



Every Child Given Every Opportunity to Thrive

Advancing Early Childhood
and School Readiness in Boston



A background image featuring a close-up of a young child's face on the right side, looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The child's hands are visible in the center, with fingers spread. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white rectangular area that contains the text.

Dear Reader,

Ten years ago, Boston started an important conversation about ensuring all young children in our City have the opportunity to succeed in school. Over two mayoral administrations, we came together with the common ideals that all of Boston's children – regardless of zip code, income or ethnicity – should have the same access to early childhood supports and opportunities to thrive.

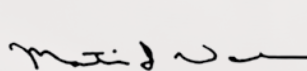
Congratulations to all of those who have helped to shape, lead and deepen the work of Thrive in 5. Our goal at the beginning was to catalyze a new citywide conversation, to inform how the City deployed its resources, and to spark new thinking in how services for families could be coordinated, so that all children enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

We are proud of our collective achievements. Many of the signature initiatives that Thrive in 5 created will continue to grow and improve through the ongoing stewardship of key partners in the City. We have been working to ensure a smooth transition of this work into their care.

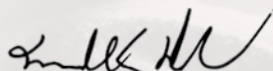
From the beginning, the work of Thrive in 5 has been guided by a Leadership Council, whose members include service providers, policy makers, funders, municipal and state leaders. Members of this Leadership Council, together with the lead partners – the City of Boston and United Way – along with a host of funders, remain committed to the mission of ensuring school readiness for all children in Boston.

We would also like to thank all of the families who participated in the many programs and events sponsored by Thrive. From parents who participated in developmental screenings of young children, to those who attended playgroups and embraced the rich variety of activities that our City's neighborhoods have to offer, these parents took a leadership role in the development of their own children and in expanding Thrive in 5's reach to many other families.

To all who have helped to shape the landscape over the years, thank you for fostering a citywide environment committed to ensuring all children thrive. We hope that you share our pride in the progress to date. And we look forward to continued collaboration in this important, collective effort to ensure that all Boston children thrive.



Martin J. Walsh
Mayor, City of Boston



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



OVER THE PAST DECADE, Thrive in 5 has worked together to help families across the City grow as advocates for their children and to connect to resources to help them support their children's early development and learning; to improve the quality of early childhood programs across the city; to elevate the importance of collecting and using data to inform decision-making; and to bring new ways of working together in partnership to ensure our youngest residents get the right start they all deserve to succeed in school and in life.

We have learned a lot, achieved a lot, and have sustained our commitment to staying the course in the face of change and challenge, as well as opportunity. On behalf of all of Thrive in 5's partners, we are pleased to present this report highlighting Thrive in 5's progress for Boston's children. We wish to thank our many supporters and funders over the years, without whom the great results presented in this report would not be possible.



Jeri Robinson



Peg Sprague

Jeri Robinson and Peg Sprague are Thrive in 5 Leadership Council Co-Chairs

If you would like to learn more about Thrive in 5 and our various programs and partners featured in this report, please visit our website:

thrivein5boston.org

A young boy with short dark hair, wearing a bright green t-shirt, is seen from the back, sitting at a desk in a classroom. His right arm is raised high, with his hand open, palm facing forward. In the background, other children are visible, some also with their hands raised, suggesting a classroom activity or lesson. The scene is brightly lit, likely by overhead fluorescent lights.

SECTION ONE

The Thrive in 5 Mission:

Kindergarten Readiness for All of Boston's Children



Launched in 2008 by Mayor Thomas M. Menino and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, Thrive in 5 is Boston's citywide movement to ensure children from families of all races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities, and languages have the opportunities and support they need for success in school and beyond.



HOW DID WE BEGIN?

In 2006, a drumbeat started in the City of Boston, calling attention to issues of education and opportunity for Boston's youngest children. Then Mayor Thomas M. Menino committed to closing the achievement gap by expanding preschool, and the Boston Public Schools began to offer preschool programming for four-year-olds. At the same time, Mayor Menino and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley (United Way) issued a school readiness call for action, setting a goal of 100% kindergarten readiness among Boston's children by 2018. Their call spurred a dialogue among civic leaders about how the expansion of readiness and preschool opportunities could complement existing programming.

The Mayor's office chose to tackle this complex issue with a three-pronged approach: 1) gathering data on the existing early education landscape in the city; 2) building the capacity of existing programs to meet immediate needs—particularly to support parents' role as their child's first teacher; and 3) conducting long-term planning in partnership with community leaders, in all sectors that touch the lives of young children and their families.

This dialogue developing in Boston mirrored similar conversations across the country, as political leaders took notice of new data stressing early childhood's critical role in shaping development. Among other findings, the data showed that every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood elicits up to \$14-17 in return.¹ Action toward more equitable kindergarten readiness across Boston, then, is not only a moral imperative—but an economic one as well.

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¹ Karoly, L.A., Kilburn, M.R., and Cannon, J.S. (2005). *Early Childhood Interventions: Proven Results, Future Promise*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Seats at the Table

In March 2007, an Action Planning Team (APT) of 65 cross-sector professionals and a Parent Action Planning Team representing Boston's diverse neighborhoods convened, led by Co-Chairs Sandra Fenwick of Boston Children's Hospital and Jackie Jenkins-Scott of Wheelock College with support from the Barr Foundation, City of Boston, and United Way to discuss a plan—not only for the city's four-year-olds, but for children starting from birth through preschool. We came together with shared ideals:

- + That the future of Boston's children should not depend on their zip code.
- + That all of the city's children—particularly children from low-income families, children of color, and children with special learning needs—should have access to the same resources and opportunities that support their development.
- + That early learning and school readiness is critical to ending the kindergarten achievement gap and securing Boston's future prosperity.
- + That Boston can provide world-class education to all students by investing in high-quality early education, by supporting parents as their child's first teacher and advocate, and by involving the whole community in young children's success—in school and beyond.

In addition to the APT, a group of researchers well versed in the latest research about early childhood development and the most successful strategies that best support early learning also convened to develop a document designed to inform and guide the work of the APT.



Every stakeholder at the table also agreed that a more comprehensive strategy and effort, involving people from all sectors that impact a child’s life, was needed to advance these ideals and close the kindergarten achievement gap. **And that’s how Thrive in 5 was born.**

A Roadmap for Readiness

Through a yearlong, community-based planning process involving 100 leaders from the Boston Public Schools (BPS), philanthropy, public policy, early education and family support communities, along with parents and researchers, we created a **Boston School Readiness Roadmap**. The roadmap is the result of a multi-part planning process that featured various groups working to define and implement each component: a “Parents Are a Child’s First Teacher” campaign; a pilot assessment tool to measure school readiness; a 0-5 data and research team; culturally appropriate tools to communicate child development information to parents and supporting organizations; and more.

