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## Report shows significant improvements in number of Boston students enrolling in, completing college

*New report highlights impact of Success Boston initiative and other efforts to keep Boston Public Schools graduates in higher education*

**Boston** – A new report commissioned by the Boston Foundation to examine the college enrollment and completion trends of Boston Public Schools students finds the number of BPS graduates enrolling in and completing higher education has risen sharply in recent years, and highlights the impact of the *Success Boston* initiative in increasing the likelihood that Boston Public Schools graduates will stay in postsecondary education.

The report, **Getting Closer to the Finish Line: The College Enrollment and Completion Experiences of Graduates of Boston Public Schools**, also finds an increase in the percentage of Boston Public Schools graduates continuing to higher education, and notes fewer of those students require remedial education. The full report can be downloaded at [tbf.org](http://tbf.org).

“When I established Success Boston, I set ambitious goals for college completion of BPS graduates. This report shows that we’re on the right track,” Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino said. “By launching Success Boston, we were the first city in the country to make college completion part of our education pipeline. Now, President Obama and other mayors across the nation have embraced this challenge.”

The 2013 report was compiled by Andy Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada and a team of researchers at the Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University, with the assistance of the Boston Private Industry Council and the Boston Public Schools. It is a follow-up to the groundbreaking 2008 report, **Getting to the Finish Line: College Enrollment and Graduation**, a seven-year longitudinal study of the BPS Class of 2000 that highlighted the disparity between BPS graduates’ high rate of college entrance and low rate of graduation.

The 2008 report found that less than 40% of the Boston Public Schools Class of 2000 who started college at some point after graduation had received a degree seven years later. The new report finds substantial improvements for Class of 2005:

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| • Seven-year college completion rate:<br>(all college enrollees) | Class of 2000: 39%<br>Class of 2005: 46% |
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- 6-year completion rate for first-year college enrollees: Class of 2000: 40.6%  
(those who enrolled within 12 months of graduation) Class of 2005: 47.4%

*Note: New data made available just after the report went to press shows the 6-year completion rate for first-year college enrollees rose again for the BPS Class of 2006, to 49.2%.*

The data also illustrate a remarkable benefit for students who take part in *Success Boston*, a collaborative initiative including the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Foundation, the University of Massachusetts Boston, numerous area nonprofits, and nearly 40 Massachusetts colleges and universities. The initiative sponsors academic, advising and support programs to ensure BPS students are “Getting Ready, Getting In and Getting Through” college. Students in the program were found to have retention rates more than 20 percentage points higher than peers who did not take part in the program.

“This report shows us the hard work of our great teachers, headmasters, and principals is paying off,” said Boston Public Schools Superintendent Carol R. Johnson. “This data also demonstrates the power of a collaboration such as Success Boston. While overall this data is encouraging, we must not be satisfied until all students graduate from our high schools prepared to succeed in college. We are making outstanding strides, but recognize this work continues daily in classrooms around our city.”

“No matter how you examine this data, the results are conclusive. Boston is moving the needle when it comes to college graduation for its public school students,” said Paul S. Grogan, President and CEO of the Boston Foundation. “In just five years, this city has substantially closed the gap between its college completion rate and the national average, and when you look at the impact of Success Boston with its students, we are on the cusp of a remarkable moment - where a large urban school district meets and exceeds the national average for college completion.”

Some of the key findings are summarized below:

### **College enrollment continues to rise**

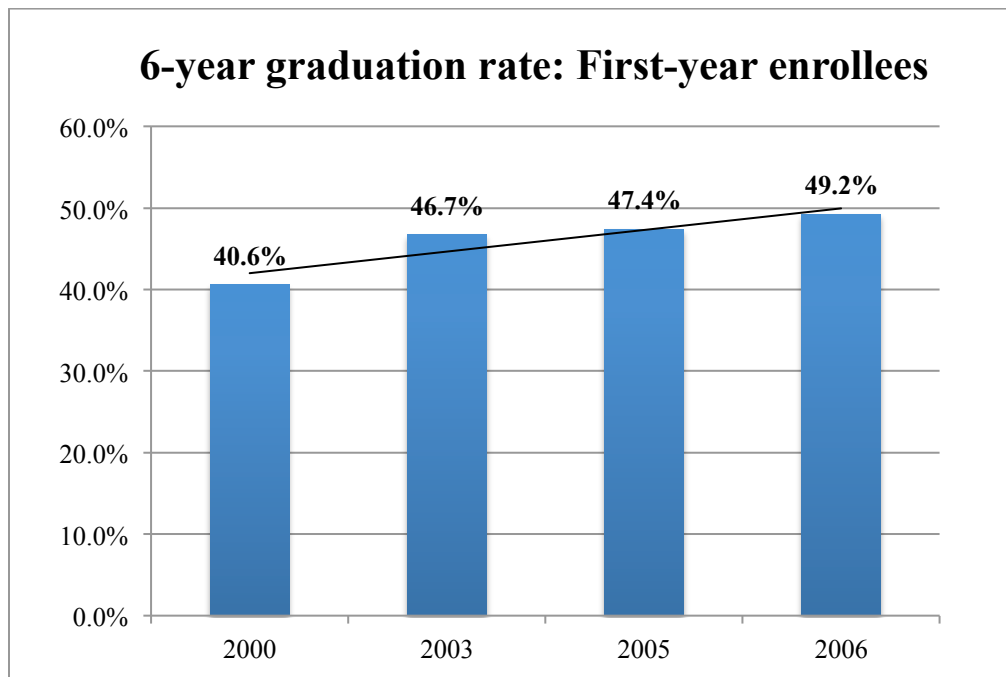
The rate at which Boston Public Schools students enroll in college has long been a point of pride for the city, and the report shows that rate continuing to rise. By the Fall 2011/Spring 2012, nearly 76 percent of members of the BPS Class of 2009 had enrolled in college since their high school graduation, exceeding the 73 percent enrollment total of the Class of 2000 in the 12 years since their high school graduation.

A second measure, the percentage of students who enrolled in college in the year immediately after graduation illustrates similar growth. Between the Classes of 2005 and 2010, this ratio increased from 61% to nearly 70%.

### **More BPS students are getting through**

The original **Getting to the Finish Line** report, released in 2008, brought to light the need to focus not just on students getting to college, but giving them the supports needed to get through college. That report found just 675 of the 1,904 BPS Class of 2000 students who enrolled in college after graduation had earned a degree of any kind seven years later – 35.5%. Revisions to the initial data have updated that number to 39%. In comparison, researchers found that the Class of 2005 reported a 7-year completion rate of 47%, an eight-percentage point improvement.

In another comparison, the 2013 report examines a more specific cohort – those students who enrolled in college in the first year after graduation. For that group, 40.6% of the Class of 2000 students had earned a degree of any kind within 6 years. That number rose to 46.5% for the Class of 2003 and to 47.4% for the Class of 2005. Subsequent data shows the rise continuing, to 49.2% for the Class of 2006. The Class of 2003 was the first in the state required to pass the MCAS exam to graduate from high school, and the enhanced academic rigor could be one possible reason for the increase for that class.



An examination of MCAS scores also notes a significant gap in degree attainment between those who scored highly on the MCAS and those who did not. 78% of the students from the BPS Class of 2005 who scored ‘advanced’ on the MCAS math test had received their degrees by early 2012. That compares to just 59% of those who scored ‘proficient’, 35% of those who scored ‘needs improvement’ and 22% of those who failed the Math MCAS.

Looking ahead, Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino has set goals of a 52% six-year graduation rate for the Class of 2009 and a 70% six-year graduation rate for the BPS Class of 2012. While neither is a certainty, continued progress to the 2009 goal has made that goal achievable. Further progress will need to be made to reach the Class of 2012 goal.

### **Persistence, and the success of Success Boston**

The percentage of students who choose to attend college after their BPS graduation has risen consistently since 2000, but after improving through 2007, the percentage of BPS students who persist through their first two years in the college of their choice has plateaued – at just under 70 percent for the Classes of 2008 and 2009.

The overall statistic, however, obscures a success story for Success Boston, a collaborative initiative launched in 2009 including the City of Boston, the Boston Public Schools, the Boston Foundation, numerous area nonprofits, and nearly 40 Massachusetts colleges and universities.

