Raising Graduation Rates in Massachusetts:
The Power of Community Partnerships

A Report of the *Pathways to Success by 21* Initiative
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Introduction

In a recent public service announcement created by Massachusetts youth for the "Ready, Set, Go to College" campaign, high school students talk about coming to realize the opportunities opened up by a college education.

"I wanted to be somebody someday."
"I realized that college would give me more choices."
"Now it looks like it's going to really happen."
"Me? Going to college?"
"And now, I'm ready to go."

The public service announcement, created by students from a youth advisory board working with the Department of Education and the Board of Higher Education, conveys a positive message about the opportunities beyond high school. It is part of a high school reform campaign that aims not just to raise graduation rates, but also to raise academic standards and improve outcomes after high school.

During the 2004-2005 school year, over 11,000 Massachusetts students dropped out of high school. The decision to leave school is rarely made in a single moment, but is usually influenced by events spanning back to the experiences of the middle school and early high school years and by expectations reaching forward to high school graduation, college, and careers. A history of attendance, academic, and sometimes discipline problems often precedes dropping out. For many students, personal or family crises contribute to the decision to leave school. Surveys of students and dropouts also suggest that a lack of engagement in school and a lack of positive reasons to stay in school are often factors influencing the choice to drop out.

What approaches can make the difference between allowing a student to drop out of school and helping a student to successfully complete high school and discover exciting options ahead?

This concept paper explores the challenge of raising graduation rates in Massachusetts, focusing on "the power of community partnerships" to support students on the path to a diploma and then to postsecondary education and careers. The paper focuses on collaboration among schools and community and state partners – particularly through the Pathways to Success by 21 (P21) Initiative – with the view that students benefit from a broad approach to addressing the factors that create barriers to high school graduation. The paper includes four main parts:

- **Part I: A Look at the Numbers**: Current data on graduation rates and dropout rates in Massachusetts.
- **Part II: Why Students Drop Out**: National and state perspectives from surveys, focus groups, and other studies about factors that contribute to dropping out of school.
- **Part III: The Economic Context:** Data on the experiences of dropouts, including the number of dropouts who later seek a GED or postsecondary training, as well as data on the economic benefits of completing high school and obtaining postsecondary education or training.
- **Part IV: Strategies – The Power of Community Partnership:** Information about the strategies being implemented in Massachusetts.

The paper was shaped by the Massachusetts Department of Education's involvement in the Pathways to Success by 21 (P21) initiative. The Massachusetts Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, along with other organizations and agencies have teamed together in the P21 initiative. P21 is a statewide effort, convened by the Commonwealth Corporation, to improve the future prospects of vulnerable youth ages 16-21, including those who are in school and those who are out-of-school and out-of-work. The initiative seeks to increase collaboration among state-level youth-serving agencies, and to help regional and local youth-serving systems to better coordinate the delivery of services. Through P21, these partners are working to raise public awareness, increase the network of people who can provide outreach and support for struggling youth, and share information among agencies in order to better serve young people.

Over the past two years, state and regional partners have identified nine P21 statewide strategies for improving options for in-school and out-of-school youth. These strategies address many different issues facing vulnerable youth, but are particularly relevant to the challenge of raising graduation rates.

Nine Strategies of P21

Strategy #1	Public Awareness	Involve youth in creating messages about issues facing youth. Use web, print and other media to share information about resources in the community for youth. Create positive messages that emphasize the role of youth as assets to the community.
Strategy #2	Early Identification	Identify youth who are struggling in school. Coordinate the assessments that are provided by different youth serving organizations, so that different groups work together to identify youth who need support.
Strategy #3	Early Intervention	Identify effective ways of intervening to support youth. Coordinate the work of schools and other organizations in order to maximize resources and work effectively.
Strategy #4	Outreach and Support	Expand the network of people who provide outreach and support to both in-school and out-of-school youth. Coordinate work among agencies and schools so that resources are focused effectively.
Strategy #5	Increase Alternative Education and Training Options	Expand the availability of alternative education and training options.
Strategy #6	Workplace Readiness Assessment for Youth	Expand the availability of work-based learning opportunities and employment readiness training to help youth. Develop opportunities for youth to demonstrate and document that they have the employment readiness skills needed by employers.
Strategy #7	Unified Staff Development	Create a common approach to recruitment and professional development of front line youth workers.
Strategy #8	Address Persistent Barriers	Help agencies coordinate efforts to address the barriers that make it difficult for at-risk youth to succeed in education, training, and careers.
Strategy #9	Share Data	Create opportunities for agencies to share data, both to improve communication and services for individual youth and to improve the state and local-level information available for understanding trends and issues facing youth.

**Part I: A Look at the Numbers - Graduation Rates and Dropout Rates in Massachusetts**

High School Graduation Rates

Massachusetts, along with other states, has recently introduced a measure for tracking graduation rates of high school students. While annual dropout data, that shows how many students drop out in a single year, has been available in the past and will continue to be available, this graduation rate measure tracks a cohort of students over four or five years.

Data released on February 1, 2007 shows that 80 percent of the students who started ninth grade in the fall of 2002 have graduated four years later. Six percent of the class is still enrolled in school, 12 percent of the class dropped out, 1 percent earned a GED, and 1 percent left high school at the end of four years without earning a diploma. These figures are based on a cohort of 74,380 first-time ninth grade students who started in fall 2002 or who transferred into the class during the four years, but excludes those who transferred out or were deceased during the four years. Figure 1 presents this data, including a breakout of the data for various subgroups of students.

These data show that graduation rates vary among different groups of students. Groups with lower-than-average graduation rates include male students, students in special education, limited English proficient students, low-income students, African American students, Hispanic students, and students in urban schools. The small cohorts of Pacific Islander and Native American students also have lower graduation rates.

