

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Opportunity and Equity: Enrollment and Outcomes of Black and Latino Males in Boston Public Schools



Helena P. Miranda, Christina Mokhtar, Rosann Tung, Ray Ward,
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This executive summary of the report *Opportunity and Equity: Enrollment and Outcomes of Black and Latino Males in Boston Public Schools* was prepared by the Center for Collaborative Education, based in Boston, Massachusetts, and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, based in Providence, Rhode Island, on behalf of the Boston Public Schools. This Phase I report is part of a larger study, *Analyzing Enrollment, Outcomes, and Excellent Schools for Black and Latino Male Students in the Boston Public Schools*, of which Phase II identifies promising school and district practices and policies associated with increased engagement of, and improved outcomes for, Black and Latino males that will ultimately help lead to their increased success in school, college, and careers. This executive summary, the full report, and companion reports may be viewed and downloaded at www.cce.org and at www.annenberginstitute.org.

The **Center for Collaborative Education** (CCE) was established in 1994 in Boston, Massachusetts, with a mission dedicated to transforming schools to ensure that all students succeed. Its core belief is that schools should prepare every student to achieve academically and make a positive contribution to a democratic society. To achieve its vision of a just and equitable world where every student is college- and career-ready and is prepared to become a compassionate and contributing global citizen, CCE works at the school, district, and state levels in New England and beyond to:

- Create learning environments that are collaborative, democratic, and equitable;
- Build capacity within districts and schools to adopt new practices that promote collaborative, democratic, and equitable learning for students and educators; and
- Catalyze systemic change at the school and district levels through district- and state-level policy and advocacy support.

The **Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University** (AISR) is a national policy research and reform support organization that collaborates with school districts and communities to improve the conditions and outcomes of schooling in America, especially in urban communities. AISR focuses on three crucial issues in education reform today: school transformation, college and career readiness, and expanded learning time. This work is grounded in a vision of a “smart education system,” that is, a high-functioning school district that collaborates with community partners to provide a comprehensive web of opportunities and supports for its students, inside and outside of school.

The Center for Collaborative Education and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University gratefully acknowledge the partnership and funding support for this project from the following organizations:

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Public Schools
Focus on Children

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We also thank all of our Advisory Committee members, who provided guidance, vision, and feedback on our research, from concept to research design to preliminary findings to reporting, and who helped to enhance and improve our research by providing multiple valuable perspectives.

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We extend our appreciation to the representatives of community based organizations who participated in a community meeting and provided valuable feedback on the findings and recommendations: Latino Network; Boston United for Students; Sociedad Latina; Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative; Boston Teachers Union, Black Ministerial Alliance, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, and the City of Boston.

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Letter from the Superintendent



To our community,

Just as Boston was first in the nation to establish a free public education in 1635, in many ways the journey toward equity and excellence for all students began here as well. In 1849, the father of five-year-old Sarah Roberts sued the City of Boston for blocking her enrollment in an all-white school because she was black. She lost the case, but six years later Massachusetts changed the law and banned segregated schools.

In the generations that have followed, our city has taken bold steps toward true educational equity. We have also faced significant setbacks and challenges. Sarah Roberts' fight is not yet won, but we are honored to engage in the struggle.

In 2013 Superintendent Carol R. Johnson commissioned a study to examine the root causes of and potential solutions to the achievement gaps that exist for Black and Latino boys in the Boston Public Schools. Just as in other large cities across the nation, these students tend to consistently have the lowest academic performance on virtually every measure. We believe these students also have the greatest opportunities for success.

Finding solutions will have positive impacts for everyone -- and will make the Boston Public Schools the first district in the nation to successfully eliminate these gaps for all students. To succeed, we must be willing to investigate why these challenges have persisted. We must seek out authentic solutions and discuss their implementation openly and honestly with the entire community.

We are grateful to the Barr Foundation for joining our effort, which has allowed us to commission the Center for Collaborative Education and the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University to develop the study we are discussing today. Many people inside and outside BPS provided data and shared their own stories. Their contributions will have a positive impact on our entire community.

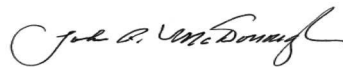
This report includes many recommendations that deserve careful consideration. We are already putting many of them in place, including:

- Expanding early education: Last year a Harvard study found that our pre-k program may be the most effective in the nation at closing achievement gaps. Mayor Martin J. Walsh is leading the effort to dramatically expand BPS early education, which will ensure long-term equity and access for all students at all levels.
- Teacher diversity action plan and hiring autonomy for schools: We are recruiting and retaining a team of highly-qualified, effective educators that better reflect the diversity of the students we serve. We are extending hiring autonomies to more school leaders and supporting them so they can attract the very best teachers to Boston. Our strategy is working: this fall one in four new teachers identifies as African-American, which is the highest percentage in seven years.
- Expanding inclusive opportunities: The BPS Inclusive Schools Network is growing. Each year we are adding more schools to the network, which ensures students with disabilities can learn alongside their non-disabled peers. This expansion allows us to offer inclusive opportunities to far more Black and Latino students, who have not had enough access to these programs in the past.
- Expanding dual-language opportunities and strengthening supports for English Language Learners: Students who are fluent in more than one language are more likely to succeed in the 21st century economy. Whether a student is learning English as a second language or wishes to become fluent in a language other than English, dual-language schools offer a pathway to future success. We are also strengthening the entire support for English Language Learners. In 2014, 88 percent of former English Language Learners have reached proficiency in English Language Arts in 10th grade, compared to 41 percent in 2007.
- Reducing suspensions and expulsions through a student-led Code of Conduct: We are reducing chronic absenteeism and have changed our policies around discipline thanks to input from students, parents and experts.

We have already seen clear signs of progress: In 2006, the dropout rate among African-American students in BPS was 10 percent. Since then we have cut it by more than half, to 4.5 percent. For Latino students, in 2006, the annual dropout rate was 11 percent. We have since cut it to 5.2 percent. Although these are the lowest levels we have ever recorded, we can and must do so much better.

As a community we agree that every child, regardless of race, income, ability or home language deserves to have the very best public education possible. We are not there yet. We asked the authors of this report to take a tough, hard look at what our students experience so we can confront and defeat inequities that remain. To succeed we must be quick, we must be deliberate and we must be united.

On behalf of Mayor Martin J. Walsh, the Boston School Committee, our great teachers, school leaders, staff, parents and students, thank you for joining us in the critical work of transforming education. Here in Boston, in the city that launched the struggle for educational equity, we stand ready to set the standard for world-class opportunity and excellence for every student.



