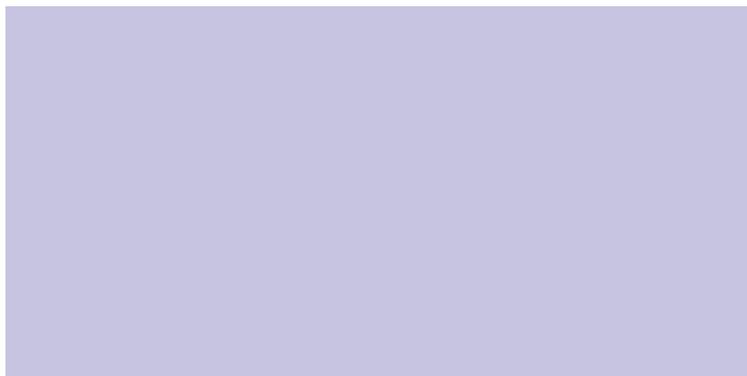


# Boston Pilot Schools

<b>Program Name:</b>	<b>Boston Pilot School Program</b>
<b>Implemented:</b>	<b>1995-1996 School Year</b>
<b>Program-Type:</b>	<b>Pilot Program</b>
<b>Legal Authorization:</b>	<b>School Board Policy and Boston Teachers Union Agreement</b>

<b>Legal Authorization: School Board Policy and Boston Teachers Union Agreement</b>		
<b>School Empowerment Benchmarks</b>		
<b>1.</b>	<b>School budgets based on students not staffing</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Charge schools actual versus average salaries</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>School choice and open enrollment policies</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Principal autonomy over budgets</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Principal autonomy over hiring</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Principal training and school-level management support</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Published transparent school-level budgets</b>	<b>no</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Published transparent school-level outcomes</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Explicit accountability goals</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Collective bargaining relief—flat contracts, etc.</b>	<b>yes</b>
<b>Boston pilot schools met 9 out of 10 school empowerment benchmarks.</b>		



## I. Program Overview

Out of 144 Boston public schools, 21 schools participate in the Boston pilot program. In the 2007-2008 school year, 6,627 students were enrolled in pilot schools out of a total Boston public schools enrollment of 56,190, meaning 11.8 percent of students in 2007-2008 attended pilot schools.

The Boston pilot schools are the result of a unique partnership launched in 1994 among Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the Boston School Committee, the superintendent and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU). The pilot schools were explicitly created to be models of educational innovation and to serve as research and development sites for effective urban public schools. The current collective bargaining agreement with the BTU allows for the creation of up to seven additional pilot schools. In 2009-2010, Boston public schools will open seven new pilot schools including a school run by the Boston Teachers Union.

The pilot schools are a network of public schools that have autonomy over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum/assessment and the school calendar. This flexibility in organization, funding and staffing allows schools to best meet students' needs, while operating within the economy of scale of a large urban public school district.

Each partner has agreed to allow approved pilot schools to be free from constraints in order to promote innovation. Pilot schools are exempt from district policies and mandates. Teachers who work in pilot schools are exempt from teacher

union contract work rules, while still receiving union salary, benefits and accrual of seniority within the district. Teachers voluntarily choose to work at pilot schools; when hired, they sign what is called an "election-to-work agreement," which stipulates the work conditions for the school for the coming school year. This agreement is revisited and revised annually with teacher input.

Pilot schools can be created in two ways: through an application to start a new school or through the conversion of an existing public school, if a minimum of two-thirds of the faculty votes to acquire pilot status. In both cases, proposals must be approved by a joint district-and-teachers'-union steering committee and then by the Boston School Committee.

## II. Student-Based Budgeting Funding Formula

Pilot schools operate on lump-sum, per-pupil budgets, which are equivalent to other district schools with equivalent grade spans and include salaries, instructional materials, consultants, etc. This form of budgeting allows for greater flexibility in determining how and where to spend resources. A lump-sum, per-pupil budget allows the school to decide the best programs and services to provide to students and their families. The total funds dispersed to a school will be based on the number of students enrolled. In calculating their budgets, pilot schools will budget the actual salaries of faculty that they hire. Employees retain their seniority and the district's pay scale delineates the minimum for each teacher's pay.

### III. Autonomy

In a January 2009 study of the performance of pilot schools in comparison to district schools and charter schools, the Boston Foundation describes pilot schools as “a middle-ground between traditional public schools and Charter Schools, preserving some of the protections of collective bargaining and local district supervision, while still allowing considerable autonomy on budgets, staffing and curriculum.”