Figure 1
Four-Year Graduation Rates, 2006 Cohort
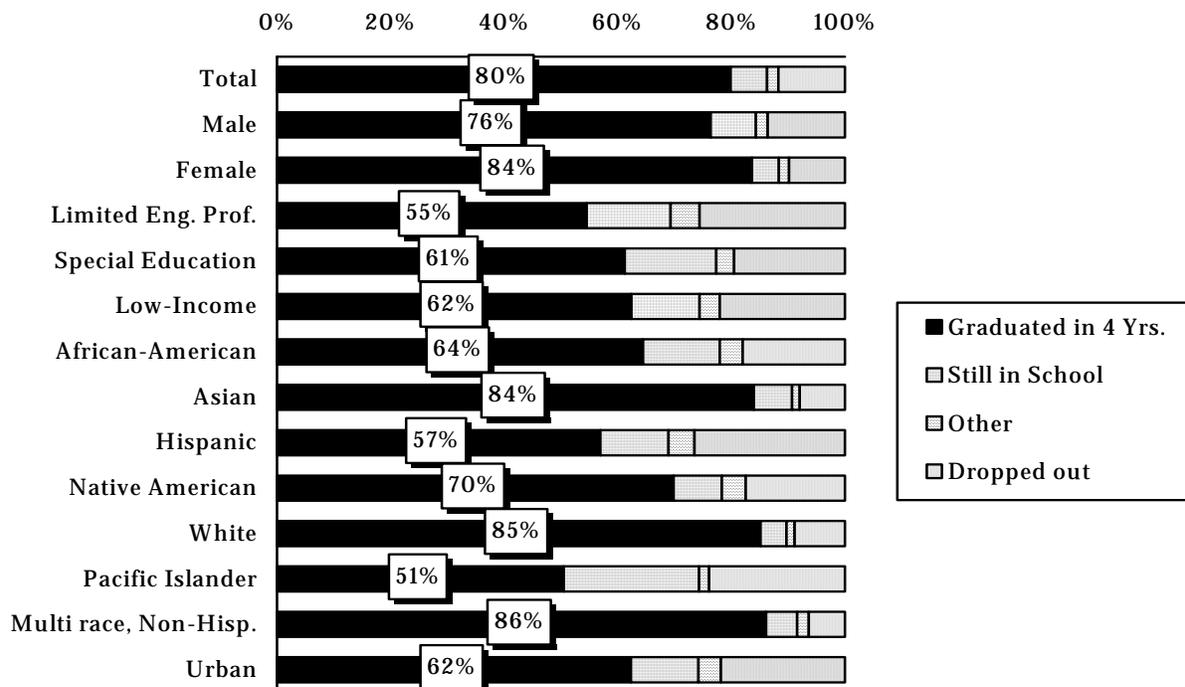
Source: Massachusetts Department of Education.
See Appendix Figure 1 for further detail.

Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, states are required to report on graduation rates and use this data to track the progress of schools. NCLB allows states to determine their own method for calculating graduation rates. In addition to the guidelines included in NCLB, Massachusetts also signed a compact with the National Governors Association in 2005, agreeing to "take steps to implement a standard, four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate." Under this compact, states agree to calculate the graduation rate by dividing the number of on-time graduates in a given year by the number of first time entering ninth graders four years earlier, adjusted for transfers in and out of the system. Massachusetts developed the graduation rate methodology in order to be as clear and transparent as possible to give accurate information about graduation rates. The Department of Education plans to release both the four-year graduation rate and the annual dropout rate data, moving forward. And since many students take more than the standard four years to graduate, a five-year graduation rate will also be introduced next school year.

High School Dropout Rates

Annual dropout rates provide another way of looking at the same issue. The annual dropout rate is based on the number of students in grades 9-12 who drop out during the year, as a percentage of total enrollment in grades 9-12 on October 1 of that year. In the 2004-2005 school year, the dropout count was 11,145 students, representing 3.8 percent of total high school enrollment. This marks an increase from previous years, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2
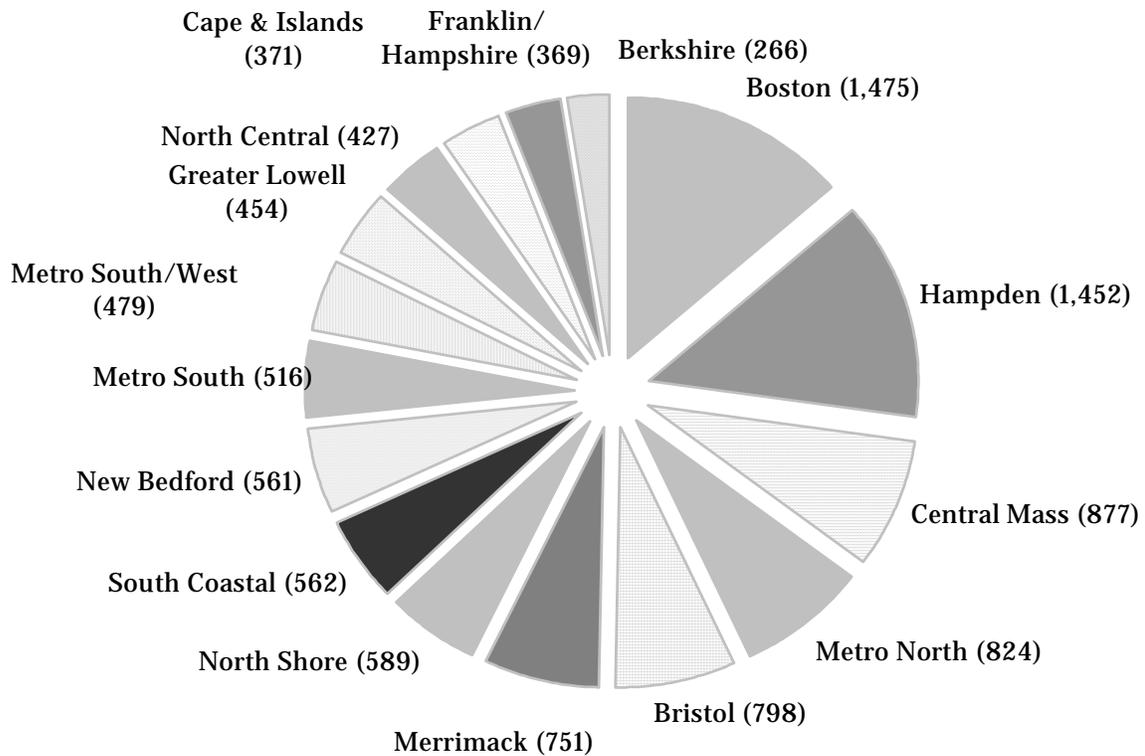**Dropout Rates, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, and 2004-2005**

	School Year 2002-2003	School Year 2003-2004	School Year 2004-2005
Number of Dropouts	9,389	10,633	11,145
High School Enrollment	281,939	288,329	293,399
Dropout Rate (%)	3.3%	3.7%	3.8%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education

Figures 3 – 7 present a profile of the 11,145 students who dropped out during the 2004-2005 school year. These figures show that dropouts come from each region of the state and from all race/ethnic groups. While some demographic groups have higher dropout rates, the overall profile of dropouts includes students from all regions and all demographic groups.