John McDonough
Interim Superintendent
Boston Public Schools



Context

Despite being the focus of education reform initiatives for several decades, disparities in access, opportunity, and achievement persist for Black and Latino males. Black and Latino male graduation rates continue to lag behind those of their female peers and male counterparts from other racial and ethnic backgrounds (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Lee & Ransom, 2011). Black and Latino males are disproportionately suspended and expelled (Fergus & Noguera, 2010), and they are more likely to be identified as having a learning disability (Losen & Orfield, 2002) and to be absent from advanced academic programs (Noguera, 2008) than their White and Asian peers.

On average, Black and Latino males complete less education than do their peers. Nationally, about 52% of Black and 59% of Latino male students graduated from high school in 2010, compared to 78% of White, non-Latino male students. While the national average for attaining a bachelor's degree among individuals aged 25 to 29 was 33% in 2012, only 16% of young Black men and 11% of young Latino men held bachelor's degrees (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013).

Recognizing these statistics early this year, President Obama announced My Brother's Keeper, a multi-funder, cross-sector initiative aimed at removing systemic barriers and creating greater opportunities for boys and men of color from birth through college and career (White House, 2014). A government cross-agency task force recommended that practitioners and policy-makers focus on implementing evidence-based approaches, increasing data collection and reporting, and addressing not only academic, but also socio-emotional and health needs of Black and Latino youth (Johnson & Shelton, 2014). This study's findings and recommendations reinforce the task force's report.

Boston is similar to other U.S. urban centers, both in demographics and in the educational attainment and lifelong prospects of Black and Latino males. Based on 2010 census data sources, in Boston, 61% of all males 19 years and under are Black and Latino. The vast majority (85.3%) of all young people in Boston who are 17 years and under and living in poverty are Black and Latino. According to American Community Survey (ACS) averages for 2007–2011, 27.6% of Latino children and 22.7% of Black children between the ages of 6 and 17 were poor, compared to 10.6% of Asian youth and only 3.7% of White children in the same age group (Jennings, 2014). Similar to national trends, Black and Latino

males in Boston also have lower educational attainment than do their White counterparts. In 2012, 36.1% of White males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a), in Boston held a bachelor's degree, compared to only 10.0% of Black males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b) and 9.0% of Latino males (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012c).

Boston stands out as having one of the most competitive job markets in the nation. As dire as the employment prospects are for Black and Latino males nationally, they are even more so in Boston due to higher skill-set demands in the local job market (Modestino, 2013). While the average unemployment rate for White males aged 16 to 64 was 6.1% in 2007–2011 according to the ACS, it was 13.7% for Latino males and 21.5% for Black males in the same age range (Jennings, 2014).

While racial disparities endure and achievement gaps persist, national policy and educational initiatives, such as the Common Core State Standards and accompanying assessments, call for more complex learning standards and skills to better prepare students for college and careers. Therefore, it is imperative that Boston Public Schools (BPS) engage Black and Latino males to prepare them for an increasingly competitive marketplace.

In response to the urgent need to better prepare Black and Latino male students for college and careers, BPS leaders commissioned this study to examine patterns of enrollment, access, engagement, and performance of Black and Latino males from School Year 2009 to School Year 2012 (SY2009 to SY2012). This quantitative analysis constitutes Phase I of a larger study that will ultimately include qualitative case studies examining promising practices in BPS schools in which Black and Latino males perform well (Phase II). The research questions guiding Phase I included:

1. What is the diversity within the male Black and Latino communities in BPS?
2. How do Black and Latino male students perform in BPS relative to female students and male students of other races?

Data and Abbreviated Methods

We obtained student-level data for the entire BPS population across four school years (SY2009 to SY2012) and created a master longitudinal student-level database using the following data sources provided by BPS: Student Information Management System (SIMS), Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), School Safety and Discipline Reports (SSDR), Advanced Placement (AP) data, Advanced Work Classes (AWC) data, and Massachusetts English Proficiency Assessment (MEPA). The student-level database contains demographic information (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, free and reduced-price lunch status), engagement information (e.g., attendance, suspensions, dropout data), and academic performance information (e.g., MCAS performance, graduation rates).

The broad racial/ethnic categories collected in SIMS do not capture the diversity within each racial/ethnic group. Thus, we used three other student-level variables—country of origin, first language, and city of birth—to create a new racial/ethnic/geographic origin framework that provides a more nuanced understanding of the educational experiences of different groups of Black and Latino males in Boston. Our new framework captures not only race and ethnicity, but also geographic origin and geographic origin by race. We acknowledge that Black and Latino students may racially identify differently. While self-identification would be more accurate and nuanced, we were limited by the SIMS data elements collected and by BPS’ racial/ethnic categories.

RACIAL/ETHNIC/GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN FRAMEWORK

The following table shows how we disaggregated Black and Latino male students by geography and race (some groups were too small to report on in the study).

Table 1: CCE and AISR’s Racial/Ethnic/Geographic Origin Framework

Black Males by Geography	Latino Males by Geography
Black North American	Latino North American
Black Caribbean	Latino Caribbean
Black African	Latino Central American
Black Central American	Latino South American
Black South American	
Latino Males by Race	Latino Males by Race and Geography
Latino-White	Latino-White North American
Latino-Black	Latino-Black North American
Latino-Other	Latino-Other North American
	Latino-White Caribbean
	Latino-Black Caribbean
	Latino-Other Caribbean
	Latino-White Central American
	Latino-Black Central American
	Latino-Other Central American
	Latino-White South American
	Latino-Black South American
	Latino-Other South American

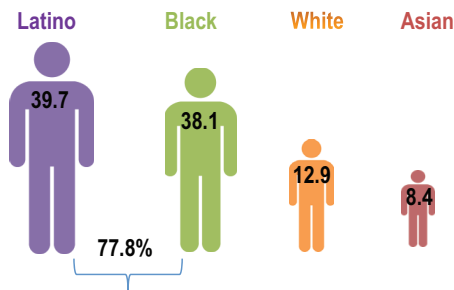
Our study presents a comprehensive picture of systemic challenges in Black and Latino male educational trajectories within the context of increasing enrollment diversity, limited access to educational opportunity, and troubling educational attainment levels. These findings have direct implications for district policy and practice as well as community engagement: that is, a call to action across the community to bring about the needed changes in school district, city, and community policy and practice that will accelerate the educational engagement and attainment of Black and Latino male students. In the sections that follow, we present

key findings along with select recommendations (in text boxes).¹ The findings from this report also point to larger, interrelated consequences beyond the specific topic of education, such as the impact of intergenerational poverty and the changing economy on the long-term prospects of Black and Latino youth, which are beyond the scope of our education-focused recommendations.

