

Metro Boston faces enormous inequality across lines of race, class, income, and national origin. A long history of residential segregation and disparities in access has constructed high hurdles to educational and economic advancement for the region's populations of color and new immigrants.

The achievement gap for children from low-income and minority families begins with a disparity in access to quality early childhood education, and frequently worsens as the quality of local schools differ widely between wealthier and poorer communities. Over the longer term of students' lives, dropout rates and college readiness also vary substantially by race and income. This variation, and the range of obstacles faced by people of color and immigrants, perpetuates lingering discrepancies in income and wealth. Improving urban schools, access to higher education, and access to jobs are important steps towards making our region a more equitable place.

MetroFuture includes recommendations intended to improve the ability of all the region's residents to access educational and job opportunities. These include strategies to shore up underperforming schools, position the growing immigrant population for success, and remove barriers to higher education and job access. These strategies seek not only to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged populations, but also to improve our region's competitiveness in the global economy. Participants in this breakout session will evaluate a selection of these recommendations and suggest additional strategies to reduce inequality in Metro Boston.

Strategy 8: Improve City Life and School Quality

8.A Ensure high-quality educational opportunities in urban communities

Since the implementation of the Federal "No Child Left Behind" law was enacted in 2002, Massachusetts has begun to characterize a school as underperforming based on its students' MCAS scores. School systems currently identified as underperforming most often are located in urban areas in the Inner Core or Regional Urban Centers, areas that have larger populations of minorities and recent immigrants. Focusing on turning around these under-performing schools is a key strategy to reduce disparities in education.

8.A.1* Establish new education and social partnerships to support underperforming schools

Many underperforming schools have partnered with outside entities to help turn around their schools. One of the most commonly used models for outside partnerships uses what are referred to as SSOs (School Support Organizations) by Mass Insight in their report

* Recommendations are numbered in reference to the larger outline of Implementation Strategies. They can be cross-referenced as follows: (Strategy number).(Sub-Strategy letter).(Recommendation number). For example, this Recommendation is from Strategy 8, "Improve City Life and School Quality," Sub-Strategy A, "Ensure high quality educational opportunities in urban communities," and is the first Recommendation in the Strategy.

Considering School Turnarounds: Market Research and Analysis in Six Urban Districts. SSOs work alongside the partner school's current administration to identify key issues and problems that are causing the school to underperform, and then work collaboratively to increase the school's performance. An expansion of this approach creates dual social and educational partnerships between outside institutions and the current administrations of schools in need of extra support.

The Department of Education must assemble a pilot program to test the effectiveness of this two-pronged approach to supporting failing schools. School MCAS scores and/or dropout rates would trigger admission into the partnership, which would use state resources to mobilize ready community partners.

EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP

The education partnership would be modeled on New York City's successful Turnaround for Children program in that it would comprise the administrators, teachers, and student support staff all working collaboratively to identify the key areas of concern that need to be addressed. In particular the members of the Partnership would ensure that both teachers and students are provided with adequate resources to meet their needs. This partnership would consist of two teams working simultaneously:

- Professional Development Team
The Professional Development Team would provide in-house trainings to administrators and teachers on a variety of social and education programs. The Professional Development Team would be responsible for ensuring that the trainings are incorporated into the curriculum and measure their outcomes.
- Student Support Team
The Student Support Team would identify students who need additional academic assistance and make sure they get the support and additional help that they need.

SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP

Administrators must analyze not only academic factors that impact a school's success, but also the outside factors that play a role in student and community life. The creation of a social partnership between schools and community partners such as community centers would help to keep local schools informed of recent community activities and events, both positive and negative. Unlike most administrators and teachers, community center employees tend to live in the community where the center is located and therefore more aware of the students' home surroundings. If a violent incident were to occur the night before, social partners would notify the school's relevant staff of the situation and the student(s) who may have been affected by the event would have their social needs addressed by a guidance counselor or other assigned administrator the following school day.

