



CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Office of the Mayor
Thomas M. Menino

For Immediate Release
March 23, 2007

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Mayor Menino Announces Taskforce To Prevent Achievement Gap

Action Planning Team to Promote School Readiness

Mayor Thomas M. Menino today announced his School Readiness Action Planning Team (the APT). Building on the excellent progress the Boston Public Schools are making in closing the achievement gap among school-age students, this uniquely diverse taskforce is charged with developing specific strategies to *prevent* the achievement gap among the next generation of students, by promoting school readiness and ensuring the healthy development of the city's youngest residents.

“With this Action Planning Team, I have brought together some of the best minds in the city,” Mayor Menino said. “We know that to ensure academic success, kids need to be on a level playing field when they first enter school. This team was chosen to represent the different sectors of the city because I seek changes at all levels that will safeguard our children's future.”

The APT is part of Boston's Birth to Five School Readiness Initiative, which Mayor Menino launched in December, in partnership with United Way of Massachusetts Bay and dozens of community organizations. The initiative responds to recent scientific research documenting the tremendous impact on a child's brain and immune system of their experiences from birth through age 5. It also responds to economic analysis that demonstrates the cost savings of prevention and intervention in the early years, particularly for low-income families.

Mayor Menino's approach to preventing the achievement gap is three-pronged: 1) continuously gather and analyze data about the current situation of young children in the city and their families; 2) expand current programming to address children's needs for early learning opportunities and to reinforce parents' role as their child's first teacher; and 3) develop a strategic plan, through the APT, to ensure the right interventions and a permanent citywide commitment to school readiness.

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The taskforce will build on initial analysis and recommendations provided by a 12-person team of top national early childhood researchers and practitioners convened by the Mayor in the fall of 2006. The 60 members of the taskforce hail from diverse backgrounds and include direct service providers, early childhood educators, senior government officials and corporate leaders. (List attached.)

Co-chaired by Wheelock College President Jackie Jenkins-Scott and Children's Hospital COO Sandra Fenwick, the taskforce will create a plan informed by a socio-economically diverse group of 35 Boston parents who have agreed to meet six times during the year to provide feedback.

While the APT conducts its work, expanded resources will continue to be developed for families, including the new "Smart from the Start" initiative Mayor Menino announced in January, to increase the school readiness of the lowest-income Boston children through services at local housing developments and community centers. One new resource that will be provided to parents starting next month is an "I'm Ready!" DVD in multiple languages. This 10-minute video from Countdown to Kindergarten illustrates ways parents can support their children's school readiness at home and in the community.

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Mayor's School Readiness Action Planning Team (APT) Members

Appointed March 2007

Co-Chairs:

- Sandra Fenwick, Chief Operating Officer, Children's Hospital Boston
- Jackie Jenkins-Scott, President, Wheelock College

Members in alphabetical order by sector:

Health and Mental Health

- Alexy Arauz Boudreau, MD., Assistant in Pediatrics, MGH Center for Child and Adolescent Health Policy
- Michelle Bordeu, Bureau Director for Women and Children, Boston Public Health Commission
- Beth Burlingame, Program Director for DSS and EEC Contracts, South Shore Mental Health Center; President, MA Association of Family Centered Service Providers
- Sandra Fenwick, Chief Operating Officer, Children's Hospital Boston
- Margot Kaplan Sanoff, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, BU School of Medicine and Boston Medical Center; Director, Healthy Steps Initiative
- Roderick King, MD., Instructor, Harvard Medical School; Senior Faculty, MGH Disparities Solutions Center
- Enrico Mezzacappa, MD., Associate Director of Psychiatric Education, Children's Hospital Boston; Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

Early Care and Education (Child Care)

- Doug Baird, President and CEO, Associated Early Care and Education
- Mary Grace Casey, Director, Shattuck Hospital Child Care Center
- Min-hua Chen, Education Specialist, MA Department of Education
- Mary Dooley, President, Community Partnerships for Children
- Gail DeRiggi, Family Support and Engagement Supervisor, Department of Early Education and Care
- Mary Kinsella, VP of Child Care Services, Daniel Marr Boys and Girls Club
- Jason Sachs, Director of Early Childhood, Boston Public Schools
- Lourdes Sariol, Executive Director, Child Care Project
- Sharon Scott Chandler, Vice President, ABCD Head Start