Enrollment Diversity

Forty years after the busing crisis in Boston, as described by scholars who have studied the “White Flight” (Weinbaum, 2004), the population of students in Boston Public Schools is predominantly Black and Latino, with small proportions of White and Asian students. Black and Latino populations make up approximately 77.8% of the total male student enrollment (Figure 1). The Latino student population has increased, while the Black student population has declined. In SY2012, the proportion of Latino males (39.7%) surpassed that of Black males (38.1%) for the first time.²

Figure 1: Male Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, SY2012 (N = 28,777)



Note: We also have an “Other” category. However, because their n’s are too small to reliably report, we do not present their findings in this paper, thus racial/ethnic percentage breakdowns do not sum to 100%.

The student population in BPS is diverse, not only racially and ethnically, but also culturally, geographically, and linguistically. That diversity is increasingly found within the Black and Latino populations.

Within the overall Black male group, Black North Americans, who are predominantly African American, make up 74.3% of all Black male students (Figure 2). And while Black Caribbean and Black African males make up smaller percentages of the overall Black male group, their percentages are steadily increasing—representing 13.6% and 11.5%, respectively.

Figure 2: Overall Black and Latino Male Enrollment by Geographical Group, SY2012

Black Males by Geography	Black North American	Black Caribbean	Black African	
	74.3	13.6	11.5	
Latino Males by Race	Latino-White	Latino-Black	Latino-Other	
	65.3	29.9	4.8	
Latino Males by Geography	Latino North American	Latino Caribbean	Latino Central American	Latino South American
	79.2	14.0	4.5	1.9

Within the overall Latino male group, Latino-White males represented the majority of Latino males at 65.3%, followed by Latino-Black males at 29.9%, and Latino-Other males at 4.8%. Among Latino geographical groups, Latino North American males form the vast majority of Latino males by geography at 79.2%, followed by Latino Caribbean males at 14.0%, Latino Central American males at 4.5%, and Latino South American males at 1.9%, with Latino Caribbeans being the fastest growing group.

The presence of a significant proportion of English language learners also adds to the diversity of BPS’ student population. Much of that diversity derives from Black and Latino groups in BPS. Even though Black males as an overall group do not have high limited English proficiency (LEP) rates, due to the predominance of African American Black males, upon disaggregating the data for Black males, we found that Black African and Black Caribbean males have LEP rates of greater than fifty percent.

Given this diversity within Black and Latino male student populations and shifting demographics, district leaders should:

- ✓ Reaffirm a vision that all students graduate from BPS college and career ready.
- ✓ Develop a vision and approach for educating Black and Latino male students that is asset based, building on the strengths and value they bring to our schools and communities.
- ✓ Study and predict the demographic shifts expected in the next five to ten years, especially as they pertain to Black and Latino students immigrating from the Caribbean and Africa.
- ✓ Develop and/or hire culturally responsive administrators and teachers, preferably those who are Black or Latino, bicultural and/or bilingual, and who have experienced immigration and language learning themselves.
- ✓ Ensure that the K–12 curriculum includes representation of diverse groups, including African and Caribbean males.
- ✓ Revise the Home Language Survey, administered at school registration, to capture important indicators including generation number, refugee status, and the student’s/family’s self-identification of race/ethnicity.

Access to Educational Opportunity

To describe educational opportunities across BPS, we analyzed the following indicators: overall special education rates and special education placement rates; MassCore curriculum completion rates; enrollment in Advanced Work Classes (grades 4–6); and enrollment in exam schools (grades 7–12). We found racial/ethnic disparities across all indicators, portraying a school system where Black and Latino males, who make up almost four-fifths of all males, do not have the same access to educational opportunities as their White and Asian counterparts. As concerning as racial/ethnic imbalances are for the major racial/ethnic groups, they are even more startling for some of the specific geographical groups within overall Black and Latino groups.

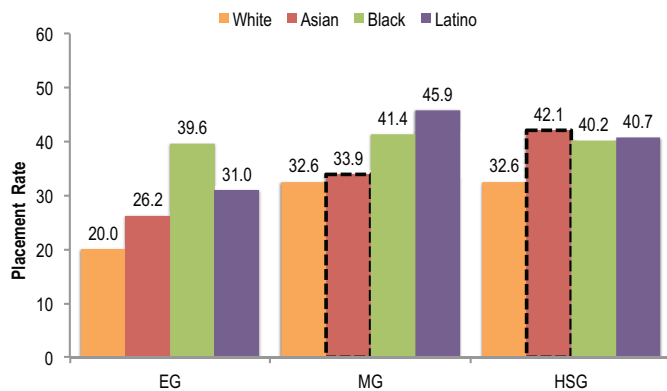
SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT

Our findings indicate that male students, regardless of race/ethnicity, are more likely to be identified as having special needs than are female students. The average rate of special education identification for all BPS males in SY2012 was 25.7%, considerably higher than the overall district average for all students at 19.6%, and even higher than the rate for BPS females at 13.8% in that same year. By disaggregating special education data by race and geography for male Black and Latino groups, we unmasked further inequities and found that some groups fare even worse. For example, while White male students have slightly higher rates of special education identification than do Black male students overall at the middle and high school grades in non-exam schools, Black North American male students, who make up 74.3% of all Black students, have a higher rate of special education identification than do White male students at all three grade spans.

Research indicates that students with disabilities who are instructed in general education settings tend to have better educational performance outcomes and, ultimately, better opportunities in adult life than students with special needs educated in more restrictive settings (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2006; National Center for Education Restructuring and Inclusion [NCERI], 1996). Despite the fact that research and policy mandate the right to least restrictive educational environments, male students are more likely to be placed in substantially separate classrooms than female students, with Black and Latino male students with special needs disproportionately enrolled in these placements.