The schools have autonomy in:

- Staffing—Pilot schools have the authority to select their own staff, though pilot teachers can be bumped by more senior district employees during layoffs.
- Budget—Schools receive a per-pupil amount as a lump sum and have discretion in spending it.
- Curriculum—Pilot schools are not required to follow the district’s curriculum and can set their own graduation requirements.
- Governance—School councils have authority over principal selection, supervision and firing, subject to the superintendent’s approval.
- Calendar—Principals can set longer school days and years, in an effort to allow students more learning time and to give teachers more time for planning and training.

### IV. School-Level Management Support

The Center for Collaborative Education, a non-profit education organization, provides the pilot schools with coordination

support and assistance, including coaching services, professional development, advocacy and research and evaluation. In addition, the Center for Collaborative Education provides a network of like-minded schools where pilot schools meet together to collaborate in such areas as teacher-sharing conferences, leadership retreats, committees on fiscal autonomy and special education and study groups on race and achievement.

### V. School Site Councils

Pilot schools’ governing boards have increased authority over traditional school councils. The governing boards set the school’s vision, hire and annually evaluate the principal (with the superintendent having final authority), determine the annual election-to-work terms for BTU members and approve the annual budget. Pilot school governing boards consist of the principal, faculty (at least four) and parent representatives, community members (higher education, business and community agencies) and for high schools, students. Faculty, parent and student representatives are elected by their peers, while community members are selected by the overall governing board.

### VI. School Choice Component

In general, pilot schools do not enroll students based on background or academic success. They operate under the Boston Public School Controlled Choice Plan (meaning they give the most weight to students who are within walking distance and who have a sibling at the school).

In elementary and middle schools

students can be guaranteed admission if they live within a certain distance of the school. As long as a school's enrollment is not filled by these guaranteed students, elementary and middle schools are subject to lotteries as part of the Boston public school choice system. However, at the high school level only two of the pilot schools admit via lottery. Another one admits only students who are over age for high school (for instance, over the age of 16 when entering ninth grade). The remaining five pilot high schools admit selectively, requiring students to submit an application or, in the case of a school dedicated to the performing arts, audition. These applications and auditions are not supposed to include prior academic performance.

## VII. Accountability

In exchange for greater autonomy, pilot schools are held to higher levels of accountability. For example, in addition to ongoing assessment, every five years each school undergoes a "school quality review" (SQR) process based on common benchmarks of high-performing schools. The SQR process includes input from the schools, external evaluators, Boston Public School District and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU). There are five main steps in the pilot schools' accountability system:

- Each school conducts a "school self-study" and creates a school portfolio.
- External practitioners conduct a three-day SQR and report with commendations, concerns and recommendations.
- Schools outline in writing the steps the school will take to address the SQR

report recommendations.

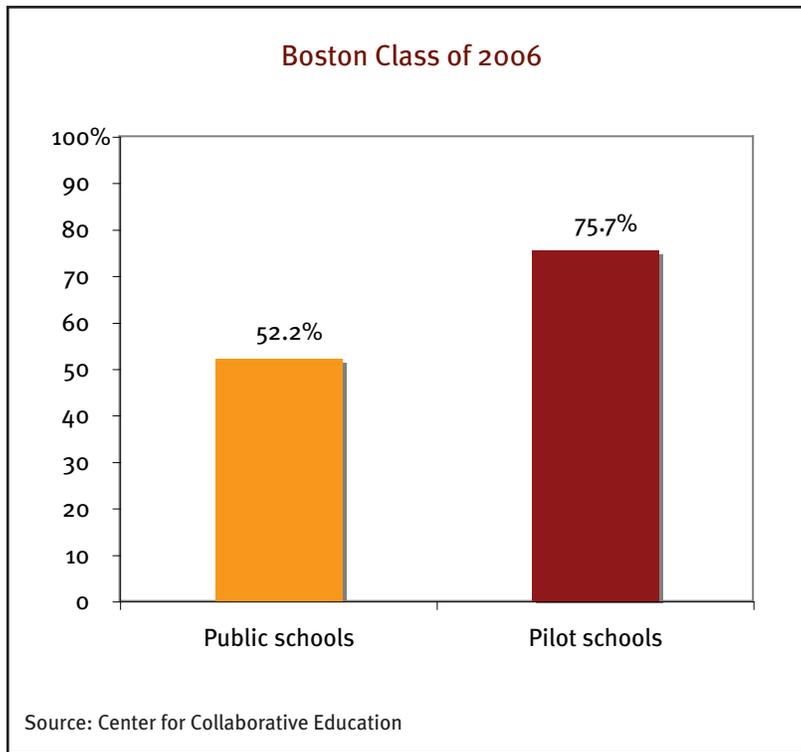
- The SQR report and the school response are submitted to the joint Boston Public School District/Boston Teachers Union Steering Committee for review and feedback.
- Schools implement an action plan based on the SQR report, the school's response and recommendation from the steering committee.