The resulting roadmap articulates Thrive in 5’s broad vision, with a **Readiness Equation** at its center:

Based on this Readiness Equation, Thrive in 5’s role has sharpened over time to focus on building capacity for community partners to advance best practices in three key areas:

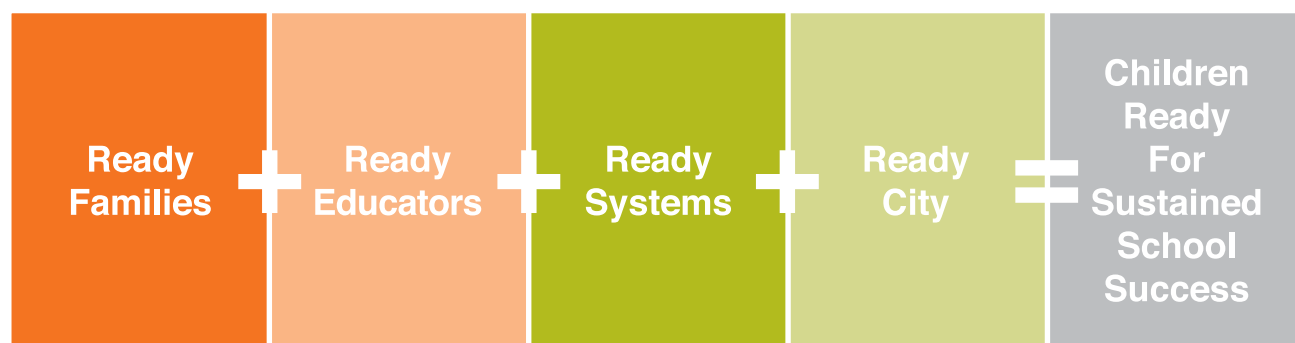
- + **Family Engagement and Parent Leadership (Boston Children Thrive)** – to engage and empower parents and families in their children’s learning and healthy development from birth.
- + **Quality Early Education (Ready Educators)** – to improve the quality of Boston’s early care and education programs, using child outcomes to drive program improvement.
- + **Universal Child Development Screening (Screen to Succeed)** – to build a citywide screening network to measure children’s development in their early years.

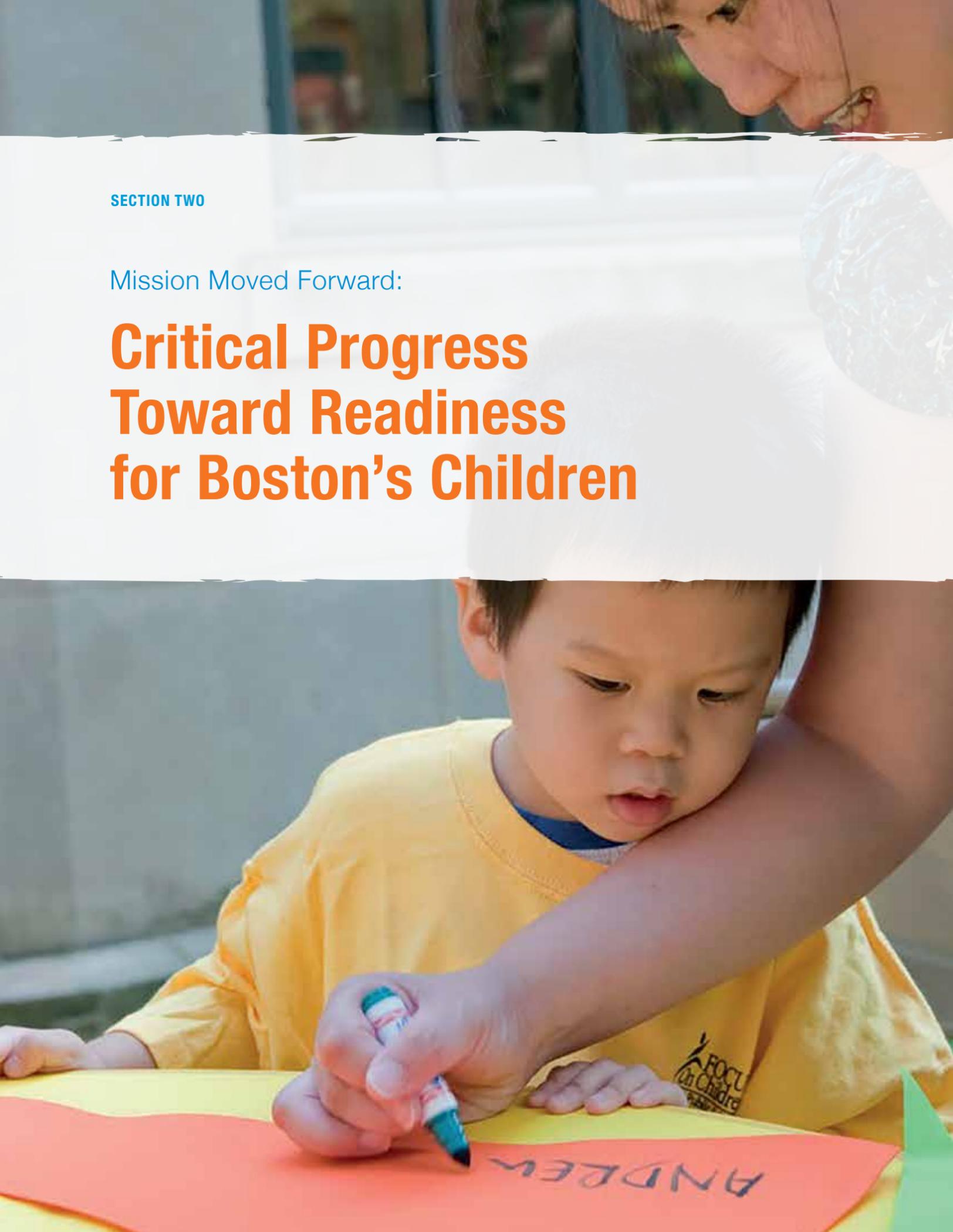
A Legacy of Progress

Through these efforts, Thrive in 5 has catalyzed a citywide conversation and sparked new thinking about how the City coordinated and deployed resources so all children enter school ready to succeed. We’ve seized on national momentum for early childhood education and created an extensive network of community partners. And we’ve built nationally recognized replicable models for our overarching strategies—parent engagement, quality early education and universal child development screening.

As Thrive in 5 comes to a close, these models stand as our lasting legacy, along with the countless lives we’ve touched and futures we’ve brightened by focusing attention on improving learning readiness across the City of Boston.

