

## A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 Mayoral Candidates

### DAY 3: THE NEXT TEACHERS' CONTRACT

*What will your priorities be for the next teachers' contract and how will you achieve successful implementation given the tight fiscal position the City will face over the next few years?*

As mayor, you will work with the School Committee and Superintendent to negotiate new contracts with the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) and Boston Association of School Administrators and Supervisors (BASAS). The current BTU contract is estimated to add approximately \$160 million in incremental costs over four years.

Important progress has been made in past years to address high school accreditation needs, establish Early Learning Centers and Kindergarten classes for four-year olds, create smaller learning communities within large school facilities and expand the number of K-8 schools.

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain such as high achievement gaps by race and gender, an unacceptable drop-out rate, uneven quality of schools by grade level and neighborhood, and insufficient access for high school students to Advanced Placement classes. Additionally, the low graduation rate for Boston high school graduates enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges or universities is unacceptable.

Currently, the federal government and the Commonwealth classify 77% of the City's public schools as "In Need of Improvement." A quarter of Boston's school age children are educated outside the district schools. Over 8,500 Boston students are on waiting lists for Charter schools and, according to METCO, there are approximately 12,000 on that program's waiting list.

Several areas of further reform require changes through the collective bargaining process. These include:

- **Greater flexibility for the Superintendent to implement turn-around strategies in chronically underperforming schools:** Several versions of this reform exist in concept. Each would require more flexible contract language that would allow the Superintendent to designate a number of schools that would operate free of contract restrictions on staff hiring, scheduling, compensation, school structure and budgeting. Performance contracts would be established between the central office and the schools.
- **Changes to teacher compensation:** The current teacher compensation is closely tracked to longevity and education level, with much less regard for level of responsibility, relative scarcity of talent in the specific subject, and performance. Differential and merit pay for teachers who work in under-performing schools or teach high-demand subjects such as mathematics and science are examples of compensation practices that would require changes to collective bargaining. Practices that would allow performance pay for Advancement Placement teachers is another.
- **Removal of school managers from collective bargaining:** Assistant headmasters, assistant principals, and program managers are currently unionized positions, yet they are integral parts of the school management team. Principals and headmasters, by contrast, negotiate individual contracts with the Superintendent.

*Please explain your priorities for collective bargaining and how you will use the process to achieve your goals for education reform considering the current financial restraints. What is the next big reform goal you have to achieve educational quality throughout the system and close the existing achievement gap? What steps are you prepared to take to enable the Superintendent to successfully implement her education agenda?*

Contact: Elaine Beattie at 617-227-1900 or [ebeattie@bmr.org](mailto:ebeattie@bmr.org) – [www.bmr.org](http://www.bmr.org)

Liam Day at 617-723-2277 ext. 203, 617-721-1341 or [lday@pioneerinstitute.org](mailto:lday@pioneerinstitute.org)