In addition, the district publishes a yearly profile of every school in the district with student achievement trends.

## VIII. Performance Outcomes

Studies from the Center for Collaborative Education have found that pilot schools are outperforming district averages on every student-engagement and performance indicator.<sup>1</sup> Pilot schools at the elementary, middle and high school levels have higher attendance and lower transfer, suspension and dropout rates than the district average. On the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests, these schools surpass the district averages at every grade level in both English and math and at both the passing and advanced/proficient levels. A significantly greater percentage of high school graduates are enrolled in higher education one year after graduation.

A 2009 study by the Boston Foundation that more carefully controlled for student characteristics found that charter schools are outperforming both pilot schools and traditional schools.<sup>2</sup> However, students in elementary and high school pilot schools outperform district schools, but middle school pilot students score slightly lower



than middle school students in traditional district schools.

### IX. Lessons Learned

1. The most important lesson from the Boston pilot schools is that school boards can negotiate with unions for more flexibility and thus obtain superior results for students. The Boston pilot schools demonstrate the benefit of a flat contract where teachers are free to

negotiate with individual schools.

2. The Boston pilot schools also demonstrate the benefit of a third-party nonprofit group that is willing to support a network of independent pilot schools. The Center for Collaborative Education plays a crucial role in providing professional development and information-sharing between pilot schools in Boston, in some ways serving the same role as charter school associations often provide for networks of charter schools within specific regional organizations.

### Resources

*Description of Boston Pilot Schools Network*, Center for Collaborative Education, March 2006, <http://www.ccebos.org/>.

*Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools*, The Boston Foundation, January 2009, [http://www.tbf.org/uploadedFiles/tbforg/Utility\\_Navigation/Multimedia\\_Library/Reports/InformingTheDebate\\_Final.pdf](http://www.tbf.org/uploadedFiles/tbforg/Utility_Navigation/Multimedia_Library/Reports/InformingTheDebate_Final.pdf).

*Progress and Promise: Results from the Boston Pilot Schools*, Center for Collaborative Education, January 2006, [http://www.ccebos.org/Progress\\_and\\_Promise.pdf](http://www.ccebos.org/Progress_and_Promise.pdf).

*Strong Results, High Demand: A Four-Year Study of Boston's Pilot High Schools*, Center for Collaborative Education, November 2007, [http://www.ccebos.org/Pilot\\_School\\_Study\\_11.07.pdf](http://www.ccebos.org/Pilot_School_Study_11.07.pdf).

*The Essential Guide To Pilot Schools*, Center for Collaborative Education, September 2006, [http://www.ccebos.org/Pilot\\_Guide\\_Overview.pdf](http://www.ccebos.org/Pilot_Guide_Overview.pdf).

## Contact Information

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## Endnotes

1. *Progress and Promise: Results from the Boston Pilot Schools*, Center for Collaborative Education, January 2006, [http://www.ccebos.org/Progress\\_and\\_Promise.pdf](http://www.ccebos.org/Progress_and_Promise.pdf); *Strong Results, High Demand: A Four-Year Study of Boston's Pilot High Schools*, Center for Collaborative Education, November 2007, [http://www.ccebos.org/Pilot\\_School\\_Study\\_11.07.pdf](http://www.ccebos.org/Pilot_School_Study_11.07.pdf).
2. *Informing the Debate: Comparing Boston's Charter, Pilot and Traditional Schools*, The Boston Foundation, January 2009, [http://www.tbf.org/uploadedFiles/tbforg/Utility\\_Navigation/Multimedia\\_Library/Reports/InformingTheDebate\\_Final.pdf](http://www.tbf.org/uploadedFiles/tbforg/Utility_Navigation/Multimedia_Library/Reports/InformingTheDebate_Final.pdf).