

BOSTON CATHOLIC-DISTRICT-CHARTER COLLABORATION COMPACT

Date Signed: September 2011

Number of All Public School Students: 63,070 (2012-2013) NAPCS

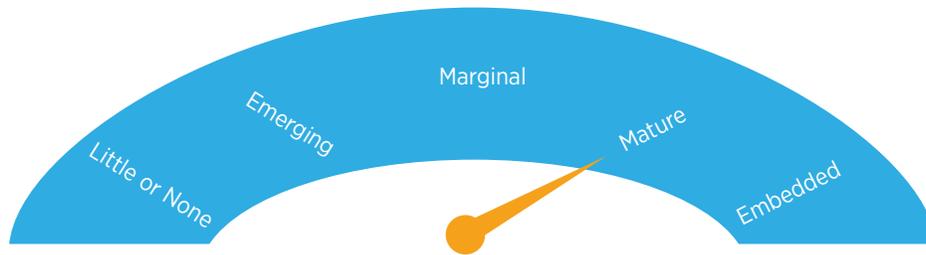
Percent of Charter School Students to All Public School Students: 12.6%

Charter Authorizer(s): MA Department of Education

School District Governing Body: Mayor-appointed school board

Compact Grant Amount: \$3,250,000

CURRENT STATUS OF COLLABORATION:



OVERVIEW

Originally signed by the mayor, 16 charter school organizations, Boston Public Schools (BPS), and later by the Catholic Archdiocese, Boston's Compact is one of the strongest and most successful collaboration efforts in the country. Yet charter schools in Boston remain controversial; any effort to support them, including legislative moves to lift a tight statewide cap on their number, is met with strong local opposition. The rigorous state charter authorizing process has resulted in a high-quality charter sector in Boston with a strong alliance. Their commitment to the Compact and its various initiatives has been remarkably consistent.

Collaboration wins in Boston include piloting school partnerships between district, charter, and Catholic schools to identify and share tangible classroom level strategies. The Compact has also used data to locate classrooms and schools where students are thriving, and then learn from teachers and administrators leading them. Instruction for English language learners was prioritized and the Compact provided nationally recognized, researched-based professional development for teachers from all three sectors. Operationally, recommendations for changes to coordinate release times across sectors helped BPS save roughly \$1 million per year in transportation costs. Two charter organizations (three schools) also have the Compact to thank for leases in vacant school buildings.

Boston Compact's dogged adherence to governance has helped sustain momentum and the commitment of

education leaders throughout mayoral and leadership turnover in all three sectors. Rachel Weinstein has held the grant-funded position of Chief Collaboration Officer since the Compact was signed. She is seen by sector leaders as a neutral party and has gently but unfailingly ensured that an agreed upon process is in place, meetings are regular and productive, commitments are kept, and work gets done. The Boston Charter Alliance's Chair, Shannah Varón, who also runs a successful charter school, represents the sector on the Compact committee. Although there are some charter schools that are more interested in solving operational challenges than instructional ones through the Compact, Varón believes all come to the table willing to share what works in their schools. The Catholic schools have continued to participate despite fewer incentives to do so, and BPS has been consistently present and engaged through three superintendents.

The Compact was renewed in Fall 2015 with a new cadre of leaders signing on to continue the collaborative work in the interest of the entire city. As Compact needs have changed, the goals have been revised and the committee structure has evolved. Most recently, the Compact has been working to carry forward Mayor Martin J. Walsh's proposal to unify the enrollment process for charter and district schools. Mindful of the pitfalls other cities have faced, and bolstered by their successes, Boston's Compact is proceeding with eyes wide open as it works to deliver on the mayor's vision of simplifying enrollment for families.

COMMON AREAS OF	COMPACT PROGRESS
High-Performing Schools	Boston's Compact aims to improve instruction at district, charter, and Catholic schools, but not to close or replace low-performing schools. During community meetings to introduce a unified district-charter enrollment proposal, both the Mayor's office and the Compact's Chief Collaborations Officer clarified that only the policymakers, namely the Boston School Committee (district), Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (charters), or Archdiocese (Catholic schools) can make decisions about closing schools.
Special Education & English Language Learners (ELL)	The Compact has prioritized several historically underserved populations of students including English language learners, special education students, and black and Latino males. The Compact covered the costs for the Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) program to provide a three-year sequence of professional development to educators from district, charter, and Catholic schools. It also identified and then provided grants to local schools with strong academic results among male students of color. These model schools used the grants to share instructional practices across sectors in hopes of boosting achievement. The Compact's Teaching and Learning Subcommittee also gathered data on where students with special needs are more successful; the unified enrollment proposal advocates for deeper inclusion in all schools.
Facilities & Resources	BPS has leased three empty school buildings in high-poverty areas to charter management organizations. Charter schools helped dramatically reduce BPS' transportation costs by aligning bell times. A growing number of students are entering Pre-K and elementary schools and BPS is developing a long-term facilities plan, so prospects for future district building leases to charters are unknown. Current unused space in district facilities is spread unevenly throughout BPS schools. Catholic schools also have space available and have leased charter schools' swing space. The Archdiocese continues to consider requests on a case-by-case basis.
School Performance Framework	In 2013, the partners launched Boston Schools Hub, a website where families can search all district, charter, and Catholic schools by neighborhood or grade. The site does not include performance data or enable comparisons of schools beyond their location. The Compact also has enabled an alignment of enrollment calendars for district and charter schools; the schools now include each other in school fairs. These were all precursors to the current push for unified enrollment.
Enrollment Systems	The Compact has been working on a proposal introduced by the current mayor to unify the enrollment process for charter and district schools. In late 2015 and early 2016, the Compact held a series of public events to invite community feedback to the proposal.
Human Capital & Professional Development	Several Compact initiatives focus on cross-sector recruitment and talent development. These include the QTEL (described above) and school partnerships that catalyze the development of cross-sector professional learning communities to jointly problem solve around persistent challenges in the classroom. The Compact ran a one-year program for aspiring and veteran school leaders to deepen the equity lens they brought to their work (this evolved into tri-sector participation in the Harvard Graduate School of Education's instructional rounds network). Currently, as all three sectors need more teachers of color, the Compact is preparing for its second annual Diversity Recruitment Fair and exploring brokering a school in each sector into the Generation Teach program, which helps build a local talent pipeline focused on teachers of color.
Common Core	While no specific collaboration efforts target Common Core adoption, several of the collaborative professional development initiatives prioritize improving standards based instruction.