Policy and Advocacy*  
Horizons for Homeless Children

**Becky Regan**  
*Loan Fund President and Acting  
Chief Financial Officer*  
Boston Community Capital

**Laurie Sherman**  
*Mayoral Advisor - Education,  
Health, Human Services*  
Office of Mayor Thomas  
M. Menino

**Rubi Simon**  
*Assistant Neighborhood  
Services Manager*  
Boston Public Library

**Denise Snyder**  
*Director*  
Countdown to Kindergarten

**Alicia Verity**  
*Senior Vice President*  
Bank of America

**Ann Walsh**  
*Parents APT*

**Richard Ward**  
*Director of Grantmaking*  
The Boston Foundation

**Dana Whiteside**  
*Deputy Director*  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

**Julie Ann Williams**  
*Parents APT*

## Appendix H: The Data and Research Team (DART)

### Co-Facilitators:

**Katie Britton**  
*Senior Assistant for 0-5  
Strategic Planning*  
Office of Mayor Thomas M. Menino

**Corey Zimmerman**  
*Research and Policy Director*  
Boston EQUIP/Associated Early  
Care and Education

### Members:

**Doug Baird**  
*President*  
Baird Associates, Inc.

**Katey Connaghan**  
*Senior Research Associate*  
Boston EQUIP/Associated  
Early Care and Education

**Tim Davis**  
*Director of Research,  
The Boston Indicators*  
The Boston Foundation

**Dean Elson**  
*Senior Director of Evaluation*  
Jumpstart

**Laurie Glassman**  
*Director*  
Child Care Choices of Boston

**Milena Gostanian**  
*Director of Child and Family  
Services*  
Crittenton Women's Union

**Kelly Graceffa**  
*Work-Family Services  
Coordinator*  
Child Care Choices of Boston

**Nigel Jacob**  
*Special Assistant to the  
Mayor, MIS*  
Office of Mayor Thomas  
M. Menino

**Barbara Jacobs**  
*Director of Program  
Development and Evaluation*  
Action for Boston Community  
Development

**Carleton Jones**  
*Strategic/Capital Planner*  
Boston Public Schools

**Charlotte Kahn**  
*Director, The Boston Indicators*  
The Boston Foundation

**Martina Kukin-Toponarski**  
*Research Assistant*  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

**Jennifer Louis**  
*Lead Research Analyst*  
Massachusetts Department of  
Early Education and Care

**Greg Perkins**  
*Assistant Director of PDR*  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

**Clare Sanford**  
*Director of Community Impact*  
United Way of Massachusetts  
Bay and Merrimack Valley

**Rod Southwick**  
*Director of Research  
and Evaluation*  
Massachusetts Department  
of Early Education and Care

## Appendix I: Mayor's Original Birth to Five Researcher and Practitioner Work Group – Fall 2006

In the fall of 2006, Mayor Menino convened a 12-person team of top researchers and practitioners to develop recommendations on the best ways to support early childhood development, in order to both jumpstart future planning and to identify immediate interventions for the most at risk families.

### Members:

**Catherine Donahue**  
Wheelock College

**Donna Haig Friedman**  
U. Mass/Boston

**Sonia N. Gomez-Banrey**  
Boston Public Schools Graduate  
and Parent Representative

**Margot Kaplan Sanoff**  
Boston University School  
of Medicine

**Enrico Mezzacappa**  
Children's Hospital Boston and  
Harvard Medical School

**Yvette Rodriguez**  
Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción

**Jason Sachs (Co-Chair)**  
Boston Public Schools

**Sandy Sachs**  
Family Nurturing Center  
of Massachusetts

**Nicole St. Victor**  
Yawkey Center/Haitian Multi  
Service Center

**Valora Washington**  
Schott Fellowship

**Richard Weissbourd (Co-Chair)**  
Harvard Graduate School of  
Education/Kennedy School of  
Government

**Hirokazu Yoshikawa**  
Harvard Graduate School of  
Education

### Staff:

**Margaret Angell**  
Boston Public Schools

**Kate Weldon LeBlanc**  
Children's Hospital Boston

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

## The Path Forward

*Thrive in Five: Boston's Promise to Its Children* outlines the path to universal school readiness. In addition to coordinating, strengthening and aligning existing services, below are examples of new efforts that will be taking place in Boston over the next ten years.

Strengthen the quality and reach of existing services. Develop new initiatives.

