



## **SUMMARY OF THE REPORT: Leadership Development in the Boston Public Schools**

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### *Abstract*

Researchers Karen Mapp and Jennifer Suesse explore the leadership development process enacted by the Boston Public Schools (BPS) during the decade-long tenure of Superintendent Thomas Payzant. This paper focuses on the development of leaders at three key management levels: principals, middle managers at the central office and school levels, and senior district staff. Mapp and Suesse describe the status of leadership development when Payzant joined the district in 1995 and analyze the districts progress in this area. Next, Mapp and Suesse highlight the BPS' current struggles and challenges with leadership development. The paper concludes with recommendations for the next superintendent that focus on moving the district forward in leadership development.

### *District Accomplishments*

Researchers Mapp and Suesse highlight the progress that the BPS has made in leadership development over the past decade. Over the course of Payzant's tenure a leadership development model emerged that focused on progress in six areas:

- Focused on developing leaders that were experts in instructional strategies
- Established an organizational and reporting structure that fostered better direct communication between school leaders and the superintendent and more opportunities to identify principals and headmasters with strong potential.
- Hired talented leadership staff with a good balance of insiders and outsiders.
- Created the School Leadership Institute, a nationally renowned model of district-coordinated professional development programs for supporting and recruiting new school leaders

### *Ongoing Challenges*

Though progress in these areas is evident, Boston's 47% attrition rate during the first three years of teaching reveals there are many challenges to address before the district can reach its goal of attracting, supporting and retaining a high-quality, diverse teaching force. Some of the major challenges highlighted in this report are:

- The current approach to leadership addressed the "what" but not the "how" of leading instructional improvement
- The conversion of the central office organization to support the improvement of classroom instruction is not yet complete
- Insufficient attention is being paid to identifying and developing internal leadership talent across the district
- An assumption exists that leadership development is something separate from the "work" of the district, which can therefore be delegated to external organizations
- There is an absence of core systems and attitudes necessary to support comprehensive and deliberate leadership development
- Limited capacity exists to address the managerial and personal aspects of leadership development at scale.

### *Recommendations for the Next Superintendent*

- Develop an explicit plan for leadership development that includes both line and support staff
- Provide professional development for central office staff to help shift their focus toward one of support for instruction at the classroom level
- Continue to build consistency of expectations across the system
- Use data to develop strategies for how to change, set priorities and engage in action planning
- Develop consistent standards for the supervision and support of principals, managers and teachers.