Boston’s School Readiness Equation





SECTION TWO

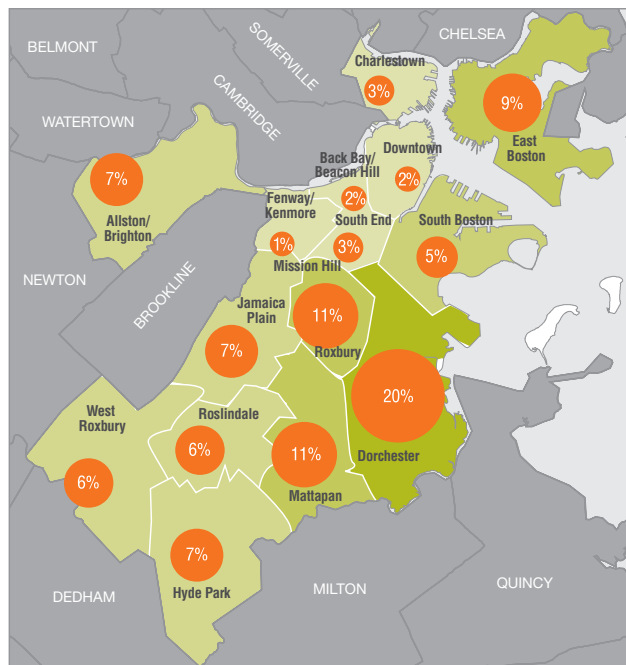
Mission Moved Forward:

Critical Progress Toward Readiness for Boston's Children



Boston's future prosperity depends on the health and wellbeing of our youngest children. We know that a child's brain develops more rapidly in the first few years of life than at any other time—and that growth depends on good health, positive experiences and nurturing relationships to create a strong foundation for lifelong learning. In fact, the strength of the foundation built in early childhood greatly impacts later health and wellbeing as well as the likelihood of success in school, in the workforce and in life.

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).

*In many ways,
 Thrive in 5's
 approach was
 ahead of its time.*

Over the past decade, we took collective action based on these principles—building our initiatives squarely on the foundation of evidence about why early childhood matters and the key strategies needed to help children succeed in elementary school. And together, with these actions, we achieved measurable results for children in the City of Boston.

In many ways, the approach Thrive in 5 adopted toward implementing a citywide effort was ahead of its own time. We intended to serve as a backbone organization—an enabler of communication and coordination among key stakeholders. This model, referred to as ‘collective impact,’ was not as well articulated or understood when Thrive in 5 was launched as it is now. Securing the core funding needed to sustain this key centralized coordinating role was an enduring challenge for Thrive in 5. In the absence of this ongoing key function, our goal of achieving a **Ready City**

proved elusive. However, thanks to the hard work and persistence of partners throughout our communities, we have made substantial and measurable progress in the **Ready Families, Ready Educators** and **Ready Systems** dimensions of our original vision. This progress provides a strong foundation for the next phase of a citywide early childhood systems change agenda.



READY FAMILIES

Family Engagement and Parent Leadership: Engaging and empowering parents and building community capacity to ensure children enter kindergarten ready for success.

What We Knew

Research demonstrates that children perform better academically and social-emotionally when families are engaged in their education.² As a result, family engagement is a critical strategy for improving child outcomes, particularly for those children most at risk. Effective family engagement puts parents on equal footing with professionals, sharing responsibility for children's learning, making decisions together and valuing each other as partners.

What We Did

Building on this research linking children's success with their parents' engagement, in 2010 we launched **Boston Children Thrive (BCT)**, Thrive in 5's signature, national award-winning, on-the-ground initiative that engages and empowers parents as their children's first teachers and as neighborhood change agents for school readiness. Across each BCT neighborhood, we partnered with hub agencies—Family Nurturing Center (Allston/Brighton), Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (Dudley), DotHouse Health (Fields Corner), East Boston Social Centers (East Boston), South Boston Neighborhood House (South Boston) and United South End Settlements (South End/Lower Roxbury)—to connect families with community-based resources and parent-driven activities that support their children's early learning and development.

With a focus on families most likely to be affected by the achievement gap—families of color, low-income families, families of children with special needs, and English language learners—we encouraged parents to become change agents in their communities through structured and supported leadership opportunities. Using BCT's unique Membership Card system, we followed families' participation in developmentally appropriate activities and events, and enhanced our understanding of how early family engagement supports children's success in school.

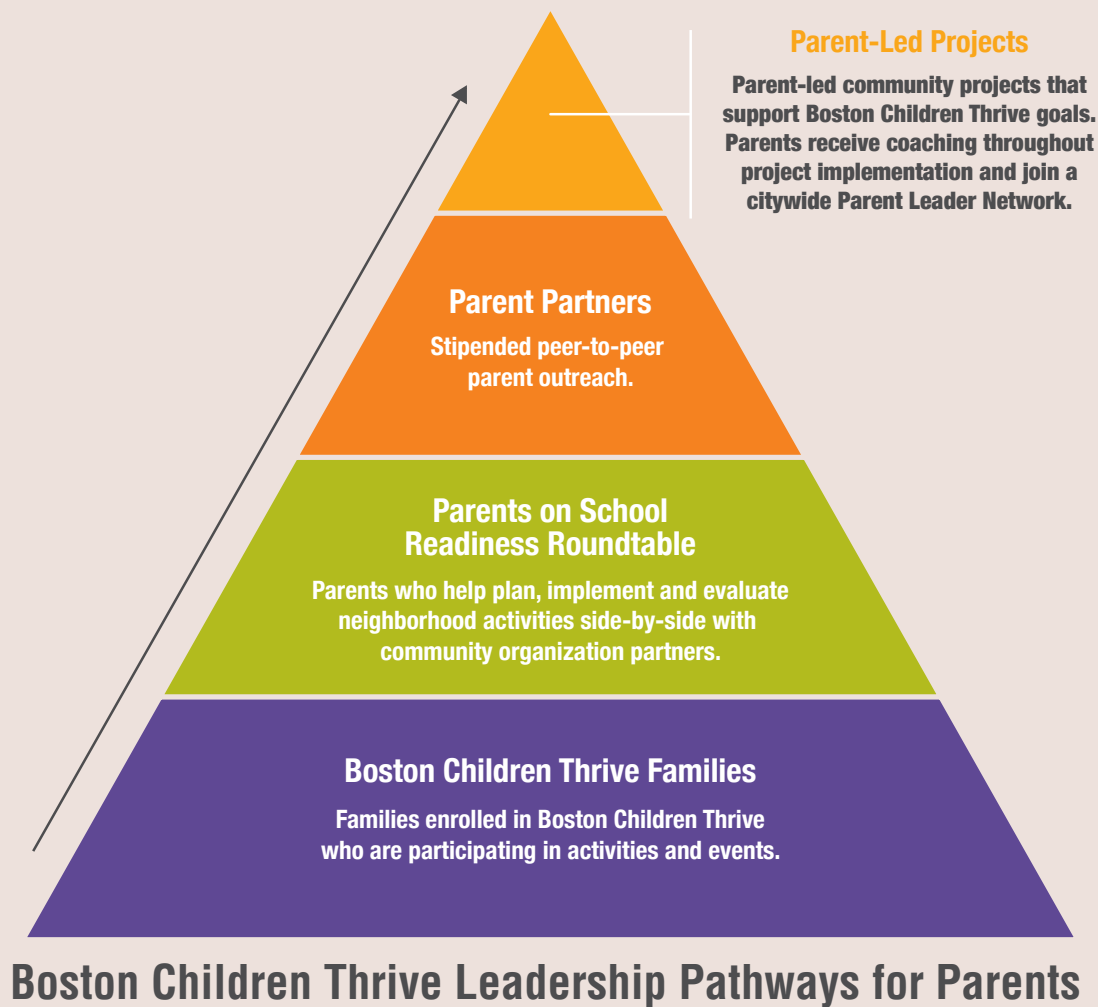
“Before Thrive in 5 I lived in this community but I really didn't do much of anything with my community. [BCT] has given me a broader sense of connection to my neighbors, my community, to the activities that are there for the children...the resources that are right next door to you that you didn't even know were there.”