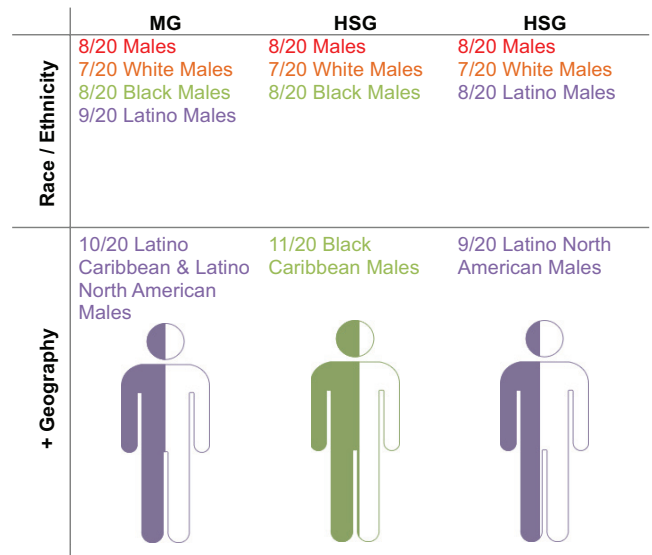
In SY2012, at all three grade levels, Black and Latino males had higher rates of placement in substantially separate classrooms than did White males (Figure 3). At the elementary grade level in SY2012, Black male students were enrolled in substantially separate special education settings at twice the rate (39.6% compared to 20.0%), and Latino male students at 1.6 times the rate (31.0% compared to 20.0%), of White male students. Conversely, White male elementary grade level students with special needs were placed in fully inclusive settings at a rate that was 1.5 times greater than that for Latino male students, and 1.7 times greater than that for Black male students.

Figure 3: Placement Rates of Male Students with Special Needs in Substantially Separate Settings by Race/Ethnicity, SY2012



Notes: Elementary Grades (EG); Middle Grades (MG); and High School Grades (HSG). There were between 51 and 99 Asian males in special education in the middle and high school grades; results must be interpreted with caution.

Figure 4: Disproportionate Placement Rates in Substantially Separate Special Education Settings by Race/Ethnicity and Geography, SY2012



Placement rates in substantially separate classrooms were even more worrisome for Latino Caribbean, Latino North American, and Black Caribbean males, whose placement rates were higher in some grade spans than those of their racial/ethnic group overall. For example, in SY2012, while 9 of 20 Latino males in special education in the middle grades were placed in substantially separate classrooms, 10 of 20 Latino Caribbean and Latino North American males were in substantially separate settings (Figure 4). Similarly, 8 of 20 Black and Latino high school males overall in special education were placed in substantially separate settings, compared to 11 of 20 Black Caribbean males and 9 of 20 Latino North American males.

Given the legal requirement and empirical knowledge about best educational practices for students with special needs (NCERI, 1996), district leaders should continue to increase the opportunities for Black and Latino males to enroll in the least restrictive, most educationally appropriate settings.

Regarding the disproportionate placement of Black and Latino males in substantially separate special education settings, we recommend that district leaders:

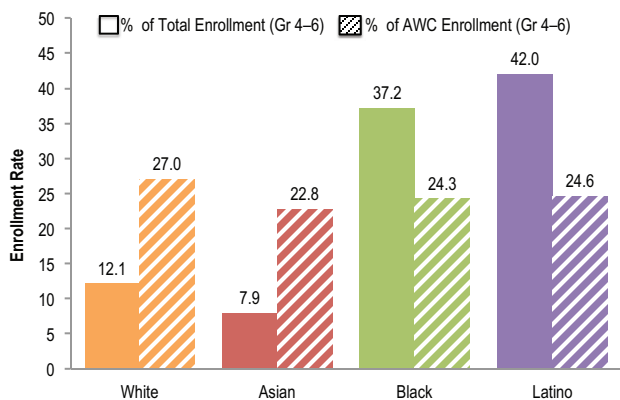
- ✓ Review special education identification and placement policies and procedures with an eye toward correcting gender and racial/ethnic biases, particularly for the Black and Latino North American groups.
- ✓ Ensure that policymakers, administrators, and teachers understand special education laws regarding least restrictive environments and referral, assessment, and placement procedures.
- ✓ Evaluate the enrollment trends, practices, and outcomes of the Inclusive Schools over time to determine how students in those schools fare compared to their non-Inclusive School counterparts.
- ✓ Ensure that enrollment in Inclusive Schools is accessible to Black and Latino males at rates proportional to White and Asian male students.
- ✓ Recruit, hire, or develop teachers who are dually certified in special education and a content area for staffing in both Inclusive and non-Inclusive Schools.



ADVANCED WORK CLASSES AND EXAM SCHOOLS

Advanced Work Class (AWC) is a full-time program in some Boston Public Schools that offers an accelerated academic curriculum for students in grades 4–6. Students in the AWC program complete higher volumes of schoolwork and homework. Admission into AWC is based on a third-grade Terra Nova cut score; students above the cut score are invited to enroll during school registration period. The AWC program is an educational track leading to enrollment in one of Boston’s three exam schools (grades 7–12 magnet schools): (1) Boston Latin School, (2) Boston Latin Academy, and (3) John D. O’Byrant School of Mathematics and Science. Admission is based entirely on the student’s grades and test scores from the Independent Schools Entrance Exam (ISEE). We uncovered substantial racial/ethnic inequities in enrollment opportunities in both AWC and exam schools.

Figure 5: Total Grade 4–6 Enrollment vs. Advanced Work Class Enrollment for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group, SY2012



While Black and Latino males constituted 79.2% of total male enrollment in grades 4–6 in SY2012, they accounted for only 48.9% of male enrollment in AWC (Figure 6). Conversely, Asian and White males made up only 20.0% of total male enrollment in grades 4–6, but accounted for half (49.8%) of male enrollment in AWC. While 25.8% of Asian and 20.0% of White males were enrolled in AWC in SY2012, only 5.9% of Black and 5.3% of Latino males attended AWC classes. Put another way, White males were enrolled in AWC classes at a rate that was between three and four

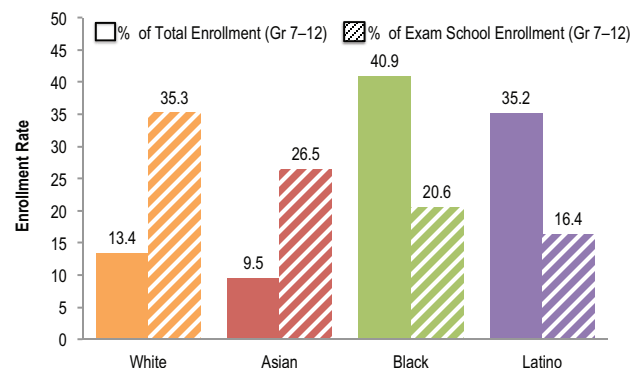
times higher than the rate of Black and Latino males. Black African and Black Caribbean males had lower rates of enrollment than did the Black male group overall at 5.6% and 3.9%, respectively. Likewise, Latino-Black and Latino-Black Caribbean males enrolled in AWC at lower rates than the Latino male group overall, at 3.8% and 2.4%, respectively.

