



“Investing in Student Success: Financing School-Connected Initiatives in Boston”

Roundtable Summary and Recommendations December 2007

The Full-service School Roundtable (the “Roundtable”) is committed to advancing the development of a sustainable and comprehensive set of educational, health and social services for every school-age child in the Boston Public School System. Like any large-scale vision, it is critical that advocacy for the vision be based on data and perspectives that can inform decision-making. To that end, the Roundtable and Boston After School & Beyond commissioned Community Matters and The Finance Study to complete a study to identify the multiple funding streams with the potential to support and advance the notion of school-connected initiatives, or full-service schools.

Entitled “Investing in Student Success: Financing School-Connected Initiatives in Boston,” the study surveyed the current funding landscape for out-of-school-time programming and other supports, such as school-based health and mental health clinics in Boston Public Schools. The authors interviewed over 200 individuals and cited a variety of elements of best practice in several other school systems. An important conclusion from the complex array of data and opinions collected for the report is that the system lacks a common vision and set of outcomes for Boston’s youth and children. The report also concludes that there is no coordinating entity that makes information widely available about best practices and desired outcomes, and there is no comprehensive revenue strategy that would allow the system to achieve its objectives.

The Findings and Recommendations in the report provide policy- and decision-makers with baseline information regarding the current capacity of the system, recommendations for necessary steps to leverage resources, and a platform that fosters dialogue among all who have a stake in improving outcomes for Boston’s children.

Summary of Findings

1. It is difficult to determine an accurate picture of the level of funding being funneled to school-connected services. This is due to several factors:

- There is inadequate and inconsistent tracking by state human service agencies and individual schools about services delivered on-site.
- There is a lack of clarity about what constitutes full-service schools programming as opposed to stand-alone programs that are not part of a full-service schools strategy.

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- Most institutions and systems (public or private) do not have the capacity or resources to track their resources so specifically.
2. Although the lack of system-wide coordination makes actual numbers difficult to calculate, there appear to be nearly \$80 million public dollars directed towards school-connected services within Boston in any given year. This is comprised of \$57 million in federal funding, \$13 million in state funding, and another \$7 million in local funding. Over the past 10 years, a total of \$60 million in private funding has been targeted at this work.
3. The total amount of public and private funding is relatively stable, but the recipients change from year to year. Moreover, little of this funding has been directed toward systems-level change. Some consequences associated with this include:
- Few programs are successful at securing long-term funding.
 - Scarce public and private funding fosters competition and inhibits both the partnerships necessary for this work and the programmatic stability required to produce quality outcomes over time.
 - Resources are unevenly distributed; some organizations and agencies enjoy funding from multiple sources while others are challenged to find sustainable funding.
4. In addition to a dearth of information on funding, there is little available and commonly accessible information about best practices in full-service schools. There is no formal mechanism for sharing what information does exist on best practices, funding, and outcomes.
- Because there is little information on how much money is being spent on school-connected services, there is, as the authors point out, “little good data on the impact and efficacy of this funding.” Without such data, it is difficult to make a clear case for funding additional school-connected services.
 - Without good data about outcomes, funders may be reluctant to test new ideas.
 - The lack of information ultimately compromises attempts at collaboration, leverage and system change.
5. Currently, successful programming is driven by individuals on a school-by-school basis – not by a city-wide commitment to educating the whole child. There are several consequences associated with this:
- A comprehensive approach to supporting the development of full-service schools, or school-connected services, does not exist.
 - The school-by-school approach to scaling up poses sustainability challenges.

Roundtable Strategies and Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, the Full-service Schools Roundtable has developed a set of upper-level strategies that stakeholders in Boston should consider. Together with our members, the Roundtable intends to discuss these recommendations and begin to flesh out some of the specific strategies that we need to accomplish together to achieve our goal of providing comprehensive school-connected services to all of Boston’s children.

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1. Both city and state agencies need a strategic agenda allowing them to direct flexible revenue opportunities towards specific, agreed-upon outcomes and deliverables that will support the education of the whole child. Specific strategies might include:
 - Identifying a minimum core set of desired outcomes.
 - Developing a working committee of BPS, DOE and EOHHS decision-makers to meet regularly to identify longer term priorities, monitor progress, and trouble-shoot obstacles.
 - Making the provision of comprehensive school-connected services a formal priority for Boston children and youth.

2. Private funders interested in “systemic change” should develop funding guidelines that support the system – requiring data gathering, testing new ideas and expanding infrastructure. Some specific strategies might include:
 - Funding a comprehensive, school-by-school survey of resources, resource challenges and community-based opportunities and provide this data to BPS for priority setting.
 - Providing funding for convening and information-sharing opportunities among funders, the state agencies and the BPS.
 - Supporting the development of a funding database that allows individual schools access to information regarding grant and other revenue opportunities.
 - Funding the collection and dissemination of quality, relevant, and objective data and information to expand the knowledge and understanding of full-service schools.

Next Steps

The Roundtable plans to use “Investing in Student Success” as a springboard for a series of conversations about sustaining and financing full-service schools, or school-connected services. Our first conversation will take place on January 17, 2008 at the Raytheon Amphitheater in the Egan Research Center at Northeastern University from 8:45-11:30 a.m. The program will feature two key speakers. Marty Blank, Executive Director of the Coalition for Community Schools in Washington, D.C., will talk about sustainability and new national legislation designed to support full-service schools. Emily Sherwood, Director of Children’s Behavioral Health Interagency Initiatives, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, will share her thoughts about the implications of the Rosie D court case for schools and school-connected services.

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