The initiative provides more individualized advising, academic and support services to a subset of students from across the BPS, and for the Class of 2009, the researchers found that the Success Boston students were substantially more likely to stay in college than their non-Success Boston peers.

“There are many lessons embedded within this report, among them the remarkable impact of the partnership between the colleges and non-profit organizations, particularly when it comes to coaching students to persist through the obstacles that inevitably stand in the way of degree attainment,” said Gary Gottlieb, president of Partners HealthCare and chairman of the Boston Private Industry Council. “This new approach to postsecondary persistence has the potential to create great return on the significant investments that colleges make in our Boston high school graduates.”

The researchers found that Success Boston students in the BPS Class of 2009 were 13 percentage points more likely to persist at both one year (86.7% vs. 73.8%) and two years (73.9% vs. 61.0%) than their non-Success Boston peers. Among gender and race-ethnic group, the one-year college persistence rates for Success Boston participants were 12-to-19 percentage points higher than those of their peers who were not members of the program. Very similar findings prevailed for two-year college persistence.

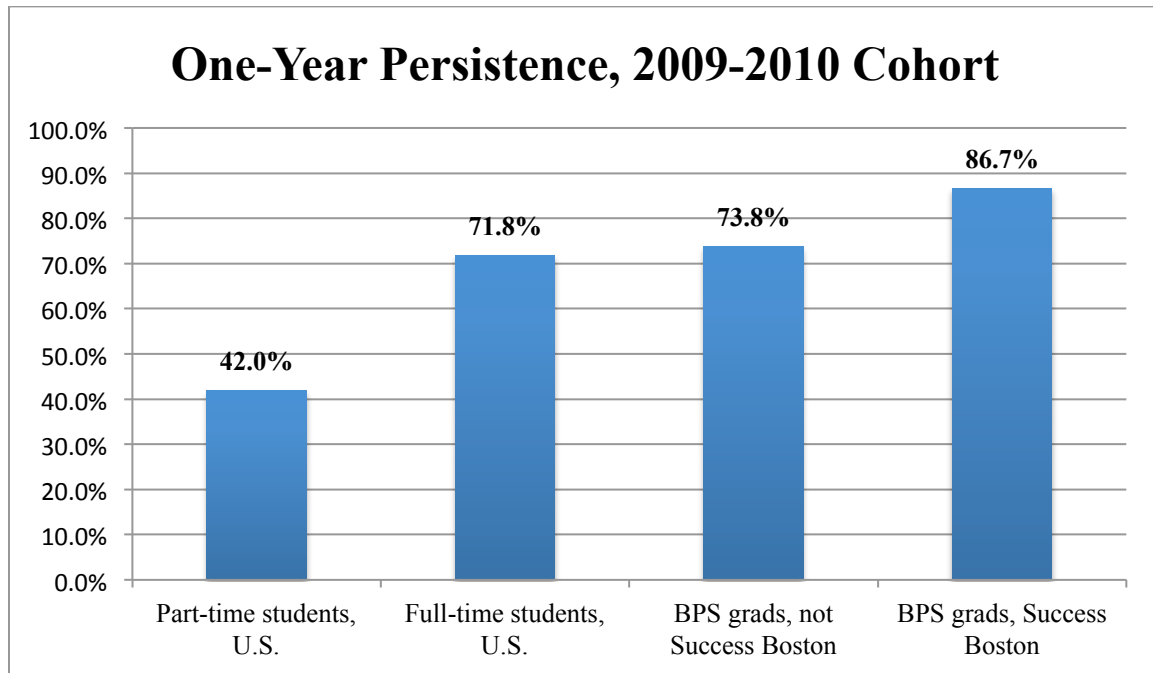
Examining a subset of seven schools where the vast majority of Success Boston students enroll, the researchers found Success Boston students were 20 percentage points more likely to persist at the one-year mark, and their two-year college persistence rate was 23.5 percentage points higher than that of their peers at those colleges. The differences were most exceptionally marked for Black and Hispanic students at both the one- and two-year mark.