Students who are from low-income households, who are in special education, or who are limited English proficient drop out at a higher rate than other groups of students. Students who are Hispanic or African American are also more likely to drop out than their peers (though over one-half of dropouts are white). Among students in grades 11 and 12, those who have not yet passed the MCAS exams and earned a competency determination are more likely to drop out (though the majority of dropouts from these grades have passed the MCAS exams). Males are more likely to drop out than females.

Figure 3
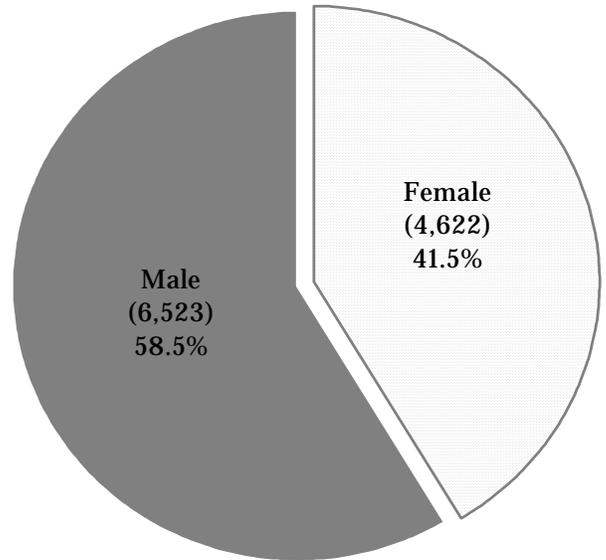**Number of Dropouts, 2004-2005, By Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Region***

Cape & Islands (371)
Franklin/Hampshire (369)
Berkshire (266)
Boston (1,475)
North Central (427)
Greater Lowell (454)
Metro South/West (479)
Metro South (516)
Hampden (1,452)
New Bedford (561)
Central Mass (877)
South Coastal (562)
North Shore (589)
Metro North (824)
Merrimack (751)
Bristol (798)

* See Appendix Figures 2-4 for information about the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) regions and for further data by region.

Figure 4
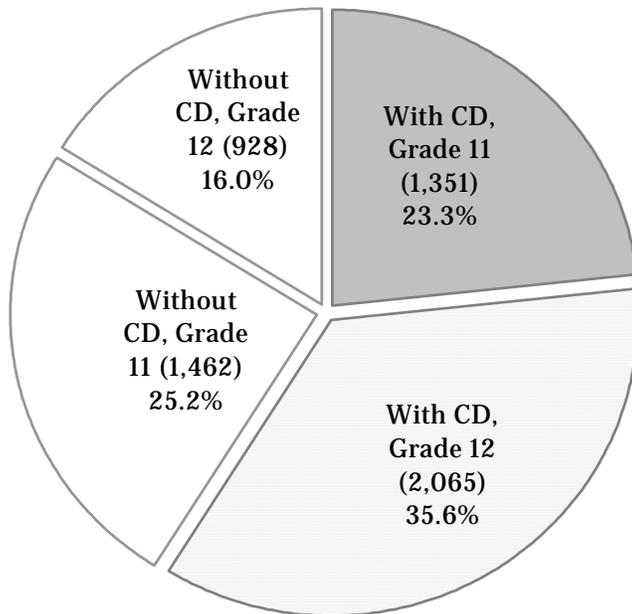**Distribution of all High School Dropouts, By Race/Ethnicity**

Asian (358) 3.2%
Black (1,701) 15.3%
White (6,166) 55.3%
Hispanic (2,872) 26.0%
Native Amer. (48) 0.4%
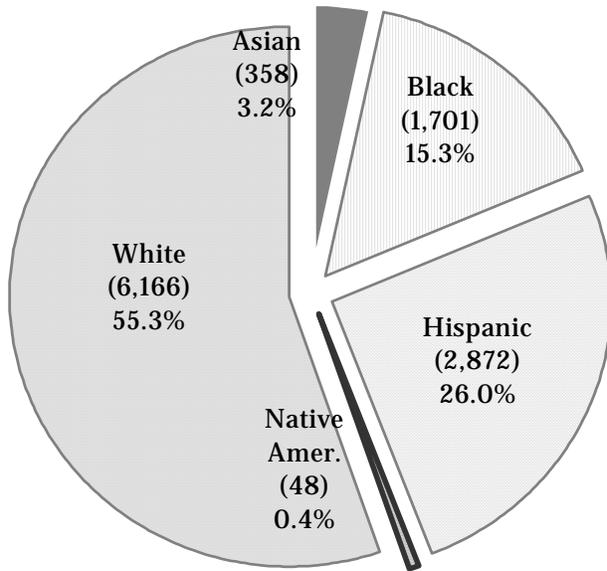
Figure 5
Distribution of all High School Dropouts, By Gender

Female (4,622) 41.5%
Male (6,523) 58.5%

Figure 6
Distribution of Dropouts in Grades 11 and 12, 2004-2005, By Competency Determination (CD) Status

Without CD, Grade 12 (928) 16.0%
With CD, Grade 11 (1,351) 23.3%
Without CD, Grade 11 (1,462) 25.2%
With CD, Grade 12 (2,065) 35.6%

Sources: Data by Race, Gender and Competency Determination (CD) status is from: Massachusetts Department of Education, High School Dropouts 2004-05, Massachusetts Public Schools. Data by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Region is from an analysis of the school-level dropout data in the school/district profiles, school year 2004-2005.

Definition: The term "Competency Determination" (CD) is used to refer to students who have passed both the Math and English Language Arts MCAS tests or retests or received the competency determination upon appeal.

Figure 7
Profile of High School Dropouts, 2004-2005

		Number of Enrolled Students	Number of Dropouts	Dropout Rate	Percent of Dropouts
Total		293,399	11,145	3.8%	100%
Gender	Male	148,491	6,523	4.4%	58.5%
	Female	144,908	4,622	3.2%	41.5%
Race / Ethnicity	African American	26,881	1,701	6.3%	15.3%
	Asian	13,612	358	2.6%	3.2%
	Hispanic	31,486	2,872	9.1%	25.8%
	Native American	886	48	5.4%	0.4%
	White	220,534	6,166	2.8%	55.3%
Special Education Status	Special Education	42,647	2,369	5.6%	21.3%
	General Education	250,752	8,776	3.5%	78.7%
Limited English Prof. Status	Limited English Proficient	10,706	996	9.3%	8.9%
	Not Limited English Proficient	282,693	10,149	3.6%	91.1%
Low Income Status	Low Income	69,952	4,461	6.4%	40.0%
	Not Low Income	223,447	6,684	3.0%	60.0%
Competency Determination (CD) Status (Grades 11 and 12 Only)	Without CD, Grade 11	5,155	1,462	28.4%	25.2%
	Without CD, Grade 12	2,714	928	34.2%	16.0%
	With CD, Grade 11	64,286	1,351	2.1%	23.3%
	With CD, Grade 12	61,138	2,065	3.4%	35.6%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, High School Dropouts 2004-05, Massachusetts Public Schools. See Appendix Figure 2 for additional data by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) region.