The primary path to exam schools in BPS is AWC, as the majority of sixth-grade males overall enrolled in AWC continue on to exam schools in seventh grade. Of the sixth-grade males in SY2011, 69.8% of AWC males went on to exam schools in seventh grade in SY2012, compared to only 7.6% of non-AWC males. However, much higher proportions of Asian and White males in AWC in sixth grade move onto exam schools compared to Black and Latino males. Of the sixth-grade Asian and White males in AWC in SY2011, 90.2% and 83.7%, respectively, went on to exam schools in seventh grade in SY2012, compared to 61.2% of Latino males and only 39.0% of Black males.

Since AWC enrollment is a primary path for BPS students in grades 4–6 to prepare for entrance into exam schools in grades 7–12, the finding that White and Asian male students are also disproportionately enrolled in exam schools is not surprising.

White and Asian males made up only 22.9% of the grade 7–12 total male student population, but they accounted for 61.8% of the exam school population; Black and Latino males made up 76.1% of the grade 7–12 male student population, but they accounted for only 37.0% of the exam school population (Figure 7). While 45.0% and 47.8% of White and Asian males, respectively, were enrolled in exam schools in SY2012, only 8.6% of Black males and 8.0% of

Figure 6: Total Grade 7–12 Enrollment vs. Exam School Enrollment for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group, SY2012



Latino males were enrolled in exam schools. In essence, White male students were enrolled in exam schools at a rate that was 5.2 times higher than that of Black males and 5.6 times higher than that of Latino males. Our data show that the enrollment rates for Black African (5.3%) and Black Caribbean (7.5%) males were even lower than the Black male rate overall, and that the rates for Latino-Black (4.8%), Latino Caribbean (2.7%), and Latino-Black Caribbean (1.8%) males were also lower than the overall enrollment rate for Latino males. White male students were enrolled in exam schools at 6.0 times the rate of Black Caribbean, and 8.5 times the rate of Black African males. White males were enrolled in exam schools at 9.4 times the rate of Latino-Black males, 16.7 times the rate of Latino Caribbean males, and 25.0 times the rate of Latino-Black Caribbean males.

Boston's three exam schools also enroll disproportionately low percentages of students receiving free/reduced school lunch (FRL). Whereas 76.0% of the males in grades 7–12 in non-exam schools were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL, a proxy for low-income) in SY2012, only about 48% of the males in exam schools were eligible in the same year. The disproportionately high enrollment of males eligible for FRL in non-exam schools results in the non-exam schools having a student population with disproportionately greater educational needs, including students from low-income households, English language learners, students with disabilities, and Black and Latino males.

Inequities in opportunities for enrollment in rigorous learning environments—for example, AWC, exam schools, and the MassCore curriculum—for Black and Latino males, and for placement in the least restrictive environments for Black and Latino males with special needs, has led to a bifurcated system with two tracks: one with the greatest learning opportunities, in which White and Asian males are substantially overenrolled, and another with diminished educational opportunities, disproportionately populated by Black and Latino males. Black and Latino males in BPS do not have the same K-12 opportunities as White and Asian males, which translates into lower lifelong prospects, including restricted college and career opportunities.

The impetus for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards across the country is to ensure that all students, regardless of race/ethnicity, class, and geographical location, are taught to the same rigorous content and skill standards. As such, there is no rational justification for

having a two-track system, especially one that begins in fourth grade.

Therefore, to remedy the lack of opportunity to enroll in AWC and exam schools for Black and Latino males, we recommend that the district:

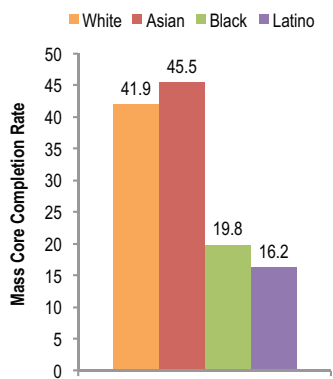
- ✓ Convert all grade 4–6 classrooms into AWC classrooms with high expectations and rigorous coursework.
- ✓ Create multiple pathways to college and career, instead of the current sole AWC/exam school pathway. For example, study and adapt successful high school career theme and college preparatory models for BPS, including Linked Learning, Generation Schools, and High Schools That Work.
- ✓ Ensure that AWC and exam school enrollment mirrors the district's enrollment by race/ethnicity, FRL eligibility status, ELL status, and special education status. Strategies for creating equitable enrollment in exam schools include the following:
 - Expand the eligibility requirement for exam schools, which is currently based on a test score and fifth- and sixth-grade report cards, to include teacher recommendations and a writing sample or portfolio of work.
 - Continue to provide entrance exam preparation for BPS fifth and sixth graders, prioritized based on race/ethnicity and eligibility for FRL.
 - Restrict exam school enrollment to students who were enrolled in at least the fifth and sixth grades in BPS elementary schools.
 - Ensure that exam schools enroll and provide adequate services for ELL students and students with disabilities.
- ✓ Study the enrollment of exam schools to better understand the demographic characteristics of those who enroll, those who leave before twelfth grade (attrition), and those who succeed in and graduate from them.

MASSCORE CURRICULUM COMPLETION

The Massachusetts High School Program of Studies, known as the Massachusetts Core Curriculum (MassCore Curriculum), was developed to prepare high school graduates for college and/or the workplace (Massachusetts Department of Education [DOE], 2013). The MassCore curriculum includes a rigorous set of courses in English, mathematics, social studies/history, and science, and includes courses such as health, arts, world languages, business education, and technology.

In SY2012 (including exam schools), only 19.8% and 16.2% of graduating Black and Latino male seniors, respectively, had completed the MassCore curriculum, the standard course sequence recommended by the state for college readiness, leaving the great majority graduating unprepared for the rigors of college or the workplace (Figure 5). White and Asian male students, on the other hand, completed the MassCore curriculum at more than double those rates.

Figure 7: MassCore Curriculum Completion Rates for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group, SY2012



In non-exam schools, while the completion rate for Black males overall was only 16.3%, the MassCore completion rates for Black Caribbean and Black African males were much lower at 10.5% and 7.9%, respectively.³ Likewise, while the MassCore completion rate for Latino males overall in non-exam schools was only 13.1%, the rates for Latino-Black and Latino Caribbean males were even lower at 12.2% and 10.3%, respectively.⁴

To remedy not only the overall low access to a high school course sequence that prepares BPS students for college and career, but also the larger access gap for Black and Latino males overall, and the even starker gaps for particular groups of Black and Latino males, district leaders need to institute changes to provide equitable access to a MassCore curriculum for all high school students.