Early Childhood Advocacy

- Margaret Blood, President, Strategies for Children, Inc. and Early Education for All Campaign
- Laurel Burnham, Healthy Families Resource Liaison, MA Children's Trust Fund
- Mary Reed, President, Bessie Tartt Wilson Children's Foundation
- Pat Xavier, Director, Boston Child Care Alliance

Research and Higher Education

- Jackie Jenkins-Scott, President, Wheelock College
- Miren Uriarte, Associate Professor, Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy at U. Mass. Boston
- Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education

K-12 Education

- Mayra Cuevas, Program Director and Coach, Boston Public Schools
- Valerie Gumes, Principal, Haynes Early Education Center
- Marchelle Raynor, Program Director, Gertrude E. Townsend Head Start; Vice Chairperson, Boston School Committee
- Carolyn Riley, Senior Director of Unified Student Services, Boston Public Schools

(Note: Many members' work crosses sectors.)

Community-Based, Immigrant and Multi-Service Organizations

- Denise Gonsalves, Executive Director, Cape Verdean Community UNIDO
- Farrell Gonsalves, Director of Social Services, Catholic Charities
- Wendy Luk, Director of Family Child Care, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
- Pamela Ogletree, President and CEO, Children's Services of Roxbury
- Yvette Rodriguez, Chief Operating Officer, Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion
- Randal Rucker, Chief Executive Officer, Family Service of Greater Boston
- Nicole St. Victor, Director of Early Childhood Services, Yawkey Center/Haitian Multi Service Center
- Cheng Imm Tan, Director, Office of New Bostonians

Parenting Education, Family Support, Family Literacy and Early Intervention

- Erin Cox Weinberg, Executive Director, Northeast Region, Jumpstart for Young Children
- Sharon Goldstein, Director of Early Childhood Center, The Home for Little Wanderers
- John Lippitt, Project Director, Department of Public Health - Division of Perinatal, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs
- Matt LiPuma, Executive Director, Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts
- Crista Martinez, Executive Director, Families First Parenting Programs, Inc.

Basic Needs and Human Services (Food, Housing and Safety)

- Christine Araujo, Director of Procurement Management, Department of Transitional Assistance
- Doris Brown, Director of Housing, Crittenton Women's Union
- Deborah Collins-Gousby, Director of Residential Services, Casa Myrna Vasquez
- Barbara Curley, Interim Area Director, Department of Social Services
- Sandra Henriquez, Administrator, Boston Housing Authority
- Brad Kramer, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Horizons for Homeless Children

Parent Advocacy and Parent/Family Engagement

- Deborah Gray, Special Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent, Office of Family and Community Engagement, Boston Public Schools
- Charlotte "Dee" Spinkston, Director, Urban Pride
- Caprice Taylor Mendez, Director, Boston Parent Organizing Network

Faith, Arts, Culture and Recreation

- Nia Alimayu, Technical Assistance Specialist, Black Ministerial Alliance
- Jose Masso, Announcer/Producer, WBUR
- Jeri Robinson, Vice President of Early Childhood Programs, Boston Children's Museum
- Rubi Simon, Branch Librarian, Boston Public Library - Egleston Branch
- Wendy Zinn, District Vice President, YMCA of Greater Boston

Foundations and Private Sector

- Nishith Acharya, Executive Director, Desh and Jaishree Deshpande Foundation
- Charles Desmond, Executive Vice President, Trefler Foundation
- Nicholas Donohue, President and CEO, Nellie Mae Education Foundation
- Carol Fulp, VP of Community Relations, John Hancock
- Kimberly Haskins, Senior Program Officer, Barr Foundation
- Peg Sprague, Vice President Community Impact, United Way of Massachusetts Bay
- Richard Ward, Director of Grantmaking, The Boston Foundation

(Note: Many members' work crosses sectors.)