Figure 8 presents information from the Department of Education's in-depth report on dropout data from the 2003-2004 school year. Among other findings, the report showed that students who have been retained in a grade are among those most likely to drop out, and that dropouts, on average, had much poorer attendance than non-dropouts in the year that they dropped out.

Figure 8
Academic and Attendance Backgrounds of Dropouts vs. Non-Dropouts, 2003-2004 School Year

Academic
Dropout rate for students retained in at least one grade during grades 9-12 . . . . . 18%

Attendance
Average number of days absent – dropouts 31
Average number of days absent – non-dropouts 10

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, High School Dropouts, School Year 2003-2004.

Among the approximately 81 high schools in the state in which more than half (50 percent or more) of the students are from low-income[1] households, 43 schools have dropout rates of 8 percent or more and 38 schools have dropout rates under 8 percent. Figures 9 –11 present data on school dropout rates and the postsecondary outcomes, attendance rates, and suspension rates for these schools. Figures 9-11 show that:
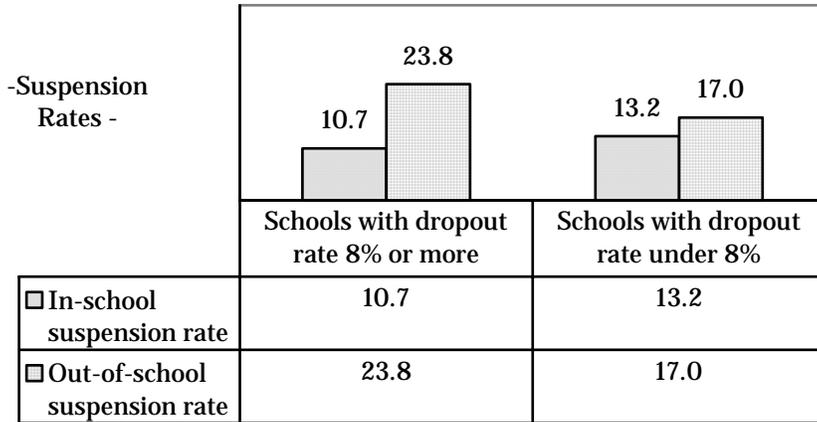
- In general, the schools with lower dropout rates have higher attendance rates, as shown in Figure 9.
- In general, the schools with lower dropout rates also have lower out-of-school suspension rates, but slightly higher in-school suspension rates, as shown in Figure 10.
- In general, the schools with lower dropout rates have a higher percentage of graduates attending postsecondary education and a lower percentage of graduates whose post-graduation plans are unknown, as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 9
School Dropout Rates vs. School Attendance
For schools in which 50% or more of the students are low-income,
2004-2005

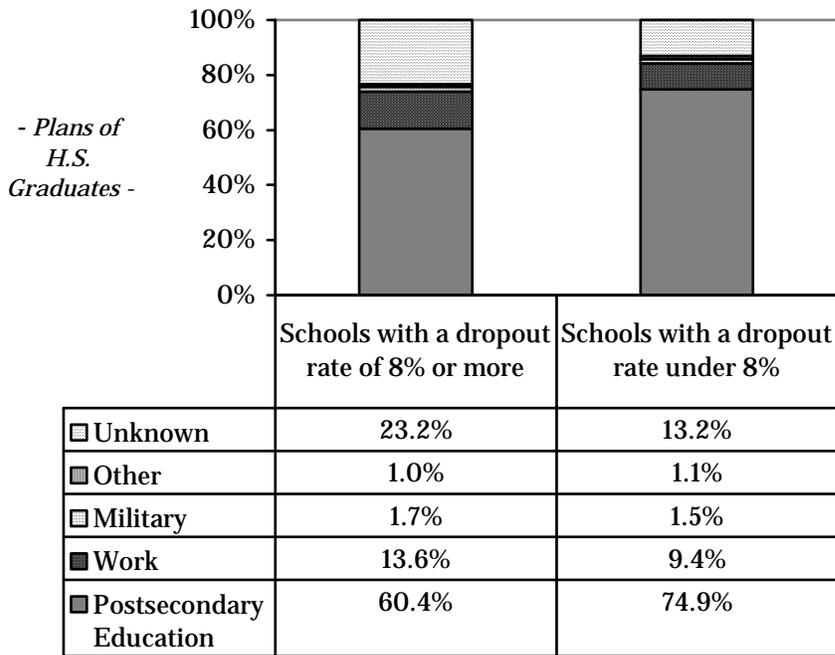|	Schools with dropout rate 8% or more	Schools with dropout rate under 8%
■ Average # of days absent	21.9	16.3

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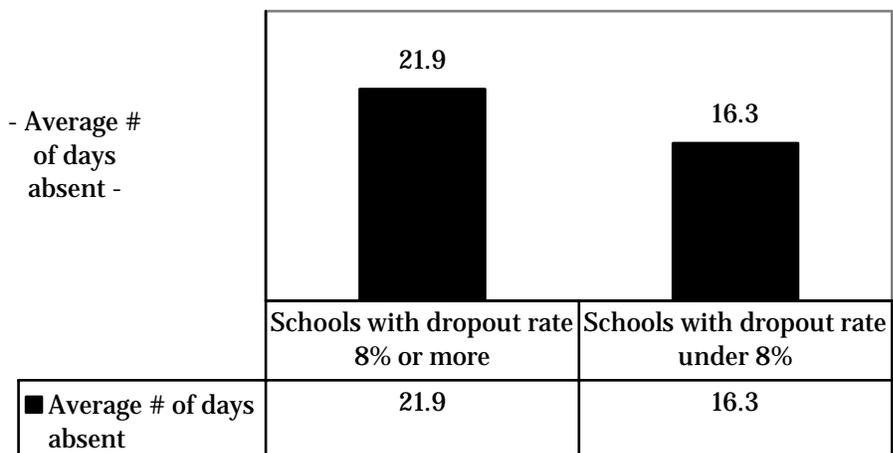
[1] Low-income status is an indication of whether the student meets any one of the following definitions of low income: (1.) The student is eligible for free or reduced price lunch; or (2.) The student receives Transitional Aid to Needy Families benefits; or (3.) The student is eligible for food stamps.

