

For Immediate Release

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**Boston Public Schools releases second phase of Study on Black and Latino Males
Finds “Promising Practices” exist while more intentional, system-wide support is needed**

Qualitative phase of report informs effort to address opportunity and achievement gaps

BOSTON--- Boston Public Schools (BPS) today released the second phase of a groundbreaking study examining factors impacting low academic performance for Black and Latino males. The new study, “Promising Practices and Unfinished Business: Fostering Equity and Excellence for Black and Latino Males,” offers detailed case studies that suggest a more intentional approach to supporting Black and Latino male students could significantly strengthen outcomes.

The first phase of the report found that Black and Latino males had inequitable access to more rigorous programs in schools, contributing in part to significant opportunity and achievement gaps for this population. Both phases of the report, commissioned by Boston Public Schools and conducted by the Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (AISR), represent the most comprehensive body of work in the country aimed at closing those gaps for Black and Latino males. The report was funded by the Barr Foundation.

“A report such as this is long overdue for our city. Its findings shine a light on our issues and our challenges, but they also allow us to see that there is a way forward,” noted Mayor Martin Walsh. “Just as Boston has taken steps to address the findings from the first phase of this report, so too, will we embrace these recommendations and continue the critically necessary work ahead.”

“Boston Public Schools set out on a course to shine a light on its own practices, to learn from them, and to identify solutions that can close access gaps that hold achievement back,” said Boston School Committee Chairman Michael O’Neill. “The findings will serve not just our city well, but other districts across the country as we tackle this national issue.”

BPS requested the study in 2013 to inform the district’s efforts to improve outcomes for Black and Latino males – a demographic group that comprises more than 40 percent of the district’s enrollment and has lower academic performance than White and Asian peer groups across all academic measures.

“This study provides an enormous opportunity for BPS, and for school districts across America, to ensure that all students receive the support and access they need for academic achievement,” said Interim Superintendent John McDonough. “As this research shows, we’re learning from the first phase of the report and making progress that can be scaled and replicated throughout the system.”

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The second phase of the study contains four case studies of Boston schools where Black and Latino males perform comparatively better than the district average. The authors found several hallmarks of effective schools overall, including positive cultures, strong professional communities, differentiated instruction, and active family engagement. Yet, despite some examples of an explicit focus on Black and Latino males, a cross-case analysis concluded that overall, these schools fell short of intentionally and systemically supporting this population.

Using evidence-based “Indicators for Black and Latino Male Equity and Excellence,” authors suggest greater cultural responsiveness is needed, which would require encouraging explicit discussions of race, gender, and ethnicity to build a common language; sharing more information about the cultural groups in our schools; and providing professional development to all staff on culturally responsive practices.

“For us to close these gaps, we need to apply system-wide approaches that work specifically with Black and Latino males, like celebrating who they are and providing them with access to rigorous and culturally responsive curricular supports,” said Warren Simmons, AISR executive director. “Unless we do, we will continue to maintain two predictable paths for our students – one that leads to success for some and another that undermines the engagement and achievement of a growing number of BPS students.”

“What we have found is that while the case study schools had positive cultures, strong professional learning communities, and individualized instruction, the opportunity and attainment gaps persist. However, we predict that intentional implementation of culturally responsive practices throughout the district, community, and schools will go a long way to closing those gaps,” said Rosann Tung, director of Research and Policy at AISR and lead author of the study.

“Boston is poised to make significant gains in its efforts to improve outcomes for Black and Latino male students,” said Dan French, Executive Director of the Center for Collaborative Education. “Systemic change within the district and schools requires community involvement and collaboration. These reports are only the beginning of the conversations in which we must all engage to ensure that we provide all students with a culturally responsive, high quality, high support education.”

The case study report outlined a series of recommendations under the categories of: Mission and Vision; Leadership; Curriculum and Instruction; Culture; Family Engagement; and Community Partnerships. Authors note that while there is much work ahead, some of these strategies are already underway at BPS or are being planned as a result of Phase I findings, including the creation of professional learning communities to share culturally responsive strategies; a deliberate policy on recruiting, retaining, and supporting a cadre of racially, culturally and linguistically diverse principals, teachers, and staff members; expansion of high quality early childhood programs; “Courageous Conversations” to develop a common understanding and language about race and cultural responsiveness as it benefits educational equity; and efforts to increase Black and Latino male access to inclusive and rigorous coursework, including MassCore curriculum, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate courses.

Increased access to advanced coursework was a key recommendation in Phase One of this study, “Opportunity and Equity: Enrollment and Outcomes of Black and Latino Males in Boston Public Schools,” which provided a comprehensive review of the educational status of Black and Latino males within BPS. The full report is available online at www.bostonpublicschools.org.

About the study

About CCE

The Center for Collaborative Education (CCE) is a nonprofit organization established in 1994 to promote innovative models of schools and to engage in related activities that increase justice and opportunity for all learners.

About AISR

A national policy research and reform-support organization that works with urban districts and communities to improve the conditions and outcomes of schools, especially in urban communities and in those attended by traditionally underserved children. Our work focuses on three crucial issues in education reform today: school transformation, college and career readiness, and expanded learning time.

About BPS

As the birthplace of public education in this nation, the Boston Public Schools is committed to transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world class system of innovative, welcoming schools. We partner with the community, families, and students to develop in every learner the knowledge, skill, and character to excel in college, career, and life. The district educates 74 percent of the school-age children who live in Boston, currently enrolling more than 57,000 students in 128 schools. It is also among the most diverse school districts in the nation. Nearly one in every two students speaks a language other than English at home and our students come from more than 100 countries. One in five BPS students has a disability and three out of four live near or below the poverty line.

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