Given the overall low rate of MassCore curriculum completion as well as the disproportionately lower completion rate for Black and Latino males, district leaders should:

- ✓ Develop guidelines for high schools on what is considered a MassCore course and course sequence.
- ✓ Review all BPS high schools for their course offerings to determine which schools offer the MassCore curriculum.
- ✓ Ensure that, upon entrance into ninth grade, all students are placed in a MassCore curriculum sequence and schedule, and provide the necessary academic supports to those students who need them to maintain passing grades.
- ✓ For those schools that do not yet offer the MassCore curriculum, provide the necessary support and staffing to increase their curriculum offerings.
- ✓ Ensure that the MassCore curriculum is responsive to students of the diverse cultural, linguistic, and racial/ethnic backgrounds in BPS.
- ✓ Inform students, families, and school staff, including guidance counselors, about the value and necessity of college preparatory course sequences such as those offered by the MassCore curriculum.

Educational Attainment

We identified positive trends in overall educational attainment: attendance rates for male students increased slightly, and suspension and dropout rates declined from SY2009 to SY2012. Despite these improvements, the racial/ethnic groups most at risk of low attendance, of being suspended, and of dropping out were Black and Latino males, with particular groups of Black and Latino males faring even worse than Black and Latino males overall. Evidence from this study shows there are still significant racial/ethnic disparities in suspension rates and achievement as well as in dropout and graduation rates.

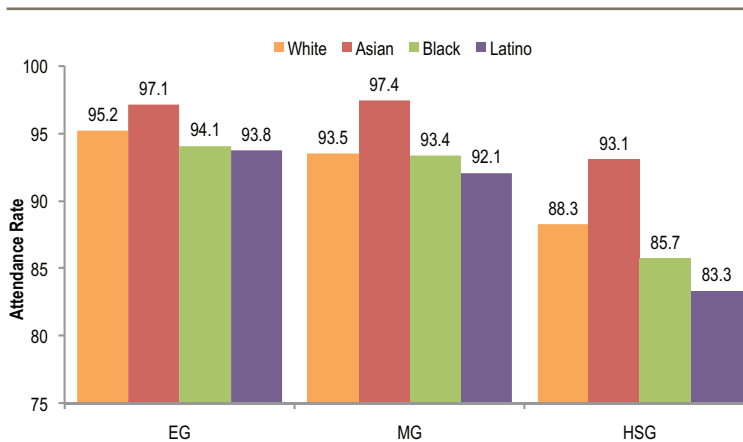
ATTENDANCE RATES

At all three grade levels in SY2012, Asian males had the highest attendance rates, and White males had the second highest attendance rates; Black and Latino males had the lowest attendance rates across all grade levels (Figure 8). The attendance rates for Black males in SY2012 ranged from 85.7% in the high school grades to 94.1% in the elementary grades, while the Latino males' attendance rates ranged from 83.3% in the high school grades to 93.8% in the elementary grades.

At the high school grades in SY2012, an overall attendance rate for males of 85.9% means that, on average, high school students missed almost five weeks of school—substantial learning time when one considers the strong correlation between attendance and student achievement. Within the Black geographical groups, attendance rates for Black North American males are of concern, as they were lower than the overall rate for Black males at all three grade levels. For instance, in SY2012 at the high school grade level in non-exam schools, the attendance rate for Black males overall was 84.9%, but it was only 83.2% for Black North American males. Attendance rates for Latino North American and Latino Caribbean males are also of concern. The attendance rates for Latino males overall in non-exam high schools was 82.4%, but it was only 82.2% for Latino-White North American males, 82.0% for Latino-White males, 81.5% for Latino-White Caribbean males, 81.4% for Latino Central American males, and 79.9% for Latino-White Central American males.

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Figure 8: Attendance Rates for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group, SY2012



SUSPENSION RATES

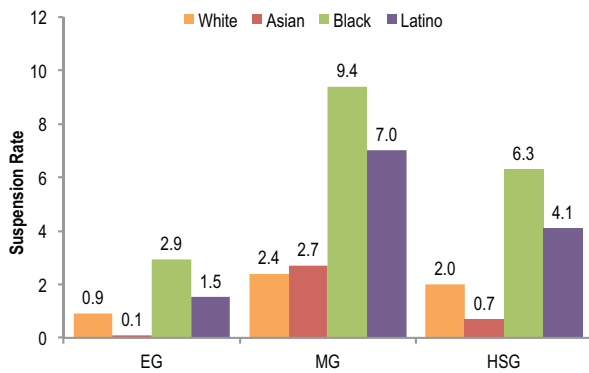
Despite suspension rate declines for all major racial/ethnic groups of males at all three grade levels, the highest suspension rates continued to be for Black and Latino males, and the smallest declines in suspension rates in the middle and high school grades occurred for Black and Latino males.

In SY2012 at all grade levels, Black males had the highest suspension rates, followed by Latino males; White and Asian males had much lower suspension rates, particularly in the middle and high school grade spans. Suspension rates were highest in the middle grades, where the suspension rate for Black males was 9.4%, the suspension rate for Latino males was 7.0%, and the suspension rates for Asian and White males were 2.7% and 2.4%, respectively (Figure 9). The risk of a Black male being suspended was 3.2, 3.9, and 3.2 times the risk of a White male being suspended in the elementary, middle, and high school grade spans, respectively. Suspension rates for Black North American and Black African males in non-exam schools were even more troubling than those for Black males overall. In the middle grades, Black North American males had a 10.4% suspension rate and Black African males had a suspension rate of 11.6%. And, in the high school grades, the suspension rate was 7.5% for Black North American males.



Data showed that for Latino males, the risk of being suspended was 1.7, 2.9, and 2.1 times the risk of a White male being suspended in the elementary, middle, and high school grade spans, respectively. Data for non-exam school students showed that among Latino racial/geographic groups, Latino-Black males, and specifically Latino-Black North American males are of particular concern, because their suspension rates were higher than that of the overall Latino group. While Black and Latino males overall had a higher risk of being suspended than White males, specific racial/geographic groups had an even higher risk. Middle grade suspension rates for Latino-Black males and Latino-Black North American males in non-exam schools were 11.5% and 13.1% respectively.

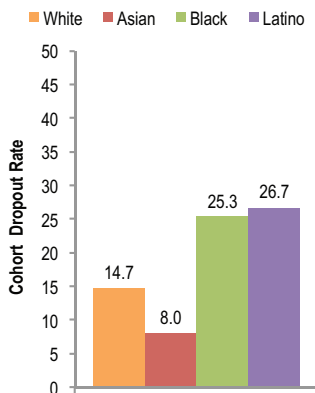
Figure 9: Suspension Rates for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group, SY2012



COHORT DROPOUT RATES

Taking into consideration the lack of access to educational opportunities, low attendance rates, and disproportionately high rates of suspension faced by Black and Latino males in BPS, it is not surprising that Black and Latino males also have much higher four-year cohort dropout rates in Boston public high schools (25.3% and 26.7%, respectively) than do White and Asian males (14.7% and 8.0%, respectively) (Figure 10). The risk of dropping out during high school was 1.7 times higher for Black males and 1.8 times higher for Latino males than for White males.