Figure 10
School Dropout Rates vs. School Suspension Rates
For schools in which 50% or more of the students are low-income,
2004-2005

-Suspension Rates -		
	Schools with dropout rate 8% or more	Schools with dropout rate under 8%
☐ In-school suspension rate	10.7	13.2
☐ Out-of-school suspension rate	23.8	17.0

Figure 11
School Dropout Rates vs. Plans of High School Graduates
For schools in which 50% or more of the students are low-income,
2004-2005

- Plans of H.S. Graduates -		
	Schools with a dropout rate of 8% or more	Schools with a dropout rate under 8%
☐ Unknown	23.2%	13.2%
☐ Other	1.0%	1.1%
☐ Military	1.7%	1.5%
■ Work	13.6%	9.4%
■ Postsecondary Education	60.4%	74.9%

Source: Data for Figures 9-11 is from the Massachusetts Department of Education, School / District Profile Data, Dropout Rates, Attendance, Suspensions, and Plans of H.S. Graduates, By School, School Year 2004-2005.

Part II: Why Students Drop Out - National and State Perspectives

Dropout prevention studies, surveys, and focus groups provide insights that reinforce the data described in Part I. Both nationally and within Massachusetts, studies suggest that the reasons that students drop out of high school are varied, and that a range of responses can make a difference. Solutions include supporting students who are struggling with academic, personal, and family challenges; improving school climate in order to keep students connected to school; and implementing learning opportunities inside and outside of school that increase student engagement.

The Silent Epidemic

 The recent national report *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts,* written by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, provides perspectives from dropouts themselves. In a national survey, while some dropouts cited academic challenges, the majority said that they had grades of C or better and felt that they could have graduated from high school. The report states "there is no single reason why students drop out of high school. Respondents report different reasons: a perception that school is boring, feeling unmotivated, academic challenges, and the weight of real world events. But indications are strong that these barriers to graduation are not insurmountable."

The Silent Epidemic
Reasons Dropouts Identify as Major Reasons for Dropping Out

47%	Classes were not interesting
43%	Missed too many days and could not catch up
42%	Spent time with people who were not interested in school
38%	Had too much freedom and not enough rules in my life
35%	Was failing in school
32%	Left to get a job
26%	Became a parent
22%	Had to help family

Source: The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts. Civic Enterprises, in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Shared Youth Vision: National Findings About Key Groups of At-Risk Youth

The Massachusetts P21 initiative is connected with an initiative of the federal Employment and Training Administration (ETA) called **Shared Youth Vision** which seeks to better align federal and state government programs to improve outcomes for disadvantaged youth. Shared Youth Vision was designed based on the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth. This Task Force identified key groups of youth who are most in need, particularly youth in foster care or aging out of foster care and youth involved with the juvenile justice system, since both groups are in state care, with the state acting in the role of parents. The Task Force also focused on youth with disabilities, homeless and runaway youth, and other key groups of at-risk youth.

The *White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth Final Report* (October 2003) showed that youth in foster care are "among those most likely to be left behind." The report states that youth in foster care "have higher absentee and tardy rates, are more likely to drop out of school, and are three times more likely to be referred for special education and related services." The Task Force report also showed that youth in the juvenile justice system face serious academic challenges and have high dropout rates. The report said that nationally, "detained and committed youth score below their expected grade levels across subject areas," and that "studies

show correlations between delinquency and lower levels of academic aspirations, lower levels of academic achievement, and higher rates of dropping out of high school."

The report pointed to the difficulty of coordinating educational services for these at-risk youth, since they are mobile and come in and out of local school systems, and called for better coordination through better alignment of state and federal resources.

Massachusetts Youth Focus Groups

Inspired by *The Silent Epidemic* report and by the value of gathering student feedback specific to Massachusetts, the Student and Secondary Support Unit at the Massachusetts Department of Education conducted seven youth focus groups across the Commonwealth, between April and October 2006.   All focus groups were asked the same general set of open-ended questions that centered around four main topics: 1) what youth like most about school, 2) what youth like least about school, 3) why students drop out of high school, and 4) how schools should be improved. The interviewed student groups were chosen to be representative of students who are at risk of dropping out or have dropped out. Five of the focus groups were conducted in urban areas, one was in a suburban area, and one was in a rural area. The focus groups were conducted with current students as well as youth who had dropped out. A total of 65 youth shared their thoughts through these seven focus groups.

Massachusetts Youth Focus Groups **Discussion Themes**
What do youth like most about school?
• Peer relationships   • Adult relationships   • Caring and attentive staff, small classes and individual support
What do youth like least about school?
• School climate and atmosphere   • Disciplinary practices   • Uninteresting academics
Why do students drop out of high school?
• School-related factors   • External-to-school factors
How should schools be improved?
• School policies   • Respect and support for students   • Academics and smaller classes
Source: Youth Voices - How High Schools can Respond to the Needs of Students and Help Prevent Dropouts: Findings from Youth Focus Groups, February 2007

(1) What do youth like most about school? What the focus group youth liked most about school was *positive relationships* – both among their peers and with adults. In all of the focus groups, youth mentioned the positive peer social aspects of school – including opportunities to see friends and to meet new people. One youth specifically noted that the social features of school were a factor for staying in school.

Many focus group participants spoke about having "cool" or "good" teachers who they felt cared about their academic and personal well-being. The participants from Alternative Education programs mentioned several factors directly related to the program environment that they enjoyed – all of which are related to positive relationships with adults. They mentioned caring and attentive staff, positive relationships with adults, small classes, and individual support with academics. Many also mentioned that they would have not remained in school if they had not joined the program.

(2) What do youth like least about school? Three main themes emerged regarding what focus group participants liked least about school: school climate and atmosphere, school disciplinary practices, and uninteresting academic classes. Many focus group participants talked about disliking the overall "atmosphere" of the school – including large class or school size,

distractions due to "obnoxious" peers or peer "drama," and safety issues related to gang activity, student fights, and bullying.

Youth in several of the focus groups spoke about feeling that the school was too "punishment-oriented" – meaning that there was a lack of rewards and privileges for students, uneven or double-standard discipline, and/or use of discipline practices that did not assist students in solving their problems (e.g., out-of-school suspensions).