Strategy 7: Support Healthy Families

7.A Establish universal early education and care

While educators offer varying opinions on how to better educate children, they all agree the process requires kindergarten. Currently in Massachusetts children under six years of age are not required to attend school although research shows a strong correlation between kindergarten attendance and success in later years. These reports show children who are exposed to early education are more likely to succeed in school, graduate from high school and go on to attend

college or technical schools, when compared to children who have not attended kindergarten¹. Presently children are not mandated to attend school until they reach the age of six years old and are eligible to enter first grade.² Massachusetts does require that each district offer kindergarten, but since the class size is regulated not to exceed 25 students, inadequate kindergarten space exists in many districts.³ In order to allow more children to participate in kindergarten, most districts offer part-time kindergarten programs. There are simply not enough slots throughout the state to ensure that all children can attend kindergarten full or even part-time.

In response to studies of early education success, the Boston Public School System built six early education centers throughout the city that offer full-time early education beginning at age 3 and going up to the 1st grade.⁴

7.A.1 Expand the network of early education centers

A statewide expansion of early education centers would allow all children to attend school before the first grade level, thereby helping them to adjust socially, to acquire learning skills, and in the long run to achieve higher grades. Children will develop the necessary skills at an early age to succeed in school and to foster a sense of being connected to schools. In addition to the benefit students would receive, full-time kindergarten programs would give parents the option of returning to the workforce if they so choose, without incurring excessive costs of daycare.

7.B Provide all school-aged children with access to after school and out-of-school programs

Quality out-of-school programming has been shown to have positive impacts on young people's academic, social, physical, and social development. Summer programs, particularly, are also demonstrably effective in closing the achievement gap between higher- and lower-performing students. Currently, there are 6,400 license-exempt or licensed School Age Child Care (SACC) and Family Child Care programs in the region, with a total capacity of 67,000 children (approximately 12% of the region's 5- 14 year old population.) 23% of participating children receive subsidies administered by MA Department of Education and Care, and approximately 2,700 children are on the waitlist. New strategies are needed to spread this effective tool.

7.B.2) Create public/private partnerships to provide financial and other resources for out-of-school programs

Partnering with private funders and businesses, as well as a variety of public institutions, can dramatically increase the resources available to out-of-school programs. Not only is this an important way for programs to access new revenue sources, it also increases young people's access to public health, artistic or cultural institutions, workforce training, and other disciplines. The state agencies primarily involved in out of school programs, the Department of Early Education and Care and the Department of Education, should take the lead in developing and fostering these programs. Additionally, legislative language should be strengthened to require schools and organizations to collaborate when planning new after-school programs.

¹ Early Education for All: A Report on the Cost of Universal, High-Quality Early Education in Massachusetts. EEA Campaign and Strategies for Children, Inc. Fall 2006

² 603 C.M.R 8.02

³ 603 C.M.R 8.01

⁴ Boston Public Schools website: <http://boston.k12.ma.us/bps/bpsglance.asp>

7.B.3) Streamline funding opportunities and provide programs with technical assistance to help them access available funding

Directors of out-of-school programs are currently faced with a dizzying array of funding options from which to support their activities, from the federal to the state and local levels, as well as private partnerships and grants. The Commonwealth should ensure that state funding sources are as accessible as possible by pooling resources and sharing applications among agencies, providing multi-year grants rather than requiring programs to re-apply every year, and maximizing the federal funding for which the state qualifies. It must also sponsor a centralized online listing of all funding opportunities available at all levels and provide technical assistance to help programs apply for funding for which they are qualified.

Strategy 6: Invest in a Skilled Workforce

6.B Broaden access to public higher education and improve student outcomes

Policy makers need to implement programs to ensure that finances and transportation do not present insurmountable obstacles for those who wish to obtain a post-secondary degree. An important part of the MetroFuture scenario is reducing the jobs-skills mismatch, particularly among immigrants and minorities. Access to and support for success in higher education is a key way to attain this goal.

6.B.6 Reduce financial barriers to attending public institutions of higher education

The Board of Higher Education's 2006 Task Force on Student Financial Aid put forward several creative recommendations that should be advanced, including dedicating need-based state financial aid to students with family incomes less than the Commonwealth's median income, and providing tuition and fee waivers to qualified Massachusetts high school graduates attending community college.

The Task Force's recommendation to offer loan forgiveness to students with state-funded college loans who are employed in jobs "addressing critical workforce needs" would create a strong link between higher education and economic development needs and priorities, and should be implemented. Additionally, creating a statewide program to help individuals and families learn how to finance a college education, another Task Force recommendation, would empower first generation college students and limited English speaking families to effectively plan for post-secondary education expenses.