— PARENT, BCT MEMBER

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² Henderson, A. and Mapp, K. (2002). A New Wave of Evidence. Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools. <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>.

Thanks to Thrive in 5, the City of Boston now has a shared definition of school readiness:

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 wellbeing, and motor development.



What We Achieved

BCT's core elements have transformed the ways in which organizations in its neighborhoods work together to reach families and young children who are least resourced. Through this program, Thrive in 5:

Established a hub agency in each of the six neighborhoods responsible for convening, organizing and providing a backbone structure for local efforts to advance children's development.

Hired, trained and supervised parent partners from diverse linguistic and racial backgrounds, responsible for weaving connections between and among parents and community resources, determining appropriate programming, and supporting its implementation.

Trained parent partners in three of the six communities to administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)³—a tool also linked with Thrive in 5's Healthy Child Development strategy—to families whose young children are not in an early education setting.

Created the School Readiness Roundtable, a leadership board of partnering agencies, parent leaders and other key stakeholders who meet regularly in each community to create and implement an aligned neighborhood support network for families and caregivers.

³ Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ) provides reliable, accurate developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age 6. Drawing on parents' expert knowledge, ASQ has been specifically designed to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children—paving the way for meaningful next steps in learning, intervention, or monitoring. <http://agesandstages.com/>

In 2012, Thrive in 5 was honored with the Outstanding Achievement City Livability Award from the US Conference of Mayors.

Cultivated an array of programs for families in each community, including playgroups, field trips, family nights, parent trainings, welcome baby visits and training for early educators.

Conceived and built a Membership Card system and enrolled 4,500 families, including 5,310 children age five and younger, in the system. With the Membership Card, families receive calendars and communications about upcoming community activities, events and programs. Each family's membership card is scanned when they participate in these activities, and the families receive incentives such as books and educational games, which also serve to further BCT's readiness mission. The data collected through the cards help community organizations develop strategies to better engage families by connecting demographics, participation data and outcomes. The BCT membership card will transition to a mobile application, through a partnership with SchoolCNXT,⁴ during Summer 2016. The mobile application will allow families to view nearby events, register and sign in to those events, and earn and track their participation points.

Encouraged a learning-centered community, with community-based organizations and parent representatives from each neighborhood meeting regularly to share lessons learned and promote cross-community action toward readiness.

Through successive evaluations over four years led by the University of Massachusetts Boston's Center for Social Policy, we know that the BCT program has effectively built social cohesion, supporting individual, organizational and community transformation in the city's most challenged neighborhoods. BCT's Parent Partner Leadership Model has enhanced parenting skills, formed a cadre of parent leaders and reached those families least connected to the services they need for their children. By linking resources, the program has also fostered cross-site collaboration and encouraged the forging of new partnerships. Parents are at the center of leading services and activities rather than being just the recipients of the services. This systemic organizational change within hub agencies and other community organizations will continue to sustain BCT's gains far into the future. In recognition of these achievements, in 2012, Thrive in 5 was honored with the Outstanding Achievement City Livability Award from the US Conference of Mayors.

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⁴ SchoolCNXT is a flexible, mobile/web-based parent engagement platform that connects parents, teachers, students, and administrators, providing an efficient and effective way to share news and important information; send reminders; and create an engaged, connected community. To learn more about SchoolCNXT, please visit www.schoolcnxt.com.



Children enrolled in BCT represent:

- + **24%** of all children ages 5 and younger in the program's six neighborhoods;
- + **51%** of the children 5 and younger living in poverty in those six neighborhoods; and
- + **31%** of all children living in poverty in Boston.

READY EDUCATORS

Quality Early Education and Care: Driving improvements in the quality of early education and care by focusing on what matters most: child-level outcomes.

What We Knew

Access to high-quality early education has been shown to produce significant benefits to children, families and society, including increased productivity, reduced special education and criminal justice involvement,⁵ and even better health.⁶ Despite its proven benefits, nationally, only 3 in 10 four-year-olds are enrolled in high-quality early education that provides them with the skills they need for kindergarten.⁷ Further, in the United States, instructional quality—the quality that appears most consequential for children’s school readiness—is low on average and disparate across groups, with only a quarter of African-American children in high-quality classrooms.⁸ In contrast, here in Boston in the 2009-2010 school year, the BPS’ pre-kindergarten model (called K1) had the highest level of instructional quality of any evaluated large-scale pre-K program in the US.⁹ There is wide variation in the quality of community-based early education and care programs in Boston.

What We Did

Through Thrive in 5’s Ready Educators strategy, we worked to raise the quality of early education and care across community-based settings—including center-based programs, Head Start, and family child care. The ultimate goal of this effort was to enhance Boston’s public/private delivery system to provide working families with high-quality full-day, full-year options for the care and education of their young children. To achieve this, we invested in two demonstration projects to identify strategies that would improve early education quality, leading to better and more consistent outcomes for children.

Boston K1DS

Boston K1DS was a two-and-a-half-year collaboration between Thrive in 5, Boston Public Schools (BPS), the

Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, private funders, and 10 community-based organizations offering early education in Boston’s high-poverty areas.

Boston K1 in Diverse Settings, or **Boston K1DS**, replicated and brought the nationally recognized BPS K1 model to 14 community-based preschool classrooms in the Circle of Promise¹⁰ and East Boston. Dr. Jason Sachs designed the program in consultation with his team at the BPS Department of Early Childhood Education. It was based on the Boston K1DS theory of change, which hypothesized that child outcomes will improve as early childhood classroom instructional quality improves.

In practice, the initiative brought critical resources from BPS to the 14 community classrooms, including:

- + Instructional materials and support to implement the BPS language, literacy and mathematics curricula (Opening the World of Learning (OWL) and Building Blocks) in the classroom;
- + Professional development alongside BPS early childhood teachers;
- + Bi-monthly, one-on-one coaching focused on the language, literacy and mathematics curricula to translate knowledge into practice in the classroom; and
- + Supplementation for teachers’ salary and benefits.