Among all of the focus groups, youth mentioned that "boring" classes and teachers were among the things they liked least about school. In particular, students stated that they felt some teachers did not care about the classes they taught. Several of the students talked about feeling a lack of motivation and difficulty focusing as a result of classes not being interesting.

(3) Why do youth drop out of school? Nearly all of the youth who participated in the focus groups had dropped out of school, considered doing so, and/or had at least one family member or friend who had done so. The focus group participants were asked why they think these people they knew had dropped out of school (or why they themselves had considered or actually dropped out of school). The youth provided a variety of answers, which fell into two general categories – school-related factors and external/personal factors.

Focus group participants reported that students leave due to a number of school-related factors. The following were the most common reasons mentioned during the focus groups:
- Being generally "overwhelmed" by school;
- Falling behind on credits and struggling to keep up, often due to absenteeism and/or out-of-school suspensions;
- Lack of perceived "help" from school staff;
- School staff recommendations to drop out and enter a GED (General Educational Development) or other alternative high school program or charter school;
- School environments that felt "restrictive;"
- Lack of respect from school staff;
- Poor student-teacher relationships.

In addition to the school-related factors, the focus group participants mentioned many external-to-school factors contributing to leaving school as well. The following were the most frequent responses cited for external or personal factors that related to leaving school:
- Needing or wanting jobs/income;
- Skipping school with friends;
- Mental, emotional, or physical health problems;
- Lack of parental support;
- Drug or partying influences;
- Family and personal problems.

(4) How should schools be improved? When directly asked what should be done to improve schools, the youth discussed a number of ideas. The most common ideas are listed below in three main categories: school policies, respect and support, and academics.

The youth mentioned several policy-related factors that would improve schools. The following were the most frequent policies mentioned by the focus group participants:
- Offer "open campus" as an earned privilege (e.g., being allowed to leave school for lunch);

- Begin the school day later in the morning;
- Provide in-house suspension programs;
- Have longer school lunches and more breaks during the day.

Focus group participants talked about the theme of more respect and support for all students. In particular, youth discussed:
- More individual attention from teachers – school staff should take time to "get to know" students;
- More respect and honesty towards students;
- Additional student support programs, such as daycare for teen parents and counseling services.

Several themes related to academics emerged throughout the focus groups.
The most common topic mentioned was having *smaller classes.* In addition to smaller classes, the youth had several other academic-related ideas for improving schools:
- Teachers that really teach – not just give out homework;
- Additional tutors and teacher aides to assist in classrooms;
- More hands-on activities; and more after-school activities and programs.

Massachusetts School Self-Assessment Projects

The Massachusetts Department of Education provided small grants to 11 schools in eight school districts to conduct a self-assessment of the dropout issue in the school and of the availability of alternative education options. Groups of school personnel and community partners looked at information about the students who had dropped out of their schools, conducted surveys and focus groups of students, dropouts, and staff, and met together to: 1) analyze the data; 2) analyze the supports and programs that are currently in place in their schools; and 3) identify strategies that they would like to implement.

The 11 schools that conducted these self-assessments reported that students drop out for a variety of reasons, but that several patterns emerge. Many individuals who drop out have a history of attendance problems; many have been

Dropout Prevention and Alternative Education Self-Assessment Projects:
Factors related to dropping out of school

Attendance issues
Academic issues
- Retention in grade nine
- Struggling in grade nine
- Problems in elementary and middle school
- Not enough credits (behind schedule for age)

Discipline issues
Mobility – students new to district
School climate
- Someone to talk to
- Engagement in learning
- Role in shaping school environment and school rules

Personal and family issues
- Lack of family support for school
- Need to work
- Pregnancy and parenting
- Legal issues

Source: Analysis of final reports from the districts participating in the self-assessment project.

retained in a grade, often in grade nine; and many have a history of discipline issues. Family or personal problems also contribute to dropping out.

Schools noted that the transition from grade eight to grade nine was a critical period. Students entering grade nine are faced with much higher academic expectations than those they faced in

middle school or elementary school. The academic challenges of ninth grade, combined with the challenges and pressures of early adolescence, can be overwhelming for many students. A survey conducted by one of the schools showed that many students who dropped out in later grades began to think about dropping out while in ninth grade.

Schools noted that in some cases, students who dropped out of high school were students who had struggled in elementary and middle school in the district. In other cases, students who had been in the district since elementary school and who had exhibited no serious problems were among the dropouts. In other cases, students with high mobility, who had moved into the district during high school, were most likely to drop out.

For some students, a history of disciplinary issues precedes the decision to drop out. Some dropouts may have legal issues outside of school as well.   But one self-assessment team made an important observation that "while some dropouts had extensive disciplinary records, others had no or minimal disciplinary referrals. This data confirms that we must be more pro-active in recognizing and addressing the needs of students who are 'quietly disengaged' in their classes."

Personal and family issues are a factor for many dropouts. Some of the students who drop out have struggled with issues outside of school, such as family crises, pregnancy and teen parenting, or economic pressures to go to work full-time. Many students face a combination of problems, including family lives with multiple challenges.

The self-assessment reports suggested that a positive school climate and high expectations for students are important for solving the dropout issue. In their reports, schools cited national research and their own surveys and observations showing that it is important for students to have someone to talk to in school and to feel the school has high expectations of them, that school rules are fair, and that they have a voice in shaping the school environment. Student engagement in learning is also essential. Students should have opportunities to connect what they learn to future career and postsecondary options and have access to different types of classroom and experiential learning. Students should be able to get help when they are struggling. Students who fall behind should have opportunities to catch up, earn the credits they are missing, and get back on track.   Schools were particularly seeking ways to improve the transition from grades eight to nine and to find ways to support students with different learning styles so that they could be more successful in the transition to high school.

Massachusetts Public School District Survey

In November 2005, Commissioner David Driscoll of the Massachusetts Department of Education (the Department) asked school district superintendents and leaders of charter schools and educational collaboratives to respond to a four-question, open-ended survey on dropouts. The Department received a total of 105 surveys from districts across the state.   Based on the open-ended responses, the Department created categories to compile and summarize the data. Due to the open-ended nature of the questions, some subjective interpretation of the results was necessary. Similar responses were combined into larger categories. Consistent with national research on why students drop out, district leaders described a wide range of reasons that students left school, as summarized in the following table.