Through an association of the local Chambers of Commerce, The Massachusetts Biotechnology Council, and other industry groups, we could establish tax deductible "Invest in the Future" scholarships for science and engineering undergraduates. This could be one component part of a larger business-driven group of activities to secure a creative and technology-capable workforce.

6.B.8 Locate public higher education expansion in smart growth locations and improve transit access to public higher education

As with any infrastructure built with public money, the Commonwealth's public higher education institutions must be located in areas that both take the most advantage of existing infrastructure and allow the greatest amount of access from a variety of transportation modes. Locating these institutions in smart growth locations, largely Regional Urban Centers and downtowns, will help meeting MetroFuture's land use

objectives by concentrating development near existing infrastructure. Furthermore, locating these facilities in transit accessible locations will help enhance equity by ensuring that those without cars and private modes of transportation will still have access to higher education opportunities.

6.D.16 Increase Coaching, Counseling, Mentoring

Coaching, counseling, tutoring, career advice and other student support services are necessary to help college students transition their hard work and effort into professional success. Academic and personal support services can have a significant impact on improving first-year retention.

For example, in Oregon, Portland Community College's federally-funded College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) supports students from migrant and seasonal farm worker backgrounds during their first year of college. It provides students with both financial assistance and support services with the goal of preparing them to continue their education at a four-year college or university. The program's services include tuition and transportation assistance, tutoring and mentoring, academic advising, personal and career counseling, book assistance, health resources and a monthly stipend.

Expanded funding for counselors, tutors, and other college and university support staff is necessary to ensure that students have access to the help they need to integrate into the college environment, particularly in their first year.

6.E Remove Barriers to Labor Force Participation

6.E.21 Reform the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) system

The Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) system was initially launched as a way to more easily collect and disseminate criminal justice-related information for use within the criminal justice system, while protecting the privacy of those with criminal records. However, its use has now expanded to employers, who use CORI information to screen potential employees. Unfortunately a lack of clarity and understanding of the CORI system stands as an impediment for many ex-offenders seeking work. Consequently, CORI reports "can have the effect of creating a class of unemployable ex-offenders." CORI stands as a major challenge to economic development, particularly in communities where residents are disproportionately involved with the criminal justice system. CORI disproportionately affects low-income and immigrant communities and communities of color who have historically been denied full access to the region's economic opportunities.

Thoughtful and balanced CORI reform that meets the needs of employers and employees, while maintaining public safety, is therefore a critical component of MetroFuture implementation. Recognizing the challenge that CORI presents, legislators and the Patrick Administration have been hard at work developing ideas on how to reform the CORI system. A recent Executive Order and legislation issued by Governor Patrick represent important progress on CORI, and it is expected that significant progress will continue to be made on this issue over the coming months and years.

In January 2008, Governor Patrick issued Executive Order 495, which implements many necessary revisions to CORI. Among other modifications, EO495 makes CORI reports easier to read, and requires that people using them in hiring situations be more completely trained in their use. Critically, EO495 directs the Executive Office of Health and Human

Services to revise its hiring guidelines for human service providers. This item will broaden access to individuals with CORIs to jobs in high demand fields that are expected to see significant growth through 2030. Legislation filed by Governor Patrick also proposes reforming the CORI system by changing the time frames for sealing of records and increasing the penalties for abuse of CORI information. Passage of this legislation, coupled with EO495, could represent a significant and positive step forward in reforming the CORI system. But additional reforms absent from the Governor's bill are needed. Such reforms include, banning the use of job applications that permit employers to exclude job seekers who truthfully disclose the existence of their criminal history; strengthening laws that will protect people with CORI from exclusion in job training programs and employment; and limiting the dissemination of records that ended in a dismissal or a finding of not guilty.

In addition to reforming CORI, incentives for employers to hire ex-offenders should be expanded and better utilized. The largely underutilized Work Opportunity Tax Credit provides incentives to employers in Massachusetts to hire ex-offenders. It gives \$1,500 to employers hiring an ex-offender for at least six months of work within one year of release from supervision or custody. Many employers do not know it exists, and others are under the misconception that the program involves significant paperwork. The Federal Bonding Program covers employers for any losses due to theft or embezzlement by the bonded employee for six months and can be extended upon request, and may be obtained through the One Stop Career Centers. The bonding program is also underutilized in Massachusetts. The Executive Office of Public Safety and Security should work to educate employers in order to expand use of these programs.

