

To: Boston Public Schools Executive Team
From: Emmanuel Allen, Marvin Moore
**Re: Project Reconnect Dropout Outreach and Recovery Report,
2006-2007 Cohort**
Date: October 20, 2008

From June through October of 2007, we worked with the Boston Public Schools and other organizations to reach out to the 1,976 students who dropped out between July of 2006 and June of 2007. In the summer of 2006, we had worked with one BPS guidance counselor to reach out to a slightly smaller group (1,660). That first year, we spoke with over 300 (141 in depth) and reconnected 81 with educational pathways that year. Thanks to support from BPS offices such as Unified Student Services, over the year in between, our project gained more visibility and momentum and attracted an expanded team to work with us this past summer.

This second summer (2007), our team consisted of a guidance counselor, two social workers, two special education experts, the Boston Youth Service Network coordinator and a one-stop career center youth employment specialist. The extra help we had allowed us to reach more students. We spoke to over 500 students or parents (319 in depth) and reconnected 208 with educational pathways.

Behind this memo are the findings on reasons that students in this cohort left school and how they fared when they return. We have added some data points since last year because of what we learned from the first cohort. For example, the previous year, 51 of the 81 re-enrolled dropouts left school again, so this year, we monitored enrollment status monthly, which we report here. In September, of the 208 who re-enrolled, 154 started school and 54 did not accept their school assignment, so they did not start. As of June 30th, 87 were still attending; 67 withdrew. The highest number of withdrawals occurred in November, December and February, which coincide with the holidays and the end of the first and third marking periods.

We also checked attendance monthly, which is reported on the 87 still in school on page 6 of the attached Power Point. This shows us that over half of those still attending probably did not earn credit for the year—and that the system has a long way to go in the area of dropout retention.

We hope that these findings inform some of the BPS' current work to increase graduation rates for all students. One of our findings is that larger numbers of these students were clustered in a small number of high schools (page 4), suggesting that they were assigned

based on seat availability more than on the best fit. Students were most likely to start at their assigned school when they gained entry to their first choice school (pages 6-7). We believe that a more focused effort on student-school matching that could be provided by the proposed Transition Center could greatly increase retention of these students.

Alternative education programs—both BPS and community-based—have better retention rates for these students, but many students who chose these schools did not get in. A good number of these students later decided not to come back at all. Another finding is that most of our cohort is two years or more off-track. This leads us to believe that increased capacity for alternative options would help more of these students succeed.

At the same time, we are working with external partners to pilot practices that could help more re-enrolled students succeed. We are currently working with the Multicultural Dropout Outreach Collaborative (MDOC) to pilot a mentoring program combined with part-time jobs for ten young men. MDOC, staffed by the Freedom House, recruited and trained the mentors, while the PIC is organizing the employment component. Shawn Brown of the Boston Private Industry Council and Diamond Educators is providing technical assistance to the program. Shawn's Diamond Educator program is a tiered mentoring model that engages boys and young men of color with male professionals of color. Behind this memo is a Boston Globe article describing Diamond Educators.

Finally, we have begun to work with some of the schools to monitor the progress of our students. Some schools, such as Charlestown and the Urban Science Academy, have helped us organize group sessions where we could coach the students. We hope to see school staff's interest in these students continue to grow, and we have been trying to cultivate as many relationships with school leaders as we can. A systemic effort to monitor these students and follow up with them at schools could be provided by the proposed Transition Center to assist schools in targeting support measures for these students.