Factors Related to Dropping Out of School

Percent of responding districts citing this factor	RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTION: *"Based on what you've seen in your district, why are students in your community dropping out of high school?"*
46%	**Lack of Academic Success.** Respondents indicated that students dropped out due to failing classes, falling behind on coursework, and/or falling behind peers on academic credits.
46%	**Personal and Family Issues.** Respondents stated that students left school due to lack of parent support, disruptive family life, death in the family, education not valued in family, parents requesting student to discontinue education, and unspecified personal or family issues.
40%	**Economics.** Respondents indicated that students withdrew from school for full-time employment, leaving to support families financially, job training, and other economic related reasons.
40%	**Frequent Truancy.** Respondents reported students left school due to inconsistent and poor attendance.
27%	**GED.** Respondents indicated students dropped out to obtain a GED.
23%	**Health Issues.** Respondents reported students dropped out due to illness or mental/emotional health issues.
23%	**Substance Abuse.** Respondents stated that students who dropped out had a history of substance abuse or drug addiction.
21%	**Court-Involved.** Respondents reported students dropped out due to involvement with the Department of Youth Services (DYS) or due to incarceration.
21%	**Disengagement.** Respondents stated students dropped out because they were disengaged or had a lack of interest in school.
21%	**Pregnancy/Parenting.** Respondents indicated students withdrew from school because they were pregnant or were a parent.
14%	**Lack of Educational Alternatives.** Respondents reported that students left school because alternative education programs and career and vocational technical education were not available to the students (program not available at school or program operating at capacity).
13%	**MCAS.** Respondents stated that students dropped out after failing part or all of the grade 10 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exam or due to concern that they would be unable to meet state and local requirements for graduation.
13%	**Mobility.** Respondents reported that students dropped out who were transient and had recently moved into their district.
11%	**Behavior.** Respondents reported that students dropped out due to discipline and behavioral issues.
36%	**Unknown** *Other factors: Other factors (cited by fewer than 10% of the responding districts) included language barriers, transportation issues, lack of support services and other issues.*

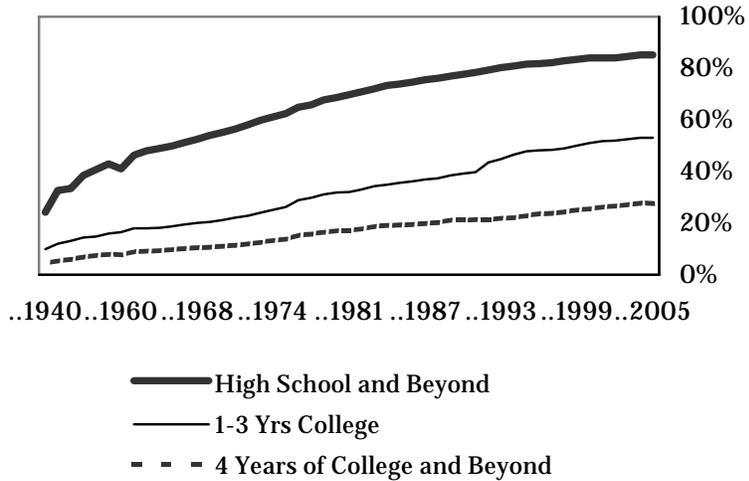*Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, Dropouts in Massachusetts Public Schools: District Survey Results, April 2006.*

Part III: The Economic Impact of Dropping Out of High School

High school and college degrees are becoming increasingly important in the U.S. economy. U.S. Census data shows that the percent of the adult population with a high school degree and with a college degree has increased significantly in past decades, as shown in Figure 12.

Today, 85 percent of the U.S. population ages 25 and over has at least a high school degree. More than one-half have attended at least some college, and 28 percent have a four-year college degree or more.

Figure 13 shows that earnings and employment rates are much stronger for people with high school diplomas and college degrees. People who did not finish high school have lower earnings and are more likely to be unemployed or not in the labor market.

Figure 12
Educational Attainment of U.S. Population, Age 25 and over, 1940 – 2005

..1940..1960..1968..1974 ..1981 ..1987 ..1993..1999..2005

━━━ High School and Beyond
──── 1-3 Yrs College
- - - 4 Years of College and Beyond

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that this earnings gap is getting wider. Among full-time year-round workers, high school dropouts earned 90 percent of what high school graduates earned in 1975, but only 70 percent of what high school graduates earned in 1999. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *The Big Payoff: Educational Attainment and Synthetic Estimates of Work-Life Earnings*, July 2002.)

Figure 13
***Earnings of U.S. Persons Age 25 and Over
And Unemployment Rate of U.S. Persons Age 25 and Over in the Labor Force, by
Educational Attainment, 2005***

Unemployment Rate, 2005	Level of Educational Attainment	Average Annual Earnings, 2005
1.1%	Professional Degree	$119,343
1.4%	Doctoral Degree	$93,593
2.0%	Masters Degree	$68,302
2.7%	Bach. Degree	$56,740
3.6%	Assoc. Degree	$39,662
4.5%	Some College	$37,089
5.4%	H.S. Graduate	$31,664
8.8%	Less than H.S.	$22,374
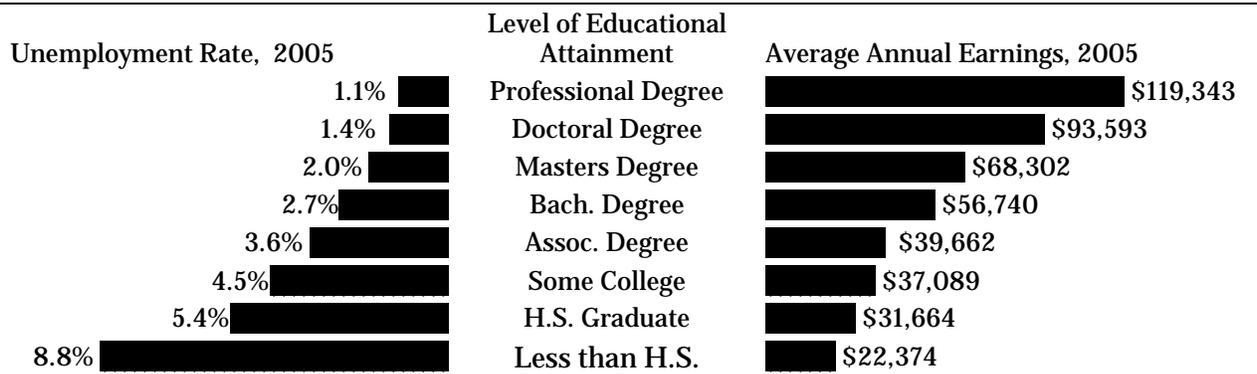
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Other measures of economic success, including ownership of houses, cars, bank accounts and retirement funds, are also significantly better for households with high school diplomas and college degrees, as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14
Asset Ownership of Households, by Educational Attainment of Head of Household, 2005