This specific set of resources was designed to extend the high-quality learning experience from the proven BPS classrooms to those community classrooms in a full-day, full-year schedule.

⁵ 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>.

⁶ Friedman-Krauss, A. and Barnett, W. (2013). Early Childhood Education: Pathways to Better Health. <http://www.nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/health%20brief.pdf>.

⁷ Slack, M. (February 14, 2013). The White House Blog. What You Need to Know About President Obama’s Plan to Provide High-Quality Early Education for All Children. Retrieved from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/02/14/high-quality-early-education-all-children>.

⁸ Friedman-Krauss, A. and Barnett, W. (2013). Early Childhood Education: Pathways to Better Health. <http://www.nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/health%20brief.pdf>.

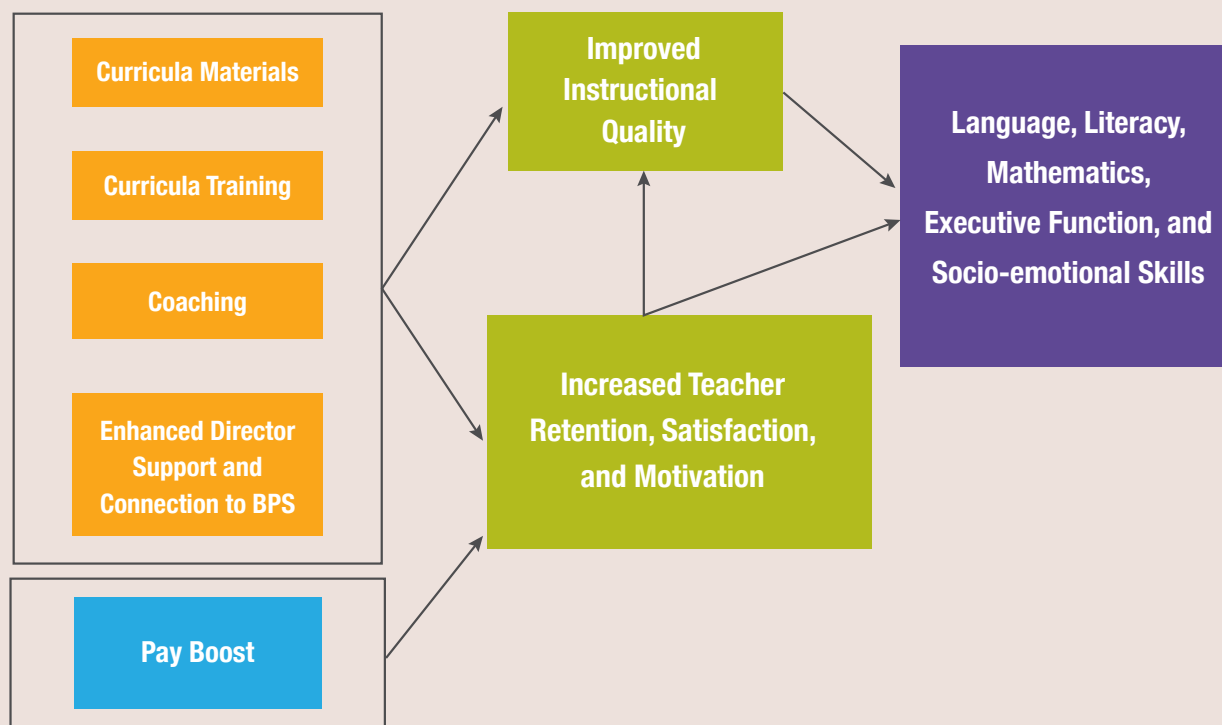
⁹ Christina Weiland and Hirokazu Yoshikawa, “Impacts of a Pre-Kindergarten Program on Children’s Mathematics, Language, Literacy, Executive Function, and Emotional Skills,” Society for Research in Child Development, Inc., 2013.

¹⁰ The Circle of Promise is a five-mile geographic area in the heart of the City of Boston, containing some of the city’s most challenged schools and disadvantaged communities, as well as great resources and assets.

“So, I love, love the mentoring piece. I think that is just what a lot of programs need, it's having someone ... they are coaching and guiding you and giving you support based on what you are doing. It's just powerful in itself so I really appreciate that part of it. My teachers, I have to say, are looking and feeling more professional and I think it's because of the support that they've been getting and the recognition that they have been getting through the school collaboration.”

— BOSTON K1DS DIRECTOR

Boston K1DS Theory of Change



“I saw a big difference today in this classroom. She was well prepared to conduct a science conversation with a small group of children. She did a terrific job of facilitating peer interactions, drawing kids in, restating their ideas and helping them to share their ideas with each other, then try them out.”

— REQIP COACH

Ready Educators Quality Improvement Pilot (REQIP)

To strengthen educators’ capacity to provide high-quality instruction from children’s earliest beginnings, Thrive in 5, in partnership with the Wellesley Centers for Women, also launched the **Ready Educators Quality Improvement Pilot (REQIP)** with community-based early education programs in low-income neighborhoods. While Boston KIDS replicated the BPS K1 model for four-year-olds, REQIP piloted a whole program approach to quality improvement for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Using data about the developmental needs and skills of enrolled children and the specific strengths and areas for improvement at the program level, REQIP provided technical assistance to ten center-based programs and five family childcare providers in areas where children are at the greatest risk of falling into the achievement gap. REQIP’s continuous quality improvement model built individual program improvement plans around what matters most in education: improving child outcomes. This model has the potential to build a pipeline of programs over time, to both improve the quality of their existing programs’ services and also provide classrooms in the community that meet high quality criteria.





What We Achieved

Boston K1DS

Child outcome data from the program's first full year suggested that children in Boston K1DS classrooms made substantial strides in their language, literacy, mathematics and self-regulation skills, and that Boston K1DS classrooms improved the learning experiences of young children in high-poverty neighborhoods. The results of the final evaluation of the Boston K1DS pilot show that it is possible to create equity in quality between BPS and community-based pre-K classrooms under certain conditions. These results demonstrate that significant gains in quality can be achieved over time; however sustaining the changes requires ongoing support and investment.

Yet Boston K1DS' innovative approach now serves as a model for the future. The program positioned Boston and cities across the Commonwealth—including Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell and Springfield—to receive a \$15 million a year federal Preschool Expansion Grant (PEG) so they can expand access to high-quality preschool for low-income four-year-old children. The Preschool Expansion Grant funds support high quality program offerings through required design elements such as inclusive full-day and full-year programing with low child-to-teacher ratios (10:1 or less); workforce development supports for educators, including individualized growth plans, joint professional development between the school district and community early education programs, and coaching and mentoring;

and use of highly credentialed educators including a lead teacher in each classroom with a bachelor's degree, who are compensated at a rate comparable to public school district salaries. Under the grant, the cities are developing public school district-and community-based provider partnerships to expand programming to approximately 3,000 four-year-olds over the life of the grant (approximately 850/year), while working to improve the quality of community-based early education programs.