6.F Position the growing immigrant population as a key asset to the region's economy

Between 1990 and 2000, the foreign born population in Massachusetts rose 34.7 percent. This growth trend is projected to continue through 2030. Without new immigrants to the Commonwealth, our population and workforce would have suffered a significant decline. Because continued immigration is expected to buttress the region's population growth through 2030, and because immigrants have traditionally been denied access to economic opportunity, it is critical that policies be implemented that fully integrate immigrants into the region's economic life. Economic opportunity to all citizens facilitates wealth-building at an individual and family level, and economic well-being at a regional level.

6.F.23 Expand funding for the adult basic education (ABE) system, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Adult Basic Education includes basic literacy services for adults, General Educational Development (GED), and English for Speakers of Other Languages, and is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Education. In May of 2008, there were 18,820 people on the waitlist for ABE classes. Of this number, 13,903 are on waiting lists for ESOL classes¹. 195,000 working-age immigrants accounting for 6% of the state's workforce have limited English speaking skills², and 32% of Massachusetts adults have been found to be below the

¹ Massachusetts Adult Basic Education Directory. Available: [Family & Community - Adult Basic Education: Massachusetts Department of Education](#) (Accessed May 12, 2008)

² MassInc "New Skills for a New Economy: Adult Education's Key Role in Sustaining Economic Growth and Expanding Opportunity." December 2000: p. 7.

lowest literacy skill level¹. The current state spending on ABE is \$32.5 million, and 2/3 of these funds are currently used for ESOL instruction. Doubling the allocations for ABE in the state budget is a critical first step in developing a skilled workforce that is both native-language literate and English proficient.

6.F.24 Evaluate and adopt innovative ESOL service delivery models

Funding is not the only issue to consider when striving for equitable provision of English language skills. New and innovative service delivery systems must be explored. The Department of Education should conduct targeted feasibility studies to guide public policy in funding and organizing the provision of ESOL. As an extension of this, it should develop a clearly stated, cohesive, state-wide strategic plan to specify public post-secondary roles, and consider new management science planning models to address the location of ESOL services.

Workplace ESOL programs provide on-site education that builds targeted skills and abilities while building English language proficiency. The employee benefits through improved skills, and the employer benefits because these skills increase employee productivity and retention, workplace safety, and improve customer service. Also, these programs reach employees who might otherwise be unable to attend ESOL classes held at other times in the day or evening. The Workforce Training Fund (WTF), administered by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, provides business and labor with matching grants of up to \$250,000 to finance incumbent worker training. In April of 2008, Governor Deval Patrick announced the release \$18 million in grants to 200 companies throughout Massachusetts in order to train over 16,000 workers in every region of the Commonwealth. The Administration should maintain this commitment in the coming years.

6.F.26 Incorporate immigrant entrepreneurs into economic development strategies

Immigrant entrepreneurs should be meaningfully incorporated into overall economic development strategies at the state and local levels. Industry associations and community based economic development organizations must find ways to effectively connect with immigrant communities that are often out of the mainstream economy. The Massachusetts Office of Small Business & Entrepreneurship notes that small businesses represent 85% of all Massachusetts companies and employ over a quarter of the workforce. The Small Business Technical Assistance Provider Grant Program was created by 2006 Economic Stimulus Law and supports community-based technical assistance to small business operators. Strategic, long-term public sector support of programs like this, and renewed emphasis on providing services that are appropriate to a culturally diverse constituency, will strengthen this important sector of the regional economy.

6.F.27 Encourage Referrals to Micro Lenders & Enhance Funding for Micro Lending Programs

Banks should develop a practice of referring rejected loan applicants or those in need of technical assistance to micro lenders in order to encourage entrepreneurship in segments of the population not typically eligible for conventional credit. This is currently not common practice among banks. Furthermore, the Massachusetts congressional delegation should

¹ Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education: Public Policy Committee. "White Paper: The Importance of the Adult Basic Education System to Workforce Development." December 13, 2006: p. 5.

work to restore funding of the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund and the Micro Loan program to 2001 levels in recognition of the important and growing role immigrant entrepreneurs play in the Commonwealth's overall economic development strategy.

State lending and technical assistance programs for small business, low-income, or minority entrepreneurs are effectively centered in the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, but additional outreach campaigns targeted to communities with limited English proficiency are needed.