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**TAKING APART RACE AND GENDER**

The achievement gaps to the right are more drastic when race and gender are pulled apart. Black and Hispanic women are doing better than their male counterparts, who have a 5% or less chance of completing a college degree.

Unfortunately, we don't have the high school data to do a complete break out, but the race/gender dimension in the Northeastern study is striking (especially the chart on p. 51).

For the full text of "Getting to the Finish Line" [click here](#).

**Sorry!**

There was a glitch in the college pipeline graphic we sent out last week.

For a corrected issue, [click here](#).

**SPOTLIGHT A Closer Look at College Performance**

According to the "Getting to the Finish Line" study released in November, 35.5% of BPS graduates *who enroll in college* go on to complete a college degree. Another question to ask: How many BPS 9th graders make it to and through college?

Boston now has the data to answer that question, and we hope to make it a focus of future reports. Until then, we can get a good idea by matching up public data on high school graduation\* with the Northeastern Center for Labor Market Studies' look at college degree completion.

**How Many BPS 9th Graders Eventually Earn a College Degree?**

	% earning a high school diploma in four years **	% of high school grads enrolling in college	% of college enrollees who earn a degree	% of 9th graders who go on to earn a college degree
		X	X	=
All	59.1	64.2	35.5	<b>13.5</b>
Exam Schools	94.5	86.2	59.2	<b>48.2</b>
Regular HSs	53.0	57.2	24.0	<b>7.3</b>
Female	65.8	67.9	36.6	<b>16.4</b>
Male	52.3	59.9	33.9	<b>10.6</b>
Asian	82.7	80.6	52.0	<b>36.5</b>
White	70.6	71.5	53.3	<b>26.9</b>
Black	55.7	60.1	28.2	<b>9.4</b>
Hispanic	50.6	56.1	23.9	<b>6.8</b>
National ***	68.2	61.6	46.3	<b>19.6</b>

**Qualifications to note:**

\* We mixed two cohorts in this chart; the high school graduation rate is based on the Class of 2006 analysis by BPS, and the college data is from the Center for Labor Market Studies' analysis of the Class of 2000. (BPS and the state didn't begin tracking high school graduation rates until 2001.) High school graduation rates have been fairly consistent for the past few years, so we think this chart is a fair representation.

\*\* Tracking the four-year high school graduation rate is now required by the state, but Boston's graduation rate increases by about 5% when a fifth year is included. Tracking a five-year cohort should result in a small bump in the final numbers.

\*\*\* This comparison is extrapolated from the National Center for Higher Education Management's 2006 pipeline analysis (<http://www.higheredinfo.org>). It counts only those students who enrolled in college directly after high school and completed a degree in 150% of the standard time, so it is somewhat more conservative than Northeastern's analysis.

## SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM MORE PRECISELY?

There are several. The Northeastern study was an important first step in understanding the depth of Boston's college-completion challenge, but it didn't ask *why* so many BPS students don't attain a college degree. Other research (local and national) offers some clues.

### Problem 1: Too few students are finishing high school, and not enough are "college ready"

In the past several years, BPS has graduated between 58% and 62% of its students in four years (and about 65% in five years). This low rate is a key focus of Superintendent Johnson, who has set the goal of an 80% graduation rate district wide by 2012. BPS has created an early-warning data tool for high schools and is working on year-round credit recovery programs for students who are off track.

But BPS and the state also have work to do in aligning curriculum and assessments to college-ready standards. According to a recent study by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 40% of BPS graduates (57% of those from non-exam schools) who enter the state's public college system need to take one or more remedial classes. The consensus from research on college persistence is that students who must take remedial courses are less likely to complete a degree.

To read "Massachusetts School-to-College Report: High School Class of 2005," click here: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/reports/research.html>

### Problem 2: Some high school grads aren't even attempting college

The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) and The Education Resources Institute (TERI) released a report last month that examines why many "college-qualified"<sup>1</sup> high school graduates do not enroll in college. The national study asked high school graduates and guidance counselors to rate reasons for not enrolling in college. The biggest factor? Money. Specifically,

- Over 70% of the guidance counselors surveyed said not having enough aid or tuition being too high was "almost always" or "frequently" an important factor in students' decisions not to enroll. Over 80% of students surveyed said availability of aid was "extremely" or "very" important.
- Respondents also pointed to factors such as failure to complete necessary enrollment steps (e.g., submit an application, take the SAT or ACT, fill out financial aid forms), students' immediate employment needs, and their lack of confidence about the availability of aid or fear about incurring loans.

While this study was not Boston-specific, it highlights financial hardship as an important barrier to college enrollment — one which will be even more critical as the state college system faces a budget squeeze in coming years.