REQIP

Through the REQIP program, Thrive in 5 engaged 10 centers, the administrators of a family childcare system that collectively serves over 900 children annually, and five of that system's 130 family childcare educators. In partnership with the Wellesley Centers for Women, the pilot helped programs gather and interpret data on children's developmental needs and program quality, then developed improvement plans and provided technical assistance to help programs build capacity in the areas where children needed the most support. The REQIP pilot evaluation after two years demonstrated improvements at the program level, positive changes in educator classroom practices, and improvements in child outcomes.

Together, both Boston K1DS and REQIP represent practices that have the potential to deliver high-quality early childhood education and care for all of Boston's young children.

Children in Boston K1DS classrooms made substantial strides in their language, literacy, mathematics and self-regulation skills, and Boston K1DS classrooms improved the learning experiences of young children in high-poverty neighborhoods.

READY SYSTEMS

Healthy Child Development: Building a citywide, universal screening system to monitor young children's development across the early years and into kindergarten.

What We Knew

Understanding children's developmental progress—individually and citywide—creates opportunities for prevention and intervention in the critical “brain building” phase of a child's life, when services are more effective and less costly. Data on child development can help families, teachers, health providers and the city take a data-driven approach to early childhood, making strategic decisions to tailor support and resources to the children, families and communities that need them most.

What We Did

To target universal child development screening for young children in the City of Boston, Thrive in 5 created **Screen to Succeed**, a citywide early childhood developmental screening model and the technology infrastructure to support data collection. Our goals for Screen to Succeed were two-fold: first, to build community capacity to screen children early for potential developmental delays, and to use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) as an opportunity for family engagement and referral to services; and second, to drive systems change with a universal screening system that enhances understanding of the developmental progress of young children in Boston and keeps them on track.

Screen to Succeed has grown to include parent screeners in 10 Boston neighborhoods through the Boston Family Engagement Network, 13 early education and care partner programs, and 14 community agencies across the city. We've used the screening data to educate families on healthy child growth and the resources available—from teachers to pediatricians—to help them be active partners in their children's development. The data have helped us to inform early education programs and community-based agencies on the programming adjustments they can make to better meet the developmental needs of Boston's children. And at the city level, we've used the data collected through Screen to Succeed to help city leaders, policymakers and early childhood advocates make strategic, informed decisions about how to align public and private resources with community needs.


What We Achieved

Screen to Succeed has broken new ground in advancing universal child development screening for young children in the City of Boston. Through this Thrive in 5 program and its partners, we've conducted more than 3,000 screenings of children across 16 Boston neighborhoods.

In addition, Thrive in 5 has been recognized for our leadership in data collection, research and evaluation through our Screen to Succeed and Boston Children Thrive programs. We have sparked and led a citywide conversation about data collection, management, analysis and dissemination.

One example of the new focus on screening is a major fundraising campaign at United Way, through its PE/VC Council (a group of Private Equity and Venture Capital industry leaders), to build on Screen to Succeed. This group of funders will help to expand Screen to Succeed's early childhood developmental screening, citywide and beyond, and build a technology infrastructure with an easy-to-use platform to aggregate and analyze Thrive in 5 data and identify trends. The United Way initiative, called DRIVE (Data and Resources Investing in Vital Early Education), will help ensure that the valuable progress made through Screen to Succeed will live on and access to developmental screening will continue to grow.

In partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), DRIVE will expand its reach in Boston as well as across the state.

 *Parents may not be aware of their child's development, because they don't have time or are just too busy. But these tools really do show you where your kids are doing well and where they need help.*

— SAMILLA QUIROA, THRIVE IN 5 PARENT SCREENER



Thrive in 5 Accomplishments: By the Numbers

8 years. Thousands of children.
Immeasurable lifelong benefits.

Enrolled 4,500 families with 5,310 children birth-5 in six of Boston's neighborhoods into Boston Children Thrive's Membership Card system; 66% of these families live in poverty.

Fueled an increase in early language and literacy skills of young children entering kindergarten, from 54% in 2009 to 63% in 2014, as measured by the DIBELS (**Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills**) assessment tool.¹¹

Directed \$23 million from multiple funders to new resources for Boston's early childhood community, 95% of which was used to expand and improve local resources for families.

Partnered with BPS to implement the successful BPS K1 model in 14 community-based preschool classrooms in Boston, serving over 250 four-year-olds.

Partnered with Wellesley Centers for Women to provide targeted technical assistance for continuous quality improvement to 10 centers, the administrators of a family childcare system that collectively serves over 900 children annually, and five of that system's 130 family childcare educators.

Conducted over 3,000 screenings of children for developmental targets by engaging 24 Boston-area programs in the initiative.

Engaged 420 community leaders in our key efforts toward school readiness for Boston's children.

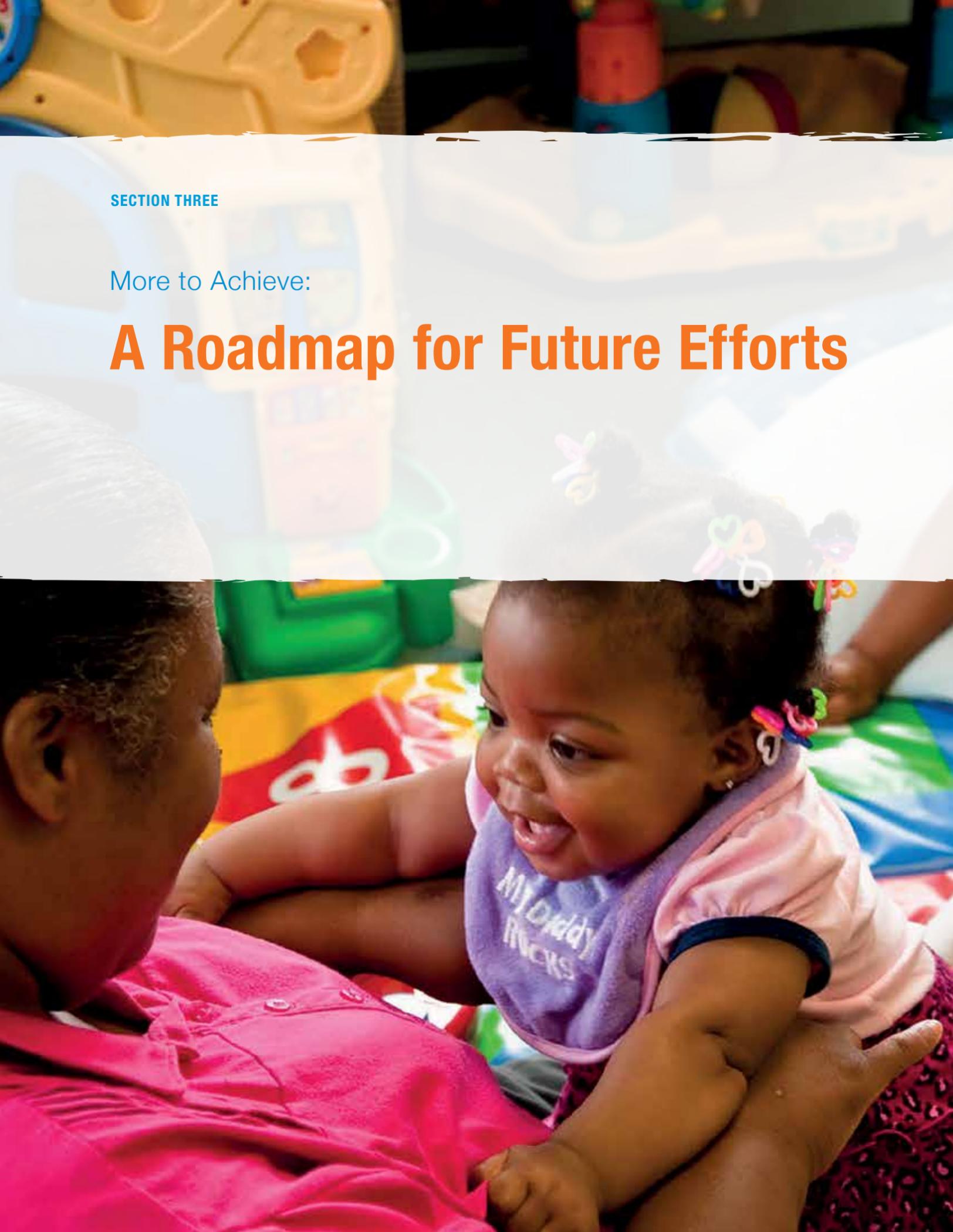
Local and National Recognition from the Early Childhood Community