### Ready Families

"Community School Readiness Wiring" piloted in three Boston neighborhoods to weave information about child development, school readiness and parenting into families' neighborhoods and everyday lives

Countdown to Kindergarten's "Milestones" and "You Are Your Child's First Teacher" campaigns launched to educate and support parents, coordinating and building on ReadBoston's "Early Words" talk campaign

Parent-friendly online screening and information referral tool launched to help parents and providers identify and locate programs and services to help meet vital family needs

### Ready Educators

Universal accreditation campaign launched to improve the quality of early education and care throughout the city

Information about Boston's School Readiness Definition provided to all early education and care providers

Capital inventory of public and private early education settings, including playgrounds completed and standards developed to ensure safe, high quality environments for young children

### Ready Systems

Health center based pilots launched at two to three sites to provide welcome newborn visits, screening, parent education, and care coordination to families with young children; close coordination with efforts to improve screening and care coordination in other sites, such as early education and care settings

Pilots of expanded eligibility for Early Intervention and preschool special education launched to serve children and families facing "toxic stress" and social/emotional issues

### Ready City

*Thrive in Five* Leadership Team convened, staff hired, lead organizations in place, and implementation partnerships convened

Public and private early childhood funding streams identified and tracked to align and support early childhood services in Boston

City departments aligned with one another and the community to provide coordinated early childhood services

City-wide campaign(s) developed and coordinated to support community's role in school readiness

### Children Ready for Sustained School Success

BPS kindergarten assessment tool chosen and teacher training begun (by Sept. 2008)

Information and training on child assessment in early education and care settings begun

First Boston's School Readiness Progress Indicators report released to provide a baseline for readiness in all areas of *Thrive in Five*

and programs as needed. Ensure alignment and integration of all efforts.

### Ready Families

“Community School Readiness Wiring” expanded to nine Boston neighborhoods, building on existing neighborhood strengths and coalitions

Access to online screening and information referral tool at all Boston libraries and community centers

Boston parent peer-to-peer video created and distributed

### Ready Families

All Boston neighborhoods “Community School Readiness Wired”

Citywide access to online screening and information referral tool

### Ready Educators

47% of early education and care in Boston accredited

Comprehensive early educators professional development plan proceeds

### Ready Educators

90% of early education and care in Boston accredited

Equitable pay scale implemented through early education and care field

### Ready Systems

Health center based pilots expanded

Early intervention and preschool special education pilots expanded

### Ready Systems

All settings reaching young children (health care, early education, early intervention and others) have an effective system for screening and referral. Early intervention and mental health services expanded to meet identified need and aligned from birth through school entry and into the early elementary grades

### Ready City

Employer program piloted to support early childhood development, parenting, and school readiness

On-going public and private early childhood investment group meets to continue to analyze and increase investment in the early years

### Ready City

Citywide campaigns implemented and improved regularly, resulting in visible signs throughout the city of a commitment to early childhood development and school readiness, from educational signs in grocery stores to art at children's eye level to parenting information in multiple languages available in many formats and locations

### Children Ready for Sustained School Success

All BPS early childhood teachers trained in kindergarten assessment tool to inform classroom instruction and provide citywide data on children's readiness at school entry

First citywide data on children's readiness at school entry reported

Boston School Readiness Summits held to report progress – 2010, 2012

### Children Ready for Sustained School Success

Boston School Readiness Summits held to report on progress and determine methods to overcome barriers identified to success in any area of Thrive in Five – 2015, 2018

2010

2012

2013

2018

# Acknowledgments from the APT Co-Chairs

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- ❖ Ready Families – **Charlotte Spinkston** of Urban PRIDE and **Wendy Zinn** of YMCA of Greater Boston
- ❖ Ready Educators – **Marchelle Raynor** of the Boston School Committee and Head Start and **Pat Xavier** of the Boston Child Care Alliance
- ❖ Ready Systems – **Dr. Alexy Arauz Boudreau** of Massachusetts General Hospital and **John Lippitt** of the Mass. Department of Public Health
- ❖ Ready City – **Charles Desmond** of the Treffer Foundation and **Peg Sprague** of United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

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Plan writers: Steve Greeley, Katie Britton, Laurie Sherman





For more information about *Thrive in Five* and Boston's School Readiness Roadmap, visit:

[www.thrivein5boston.org](http://www.thrivein5boston.org)



Thomas M. Menino  
*Mayor of Boston*



United Way  
of Massachusetts Bay  
and Merrimack Valley