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New report assesses community partnerships in the Boston Public Schools

*Extensive survey reveals successes, challenges in engaging partners
to meet students' academic and non-academic needs*

BOSTON – According to a new report released today [download at www.fssroundtable.org], the Boston Public Schools (BPS) engage a broad array of nearly 200 external organizations – including hospitals, universities, and local non-profits – to meet students' academic and non-academic needs. The report also cites some unevenness in partnerships across schools and calls for greater district involvement to ensure equity and accountability.

The Full-service Schools Roundtable and district officials today jointly released “Schools at the Hub: Community Partnerships in the Boston Public Schools,” the first report of its kind, which presents the results of a survey administered to all schools at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. With 93% of schools responding, the report provides extensive baseline data about the types and extent of partnerships providing supports to students and families.

Nearly 200 people attended an event today at the Children's Museum, where officials presented the report's findings and recommendations. Established in 2000, the Full-service Schools Roundtable (www.fssroundtable.org) is a citywide coalition working to advance the healthy development and academic success of Boston students through integrated school-community partnerships.

“In this impressive report, the Full-service Schools Roundtable paints a picture of what every school can aspire to offer its families – a comprehensive set of physical, emotional, social, and academic supports that ensure every child achieves excellence,” said Dr. Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. “And, after all, what better place for all of these supports to come together than in schools – the true ‘hubs’ of our communities – where we are entrusted with the great responsibility of helping children learn and grow.”

The report includes an analysis of ten specific supports offered by Boston schools, including mentoring, tutoring, on-site mental health services, adult education, before- and after-school programs, school-based health clinics, and university partners, among others. The report indicates that, as of the Spring of 2010:

- 66 percent of all schools offered a range of five to seven of these supports;
- 15 percent offered more than seven supports;
- 17 percent had fewer than five supports;
- no schools offered zero supports, and only one offered all ten.

Additional findings from “Schools at the Hub” include:

- Middle schools lagged behind other school levels in the areas of mentoring, tutoring, prevention programming, after-school programs, and on-site mental health services.
- Forty-seven percent of all schools and 60 percent of high schools reported having a university partner that provides student support services.
- Less than a third of schools reported including community partners in their strategies to serve English language learners and/or students with disabilities.

The report also presents recommendations to address unmet student needs, particularly by launching a district-wide strategy for coordinating and aligning student support partnerships.

Dr. Johnson added that the report provides valuable information to support implementation of the *Acceleration Agenda*, the district’s five-year strategic plan. She also noted several initiatives launched since the survey was conducted nearly 18 months ago have helped narrow some of the gaps identified in the report. The BPS Office of Innovation, Partnerships, and Development, for example, was created specifically to improve coordination of partnership work.

“This report affirms that schools benefit from a wealth of partnership resources from at least 200 Boston institutions and community-based organizations,” said Matt LiPuma, Executive Director of the Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts, who chairs the Roundtable Steering Committee. “To have maximum positive impact on students, however, these partnerships must be strategic, aligned with student needs, integrated with school and district goals, equitably distributed, and coordinated effectively.”

Abby R. Weiss, former Executive Director of the Full-service Schools Roundtable, who co-authored the report with Anthony J. Siddall, presented an overview of findings and recommendations at the event. Ms. Weiss now manages the Child and Youth Readiness Cabinet at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education.

The event also included a panel discussion featuring: Marie St. Fleur, Chief of Advocacy and Strategic Investment for the City of Boston; Robert Kilkenny, Executive Director of the Alliance for Inclusion and Prevention; Arthur Unobskey, Principal of the Irving Middle School in Roslindale; Melissa Partridge, BPS Office of Innovation, Partnerships and Development; and Rahn Dorsey, Evaluation Manager for the Barr Foundation.

*The **Boston Public Schools**, the birthplace of public education in the United States, serves more than 56,000 pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students in 125 schools. www.bostonpublicschools.org*