Through our work and partnerships, Thrive in 5 has been recognized as a key change-agent—and leader—in the early childhood arena, in Boston and beyond. We have been asked to take the lead, be a major partner or serve as a model for various projects, including:

- + *The Mayor's Universal Pre-K priority – Thrive in 5 supported the initial planning and convening of the Mayor's Universal Pre-K Advisory Committee. Thrive in 5 was tapped to staff the UPK planning process and help to guide the creation of the Mayor's UPK Steering and Advisory Committees. Our work with the Mayor's office provides a strong foundation for future partners to step in and support the second phase of UPK implementation in the city. To read the report completed by the group, please visit: cityofboston.gov/residents/education.*
- + *A \$15 million federal grant to the state of Massachusetts to develop public school district- and community-based programming for approximately 3,000 4-year-olds, modeled on the learnings from Boston K1DS.*
- + *The Boston Family Engagement Network,¹² a citywide coalition, that instituted Parent Partners in each of its 10 grantee neighborhoods throughout Boston, based on Thrive in 5's parent leadership model.*
- + *The Children's Museum of Boston, which also replicated our Parent Partner model to increase patronage from previously underrepresented communities.*
- + *The Boston Public Health Commission, selected by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to provide mental health services for young children and their families, was influenced by Thrive in 5's neighborhood-based family engagement model.*
- + *National early childhood initiatives such as the Early Childhood Learning and Innovation Network for Community (EC-LINC), led by the Center for the Study of Social Policy in Washington, DC, which benefit from Thrive in 5's innovative practices.*
- + *Groups around the country seeking to support a holistic early childhood agenda, who consult with Thrive in 5, visit our programs, and request presentations of our initiatives and successes at national conferences such as Smart Start and United Way Worldwide Community Leaders Conference (CLC).*

.....
¹¹ The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. <https://dibels.org>

¹² The Boston Family Engagement Network is a citywide coalition focused on raising awareness about the importance of family engagement in the life of a young child.

A photograph of a woman with short dark hair, wearing a bright pink button-down shirt, looking down at a baby. The baby is wearing a pink short-sleeved shirt and a purple bib with the text "My Daddy Rocks" in white. The baby has several colorful hair clips in their dark hair. The background is slightly blurred, showing a colorful patterned blanket and some toys.

SECTION THREE

More to Achieve:

A Roadmap for Future Efforts



Much has been accomplished— but our agenda remains unfinished.

Since our beginnings in 2008, Thrive in 5 has played a unique and important role in advancing early childhood and school readiness in Boston—with demonstrated successes in engaging parents, improving quality of pre-K education and enhancing the availability of citywide child development data. Many of these and other signature Thrive in 5 initiatives will continue, grow and improve through the ongoing stewardship of our key partners, including:

- + United Way’s commitment to scale child development screenings in Boston, while replicating the effective approach of Screen to Succeed in other communities, through the Data & Resources Investing in Vital Early Education (DRIVE) initiative.
- + United Way’s investment in family engagement by investing in technology to improve the Boston Children Thrive membership system, and incorporating these data into DRIVE.
- + A growing set of community partners demonstrating their commitment to engaging parents in their roles as “first teachers,” and to expanding the Boston Children Thrive membership model.
- + The Boston Opportunity Agenda,¹³ drawing on lessons learned from Thrive in 5 to inform its emerging Birth-to-8 strategy.

The most ambitious goal of Thrive in 5, to create systemic change and cross-system collaboration, was not fully realized, yet progress has been made in setting the stage for a citywide Birth-to-8 agenda. This bodes well for a continued commitment to ensuring Thrive in 5’s original goals are achieved. As Thrive in 5 winds down, there is an opportunity for others to step in and further solidify the proven

Thrive in 5 strategies while pursuing our unfinished agenda, including:

- + The Boston Children Thrive Parent Leadership Model can be brought to all Boston neighborhoods, providing technical assistance and capacity building to neighborhood-level partners. The BCT membership system can be applied to deepen relationships with families and to provide an ongoing data collection and analysis system—within each neighborhood site as well as citywide.
- + Boston K1DS and REQIP have the potential to serve as models in building a pipeline of programs to improve the quality of community-based early childhood services.
- + Lessons learned from each of Thrive in 5’s pillars can be tapped to ensure comprehensive, culturally-appropriate support for those families of infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers least connected to resources.
- + There remains a need to understand and raise knowledge about the intersections, gaps, funding needs and strengths of the various systems impacting young children and their families—including the health care system, early education and care system, public and private family support, and safety net systems.
- + Screen to Succeed’s multifaceted model for reaching children in diverse community settings can be scaled citywide and across the state. Parent Screeners can be integrated in any community setting to reach disconnected families earlier, and training and technical assistance on family engagement and developmental screening can be made available to all licensed providers.

.....
¹³ The Boston Opportunity Agenda is a public/private partnership among the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the city’s leading public charities and many local foundations to ensure that all Boston residents have access to the education necessary for upward economic mobility, civic engagement, and lifelong learning for themselves and their families.