Figure 10: Cohort Dropout Rates for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group SY2009-SY2012 Cohort



Cohort dropout rates were even higher for students in non-exam high schools and for particular Black and Latino geographic groups than for Black and Latino males overall. The cohort dropout rate for Black males in non-exam schools was 27.5%, while the dropout rate for Black North American males was 28.4%. And while the Latino male dropout rate in non-exam high schools was 28.0%, the cohort dropout rate for Latino-Black males was 31.2%, and for Latino Caribbean males it was 30.5%.

To increase the amount of time that Black and Latino males are in school through attendance improvement, suspension reduction, and dropout prevention, the district should:

- ✓ Under the weighted student funding formula, create an added weight for Black and Latino males to ensure that they receive increased academic services and resources.
- ✓ Identify the root causes of student disengagement, particularly Black and Latino male disengagement, and conduct district-level inquiry that leads to a plan of action.
- ✓ Encourage school staff to address student engagement in a comprehensive way by providing professional development and technical assistance to infuse curriculum and pedagogy with culturally responsive content and practices.
- ✓ Build a district culture of high expectations for Black and Latino males, celebrating their lived experiences and building upon them so that students are empowered to share, learn, and act, and emphasizing academic mindsets that promote effort and practice over fixed intelligence.
- ✓ Develop early-warning indicators and systems for identifying students who are disengaged in late elementary and early middle school, and provide these students with supports to reengage them, such as mediation, counseling, and the involvement of family and community.
- ✓ Review suspension policies to ensure that they are positive, not solely punitive.
- ✓ Ensure that suspensions are not disproportionately given to Black and Latino male students.
- ✓ Eliminate zero-tolerance discipline policies and suspensions for “acts of willful defiance,” reserving suspensions for when a student’s actions present a safety threat.
- ✓ Develop or adopt, then implement and monitor evidence-based dropout prevention interventions.

MASSACHUSETTS COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND MATH PROFICIENCY RATES

Over the SY2009–SY2012 study period, MCAS proficiency rates increased for all racial/ethnic groups in English Language Arts (ELA) and math: ELA rates increased for all groups at the elementary and high school grade levels; in math, rates increased at the elementary and middle grade levels. We also uncovered educational attainment gaps as measured by MCAS proficiency on the ELA and math tests, further emphasizing the consequences of reduced access to rigorous learning environments for Black and Latino males.

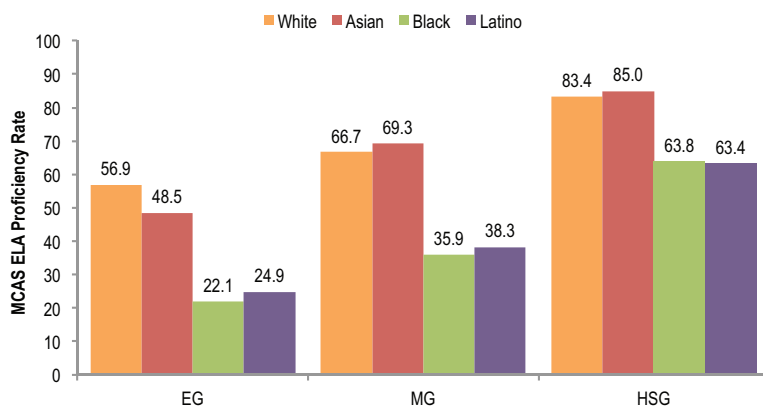
Black and Latino males had lower proficiency rates in the MCAS ELA than did White and Asian males at all grade levels (Figure 11). Proficiency rate differences among the major racial/ethnic groups was significant at all three grade levels, with a gap of 20 percentage points or more between Black and Latino males and White males in each level. Racial/ethnic gaps were the greatest in the middle grades, where the proficiency rate for Black males was 35.9% and the proficiency rate for Latino males was 38.3%, compared to 69.3% and 66.7% for Asian and White males, respectively. White males had ELA proficiency rates that were 2.6, 1.9, and 1.3 times higher than the rates for Black males at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively; and rates that were 2.3, 1.7, and 1.3 times greater than the rates for Latino males at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively.



In non-exam schools, some Black and Latino geographic groups fared worse than Black and Latino males overall. Black African males had lower MCAS ELA proficiency rates at all three grade levels than did Black males overall; and Black Caribbean males had lower rates at the elementary and middle school levels than did Black males overall. In the elementary grades, where proficiency rate differences were more pronounced, the proficiency rate for Black males overall was 22.1%, while the proficiency rates for Black Caribbean and Black African males were 20.7% and 18.6%, respectively.

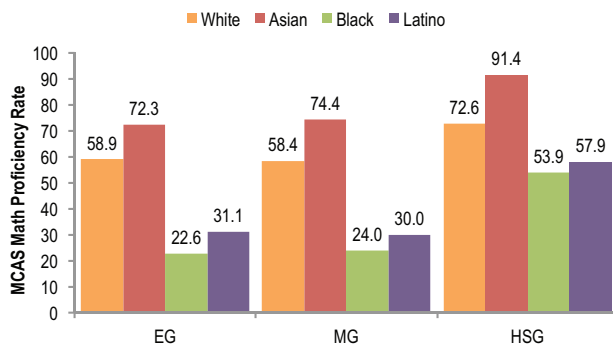
Among Latino groups, Latino-Black and Latino Caribbean male students had lower MCAS ELA proficiency rates than did the Latino male group overall at all three grade levels. In the elementary grades, while the proficiency rate for Latino males was 24.9%, it was 21.7% and 15.8% for Latino-Black males and Latino Caribbean males, respectively.

Figure 11: MCAS ELA Proficiency Rates for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group, SY2012



MCAS math proficiency rates among racial/ethnic groups varied even more than MCAS ELA proficiency rates. The difference between White and Asian male proficiency rates in middle school was remarkable, with Asian males having a math proficiency rate 16.0 percentage points higher than the rate for White males. Asian males had a math proficiency rate of 74.4%, followed by White males at 58.4%, while only 30.0% and 24.0% of Latino and Black males, respectively scored proficient in math (Figure 12).