**Comparison of One-Year and Two-Year College Persistence Rates of Class of 2009 Success Boston Participants at Selected Schools Compared to Non-Participants (in %)**

Group	Enrolled in Success Boston		Not in Success Boston		Difference		
	One-Year Persistence Rate	Two-Year Persistence Rate	One-Year Persistence Rate	Two-Year Persistence Rate	One-Year Persistence Rate	Two-Year Persistence Rate	N
All	86.4%	73.4%	66.0%	49.9%	+20.4%	+23.5%	711
Male	83.3%	66.7%	62.5%	46.6%	+20.9%	+20.1%	343
Female	88.1%	77.1%	70.0%	53.6%	+18.1%	+23.5%	368
Black	90.3%	77.4%	64.8%	49.6%	+25.6%	+27.8%	306
Hispanic	82.6%	66.3%	58.6%	42.7%	+24.0%	+23.6%	243

“The colleges participating in Success Boston have been working hard to enhance the success of BPS students enrolled at our colleges. The increased college enrollment, retention, and graduation of Boston Public Schools graduates is very encouraging,” said Keith Motley, Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Boston and a Success Boston co-chair. “The early, but promising, outcomes for students receiving transitional support from the non-profit coaches suggests that coaching may be an effective strategy for addressing the concerning differences in the attainment of males and females and among different racial and ethnic groups. I look forward to working with my higher education colleagues and our Success Boston partners to scale up the practices that are driving improved enrollment and completion rates of so that we can accelerate our progress and achieve Mayor Menino’s goals.”

The comparison is striking, too, when comparing Success Boston persistence rates with national averages. While BPS students out-persist the nation as a whole, Success Boston students outshine their BPS peers by 13 percentage points.



### **Progress in remediation**

Supplemental data collected by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education for the report examined the number of BPS students who required remedial coursework when they entered college for the Fall term of 2009, 2010 and 2011.

The data show that while 100 more BPS students enrolled in colleges in Fall 2011 versus Fall 2009, fewer needed any remedial courses, whether at community college (60% in 2011, down from 66% in 2009), state universities (21% from 24% in 2009), or the UMass System (14% from 20% in 2009).

### **Performance gaps still evident**

Unfortunately, while many of the overall statistics show great improvements for Boston Public Schools students as a whole, significant performance gaps are evident – between White/Asian and Black/Hispanic students, between female and male students, and between students from the city’s three exam schools (Boston Latin Academy, Boston Latin School and the John D. O’Bryant School of Mathematics and Science) and its non-exam schools.

For the classes of 2007 through 2009, while all gender and ethnic groups improve their first-year college enrollment, stubborn gaps of eight points persisted between female and male students,

and Asian and White students (83.2% and 77.3%) were substantially more likely than Black and Hispanic students (64.2% and 59.7%) to enroll in college in their first year after graduation.

An even more striking gap can be seen between genders and races in the percentage of students from the BPS Class of 2005 who received their college degree. While 72.9% of Asian women and 66.2% of White women who enrolled in college received their degrees by April 2012, just 27.6% of Black men and 22.5% of Hispanic men had completed their degrees.

There were also large gaps on enrollment, persistence and graduation rates when comparing exam and non-exam schools. Graduates from the BPS exam schools were more than 20 percentage points more likely to enroll in college than non-exam school graduates for the Classes of 2000, 2003 and 2005, and were 29-35% more likely to enroll immediately in college after high school graduation than their non-exam peers. Once in college, exam school students were 28 percentage points more likely to persist through two years of college than their non-exam peers. (89% vs. 61%, for the BPS Class of 2007). For first-year college enrollees from the BPS Class of 2007, 69% of the exam school students had obtained a degree by November 2012, compared to just 31% of non-exam school students.

To achieve the longer-term college graduation rates set for the BPS Class of 2012, substantial efforts will be needed to improve college completion performance from the non-exam schools.

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**The Boston Foundation**, Greater Boston's community foundation, is one of the oldest and largest community foundations in the nation, with net assets of more than \$800 million. In 2012, the Foundation and its donors made \$88 million in grants to nonprofit organizations and received gifts of close to \$60 million. The Foundation is a partner in philanthropy, with some 900 separate charitable funds established by donors either for the general benefit of the community or for special purposes. The Boston Foundation also serves as a major civic leader, provider of information, convener and sponsor of special initiatives that address the region's most pressing challenges.

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