LESSONS LEARNED

As we pass the torch to those individuals and groups who will move our mission into the future, we would like to share some key lessons we've learned through the past eight years of work to create Ready Families, Educators, Systems and a Ready City:

Lesson #1

Ensuring a shared vision and measurable goals is essential.

- + Include involvement from key stakeholders.
- + “Sustain the gains” through capacity building for individuals, organizations and communities.
- + Stay focused on a few measurable goals.
- + Build on what you know works.

Lesson #2

A citywide early childhood intermediary plays an essential role in coordination, communication, information-sharing and maintaining the collective action needed to achieve desired results.

- + Ensure continued engagement and buy-in of key partners.
- + Stay patient—creating sustainable change takes time and will require multi-year commitments.
- + Marshal the sufficient, ongoing resources required to serve as an intermediary.
- + Identify public funding sources that will sustain the efforts and infrastructure in the long term.
- + Pursue novel strategies without being in competition with direct service partners.

Lesson #3

Data will help you make the hard decisions.

- + Create a plan to ensure you have the resources needed for thoughtful data collection and measurement.
- + Clearly define your measurable indicators upfront, and create a data infrastructure that will allow you to effectively collect and manage data, and track your progress over time.
- + Ensure your contributing partners are equipped with the knowledge and capacity to effectively collect and use data.

Lesson #4

Lead from a place of service, love and authenticity.

- + Carefully build credibility with parents to establish their trust.
- + Leverage that trust by doing what you say you are going to do.
- + Balance relationships, results and process.
- + Know that by connecting families, you are building community.
- + Recognize, celebrate and build upon successes.

“When we are collaborating across sectors, we stand a better chance of working at a scale that allows us to touch all neighborhoods and to target our efforts in ways that allow us to meet residents’ unique needs—particularly those of our most vulnerable residents.”

— **TURAHN DORSEY**, CHIEF OF EDUCATION, CITY OF BOSTON

IN CONCLUSION

Over the past decade, Thrive in 5 has provided neighborhood organizations, families and service providers with a sense of hope. In response, all of these stakeholders have invested their energies and made transformative changes in the ways they operate. The full backing of public sector, philanthropic and community leaders, along with sustainable public funding streams, will be needed to keep this hope alive by sustaining an ambitious early childhood change agenda for the long haul. Thrive in 5 has moved Boston forward, providing critical lessons that will help shape the future agenda for child development and early education in our city—an agenda from which Boston cannot retreat.

Citywide efforts such as Thrive in 5 undertake ambitious goals, move work forward and achieve good results thanks to the collective efforts of many. However, such efforts must also transition over time in response to changing needs, opportunities and contexts. With these transitions come opportunities to build on gains made and lessons learned, with new ideas and partners well positioned to reinvigorate the work. Thrive in 5 is proud of our legacy, and we are pleased to pass the torch to new leaders committed to ensuring that all of Boston’s young children are ready for success—in school and in life.

“Because of Thrive in 5, the city has been able to share resources that already exist and create new ones, leading to new opportunities to work together differently.”

— **COREY ZIMMERMAN**, ASSISTANT VICE PRESIDENT FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT, UNITED WAY

Our Committed Leadership Council & Staff

Leadership Council:

Maggi Alexander
Debby Allen
Karley Ausiello
Allison Bauer
Rahn Dorsey
Sally Fogerty
Kim Haskins
Susan McConathy
Kristin McSwain
Anita Moeller
Shari Nethersole
Elizabeth Pauley
John Riordan
Jeri Robinson
Marta Rosa
Randal Rucker
Jason Sachs
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Katie Madrigal
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A CITYWIDE EFFORT: Partners Critical to the Thrive in 5 Mission

From the beginning, Thrive in 5 has been guided by an extensive network of generous funders and committed partners—from local early education providers and major health institutions to state and national advocacy and policy leaders. Our ability to bring multi-sector organizations to a common table, sparking new collaborations and engaging diverse stakeholders in support of a common agenda, has been instrumental to our work and progress.

Through this longstanding commitment to community engagement, we've directly supported or co-facilitated several learning collaboratives and working groups designed to bring partners together and promote cross-sector collaboration around our specific initiatives. These groups include the Family Engagement Learning Collaborative, the Screen to Succeed Learning Collaborative, Thrive in 5's Evaluation Advisory Group, the Strategic Advisory Group for a Feasibility Study regarding an Early Childhood Data Center, the UPK Steering/Advisory Committees and the Boston K1DS Directors Learning Community.

Funders

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Barr Foundation
Berkman Charitable Trust
Blue Cross Blue Shield
Boston Children's Hospital
Boston Opportunity Agenda
Boston Public Health Commission
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
Eos Foundation

Harold Whitworth Pierce
Charitable Trust
Herman and Frieda L. Miller
Foundation
Jessie B. Cox Charitable Trust Fund
Kellogg Foundation
Longfield Family Foundation
Massachusetts Department of
Early Education and Care

Partners HealthCare
Private Equity/Venture Capital
Leadership Council, United Way
Paul and Edith Babson Foundation
Robert Treat Paine Association
The Boston Foundation
United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Inc.
Verizon Foundation
W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone
Foundation



United Way
of Massachusetts Bay
and Merrimack Valley

thrivein5boston.org

Community Partners

Boston Family Education Network
Boston Public Health Commission
Boston Public Schools
Boys and Girls Clubs of Dorchester
Bradshaw Head Start Center – ABCD
Brazelton Touchpoints Center
Children's Services of Roxbury
College Bound Dorchester
Countdown to Kindergarten --
Boston Public Schools
DotHouse Health
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
East Boston Social Centers
East Boston YMCA --
YMCA of Greater Boston
Ellis Early Education Center
Family Engagement Network
Family Nurturing Center
First Teacher
Gertrude Townsend
Head Start Center -- ABCD

Grove Hall Child Development Center
Harvard Graduate School of Education
Horizons for Homeless Children
Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción
Jeffries Point Child Care Center --
East Boston Social Centers
Jeremiah Program at Endicott College
JPND
La Alianza Hispana
Laboure Child Care Center --
Catholic Charities
Massachusetts Department of
Early Education and Care
Mattapan Head Start -- ABCD
Nazareth Child Care Center --
Catholic Charities
New Sector Alliance
NICE, Inc.
Nurtury
Nurtury Family Child Care Program

Old Colony Head Start Center -- ABCD
Paige Academy
Project Hope
Project Zero, Harvard Graduate
School of Education
Ruggles/Gilday Child Care Center --
Nurtury
South Boston Neighborhood House
South Side Head Start -- ABCD
The Kennedy Center
United South End Settlements
University of Massachusetts Boston,
Center for Social Policy
Wellesley Centers for Women
Wesley Child Care Center
Yawkey Konbit-Kreyol Center --
Catholic Charities
YMCA of Greater Boston