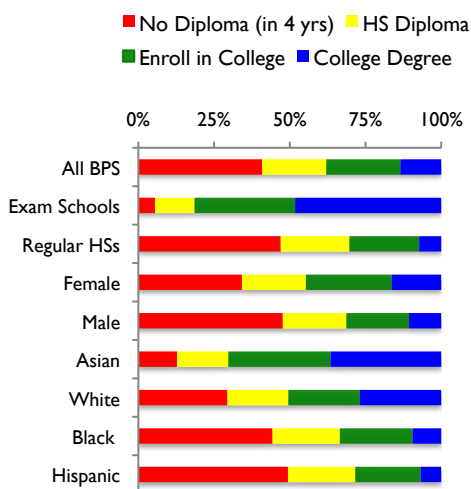
To read "Promise Lost: College-Qualified Students who Don't Enroll in College," click here: <http://www.ihep.org/publications/publications-detail.cfm?id=117>

### Problem 3: Many students who attempt college aren't prepared

While we have anecdotal evidence about why so many BPS students leave college before completion (e.g., they get stuck in remedial courses, have a hard time balancing employment and schooling, and get squeezed financially), Boston needs a more thorough study of the issue. For now, we can look to national research.

One of the best studies to date, by Cliff Adelman at the U.S. Department of Education, identifies factors that predict whether students who begin college will

## WHERE ALONG THE PIPELINE DO BPS 9TH GRADERS END UP? \*



\* This is the same data from p.1, sliced a different way.

<sup>1</sup> In this study, "college qualified" is defined as earning at least a 2.5 grade point average (GPA) in high school, taking a college preparatory curriculum, and completing an advanced math sequence.

## ▶ OTHER NEWS

### School Committee Approves School Reprogramming Plan — Mostly

After one postponement and a long night on November 5th, the Boston School Committee approved the underlying criteria of Superintendent Johnson's Pathways to Excellence agenda and most of the proposed school closings, expansions, and reconfigurations. The original proposal was modified along the way (e.g., the E. Greenwood ES and Odyssey HS will not be closed, and the Noonan Business Academy and Public Service Academy will stay open and be merged). In total, six school buildings will be vacated next summer.

A press release that covers all of the changes that were approved can be found here: <http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/node/1738>

### Three Pilot School Proposals Approved

Three pilot school proposals — the Haley ES conversion, Mary Lyon expansion to grade 12, and BTU K-8 pilot in Jamaica Plain — were approved by the school committee on November 19th. Two other pilots, Young Achievers and Tech Boston Academy, will also be expanding under the Superintendent's Pathways to Excellence plan.

All five proposals are available here: <http://bostonpublicschools.org/pathways>

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persist to a bachelor's degree. High on that list are:

*Intensity of their high school academic program:* This is the pre-collegiate factor that counts most. Adelman lists the core courses that give students momentum toward a college degree, which include completion of an advanced math course (calculus, precalculus, or trigonometry) and completion of more than one Advanced Placement (AP) course.

*Degree accumulation in the first year:* Earning 20 or more credits by the end of the first year of college is the "threshold;" students who reach 20 credits are far more likely to persist to a degree. Important to note: Students who begin college with some credit — AP, International Baccalaureate, or dual enrollment — have a leg up in some colleges, whereas students who spend their first year of college in non-credit-bearing remedial courses are unlikely to hit the threshold.

To read "The Toolbox Revisited," click here: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/toolboxrevisit/index.html>

## ■ RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

Improving the college completion rate of BPS graduates will take a coordinated effort. Mayor Menino has called for doubling the college graduation rate for college enrollees from the BPS Class of 2011, asking the BPS, the higher education community, nonprofit partners, and local funders to work together to get more students "ready, into, and through" college. Some initial commitments were announced at the press conference two weeks ago.

For the press release and a list of commitments from the BPS, The Boston Foundation, Northeastern University and others, look here: <http://bostonpic.org>

### What more can BPS do?

Many of the factors contributing to student performance in college — for example, quality of instruction in "gatekeeper" college courses, comprehensiveness of first-year support systems, availability of aid, and institutional commitment to raising degree completion rates — are beyond the reach of the district and its high schools. Colleges must be responsible for addressing these issues and others. BPS can, however, address a primary factor that causes students to leave college without a degree: academic preparedness.

Superintendent Johnson's focus on analytical writing and math and her commitment to increasing rigorous course options such as AP and International Baccalaureate will help. There are also shorter-term steps the district can and should take right away:

- BPS is revising its curriculum standards this year; this effort should explicitly link curriculum and assessments with college standards beginning with the third grade.
- Most BPS students don't see their grade point average (GPA), a key college application criterion, until the senior year. BPS should make GPA data available to students regularly, beginning in September of their sophomore year, empowering them and their teachers to keep college in their sights.
- Students, parents, and teachers need information about what the slogan "college success for all" means. Why is college the goal? What does it really mean to be college ready? How will the goal of college success influence the everyday interactions among teachers, students, and the content they are learning? BPS, with the help of partners, needs a coordinated and multi-part strategy for increasing college awareness across the district.

Look for more on this issue in the months ahead.