Figure 12: MCAS Math Proficiency Rates for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group, SY2012



In SY2012, White males had math proficiency rates that were 2.6, 2.4, and 1.4 times higher than the rates for Black males at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively; and rates that were 1.9, 2.0, and 1.3 times higher than the rates for Latino males at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, respectively.

Among Black geographic groups, Black Caribbean males had lower MCAS math proficiency rates in the elementary and high school grades than Black males overall, and Black North American males had lower MCAS math proficiency rates than Black males overall at all three grade levels. At the elementary grade level, where differences were more notable, while the math proficiency rate for Black males overall was 22.6%, the proficiency rates for Black North American and Black Caribbean males were 22.0% and 20.8%, respectively. Among Latino groups, Latino Caribbean, Latino-Black, Latino-Black North American, and Latino-Black Caribbean males fared worse across all grade levels compared to Latino males overall. At the elementary grade level, the math proficiency rate for Latino males overall was 31.1%, but rates were only 20.0% for

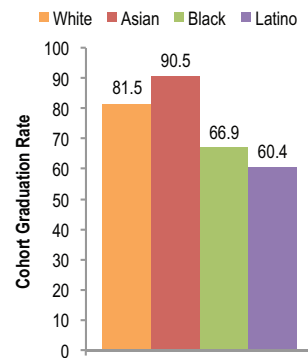
Latino-Black Caribbean males, 22.3% for Latino Caribbean males, 25.3% for Latino-Black males, and 25.7% for Latino-Black North American males.

Given the disproportionalities in access to educational opportunities and consequent lower educational attainment, it is no surprise that Black and Latino males also had lower four-year graduation rates than their White and Asian counterparts.⁵

COHORT GRADUATION RATES

The cohort graduation rate for Black males was 14.6 percentage points lower than the graduation rate for White males and 23.6 percentage points lower than the graduation rate for Asian males (Figure 13). The cohort graduation rate for Latino males was 21.1 percentage points lower than the graduation rate for White males and 30.1 percentage points lower than the graduation rate for Asian males. The cohort graduation rate for White males was 1.2 times higher than the rate for Black males, and 1.4 times higher than the rate for Latino males.

Figure 13: Cohort Graduation Rates for Males by Racial/Ethnic Group



Although cohort graduation rates were relatively low for Black and Latino males overall, they were even lower for some of the Black and Latino geographic groups. Black North American males had the lowest cohort graduation rates among the Black male groups at 62.1%. Latino-Black and Latino Caribbean males had the lowest cohort graduation rates among Latino racial and geographic groups at 54.4% each, followed by Latino-Black North Americans at 54.3%. All three groups had lower cohort graduation rates compared to Latino males overall.

To counteract the effects of lower educational attainment resulting from disproportionalities in access to educational opportunities, district leaders should:

- ✓ Continue to expand early childhood programs, including the numbers of classrooms for K0 and K1 (preschool).
- ✓ Prioritize enrollment in K0 and K1 classrooms for low-income students and Black and Latino students.
- ✓ Study the long-term outcomes of students who enroll in K0 and K1 versus those who do not (using a wait list control), comparing eventual enrollment in AWC and exam schools, engagement indicators (such as attendance and discipline), and performance indicators (such as grades and MCAS scores).
- ✓ Create a position, or assign an individual or department, to be responsible for action planning and implementation of district recommendations on Black and Latino male opportunity and outcomes.
- ✓ Hire Black and Latino male administrators, teachers, and staff who reflect similar racial/ethnic, geographical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds as the students.
- ✓ Partner with Boston area universities, hospitals, and businesses—including those in the high technology, biotechnology, pharmaceutical, financial, and other industries—to create innovative, engaging internships, service learning opportunities, and mentor programs that highlight the connection between schooling and future employment.
- ✓ Partner with Boston community-based organizations to develop quality afterschool programs that complement the school curriculum in engaging ways and meet the academic and socioemotional needs of students.

Community Engagement

While much of the quantitative data analysis presented in this report has implications for district-level policy and practice, the Boston community (e.g., community organizations, business leaders, health care providers, and institutions of higher education) also has a responsibility for acting on the findings in this report.

We recommend that city leaders use this report as a call to action and:

- ✓ Create a task force or coalition, including district and community groups representing Black and Latino male interests, to be responsible for: disseminating and understanding the report's findings; coordinating the development of further recommendations and accompanying action plans (for nondistrict efforts); and monitoring district action plans based on this report's recommendations.
- ✓ Organize community-wide dialogues about the role of racism and discrimination in creating opportunity gaps, and the importance of closing those gaps for Black and Latino males.
- ✓ Share findings with Black and Latino male students in a way that allows them to engage with and react to the data in safe spaces, leading to action.

In summary, Boston’s student enrollment is increasingly diverse and varied, not only by race, but also by ethnicity, culture, country of origin, and language, particularly among Black and Latino racial/ethnic categories. In order to serve all students well, city and district administrators need to recognize and embrace the diversity of Black and Latino students and families, and acknowledge each group’s unique strengths and needs.

The Boston Public Schools has made progress in educating its diverse student body. Attendance, MCAS proficiency, and graduation rates have increased, while dropout and suspension rates have declined—all signs of an improving system. At the same time, substantial disparities by race/ethnicity and geography persist in both access

and outcomes. Most troubling is the inequitable access that Black and Latino male students, who comprise 77.8% of the male district enrollment and 40.1% of the overall district enrollment, have to more rigorous programs and schools, which only serves to perpetuate the historical pattern of low achievement outcomes by race/ethnicity. In the pursuit of an educational system that truly values its increasingly diverse student enrollment, we must provide each and every student—rather than merely some of our students, as is currently the case—with the access, opportunities, and supports necessary to ensure the experience of challenging coursework, academic success, and preparation for college and career.



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Notes

1. Note that only a small set of recommendations is presented here. Please refer to the report for the full set of recommendations.
2. Comparisons across indicators throughout this report for disaggregated geographical groups of Black and Latino males in middle and high school grades do not include students in exam schools as so few Black and Latino males are enrolled in exam schools. All other group comparisons (by gender, and by the four overall racial/ethnic groups) do include exam school students, as most of the disparities unearthed in this study revolved around BPS' dual tracking system.
3. There were between 51 and 99 Black African and Black Caribbean male graduates in SY2012; results must be interpreted with caution.
4. There were between 51 and 99 Latino Caribbean male graduates in SY2012; results must be interpreted with caution.
5. Operationally, we defined "graduates" as students registered in the fall of SY2009 who were still enrolled in the fall of SY2011 and had not dropped out, transferred, or passed away, or who were still enrolled in the spring of SY2012. Students still enrolled in the spring of SY2012 were held back.