Educational Attainment of Head of Household	No High School Diploma	High School Graduate	Some College, No Degree	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
% of households owning:					
Interest earning assets at financial institutions	42.8%	59.6%	66.7%	72%	82.6%
Other interest earning assets	0.7	1.9	3.0	2.3	7.5
Regular checking accounts	27.3	37.4	40.5	42.4	40.4
Stocks and mutual fund shares	6.9	19.5	27.3	29.9	49.3
Own business or profession	5.5	9.5	11.2	11.1	15.7
Motor vehicles	71.1	85.7	88.7	91.8	91.4
Own home	56.1	67.3	65.0	70.7	74.9
Rental property	2.3	3.9	4.8	5.1	7.7
U.S. savings bonds	4.3	11.8	15.5	18.1	23.3
IRA or Keogh accounts	6.7	16.4	22.9	24.6	42.3
401K & thrift savings plan	8.4	23.8	32.1	38.8	46.8
Other assets	1.8	3.1	3.5	4.1	6.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Census data shows generational differences in the importance of completing high school and attaining postsecondary education. While it was fairly common for many older Americans to have a high school degree or less, it is more common for younger Americans to complete high school and to pursue postsecondary education.

Postsecondary education is increasingly important in the labor market. The recent report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, *Tough Choices or Tough Times,* points out that high-level skills are increasingly important in a very competitive global economy. The report says that "this is a world in which a very high level of preparation in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, science, literature, history, and the arts will be an indispensable foundation for everything that comes after for most members of the workforce."

In the recent report, *Making Good on a Promise: What Policymakers Can Do to Support the Educational Persistence of Dropouts*, Jobs for the Future (JFF) analyzed data from the National Education Longitudinal Survey and found that high school dropouts often work toward more education after they have left school. The report shows that:

- 49 percent of dropouts earn a GED within 12 years of leaving school and another 10 percent earn a high school diploma, for a total of 59 percent earning a high school credential within 12 years of dropping out of school.
- 44 percent of the dropouts who earned a degree or GED go on to enroll in a two-year or four-year college, though only nine percent earned a degree.
- Another 14 percent of this group enrolls in a non-degree certificate program, for a total of 59 percent of dropouts who earned a degree or GED enrolling in some form of

postsecondary education. Among those who enroll in postsecondary education, including degree and certificate programs, 23 percent earned a degree or certificate.

The *Making Good on a Promise* report suggests that high school dropouts are aware of the benefits of education, are motivated to complete high school or a GED program and to pursue education, and suggests a need for policymakers to support pathways to further education to those who have struggled in school or dropped out of school.

Part IV: Strategies – The Power of Community Partnerships

Both Massachusetts data and national studies suggest that there are many concrete actions that schools and communities can take to address the dropout issue.   Traditionally, the role of community partners outside the school system has been to focus on dropout recovery efforts, i.e., efforts to reach out to those who have already dropped out of school and help them enter adult education or GED programs, find employment, or go back to school. In contrast, dropout prevention efforts have historically been the responsibility of school districts.

However, there are now many models of partnering between schools and community partners that "blur" these traditional lines of responsibility.   Areas of partnering include initiatives that build a school climate that keeps students engaged in the life of the school, create networks of caring adults who will support students both inside and outside school, and support and enrich the academic program of the school. Partnerships among schools and community organizations, higher education, and businesses can:

- Involve business and higher education partners in support of curriculum development, academic enrichment, MCAS remediation, and tutoring programs;
- Create work-based learning experiences that provide students with career and academic development;
- Help students partner with adults on community service-learning projects;
- Provide opportunities for youth to have a voice in the community at large;
- Strengthen networks of caring adults who can provide mentoring, access to work experience, access to postsecondary education opportunities, and access to social services and community programs;
- Coordinate services for students most in need, including those who are in foster care, those who are homeless, and/or those with mental health or physical health issues;
- Address the challenges experienced by court-involved youth and ensure smooth re-entry to school for those who have been placed in state custody;
- Support students with disabilities as they explore opportunities for employment and postsecondary education and training;
- Provide opportunities for parents to connect with the school and continue learning through workshops, adult education programs, technology skill programs, and more;
- Provide alternatives to traditional educational paths, including dual enrollment programs in which high school students can finish a high school diploma while taking community college courses.

In Massachusetts, the Commissioner of the Department of Education co-chairs the Pathways to Success by 21 (P21) initiative and participates in many other inter-agency initiatives, demonstrating a sustained commitment to forming partnerships among schools, communities, state agencies, and other organizations to better meet the needs of students in the Commonwealth.

At both the regional and statewide level, schools, community partners, and P21 partner agencies are working on a variety of efforts that support youth, in ways that directly or indirectly aid dropout prevention and recovery efforts. The projects described below, focusing on strategies 1-8 of the P21 strategic plan, list a few of the state and regional projects that are currently underway in order to give a snapshot of current activity around the state.

Many of these projects – such as helping youth to build workplace skills or using youth voices to create public awareness campaigns – are not "direct" approaches to dropout prevention, but are essential ingredients of the work needed to help youth to feel connected, supported, and engaged in learning.

Strategy #1: Public Awareness (and Youth Voices). With the advent of P21, the Massachusetts partners made a commitment to include **youth voices** in all aspects of planning and implementing improvements to the youth-serving system. With the expectation that more attention will be focused on the dropout issue, it is more essential than ever that youth voice is included in creating public awareness messages and that public awareness messages convey a positive message. The "Ready, Set, Go to College" campaign mentioned at the beginning of this paper provides an example of this youth-focused approach to sharing a public message. Regional projects supported by P21 Implementation Grants provided to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) regions build on the theme of youth voice, as described below.

- The Franklin/Hampshire region has implemented several local projects that exemplify the use of youth voice in the community, thereby strengthening the connections between youth and their communities and schools. In the Franklin/Hampshire region's North Quabbin area, the community will train 15 youth to establish a youth leadership council supported by the North Quabbin Youth Policy board and the local Youth Entrepreneurship program. The Hampshire County area will assist youth in design and launch of first annual Hampshire County Youth Legislative Forum. Also Hampshire County will increase utilization of the www.fhyouth.org website through adding new interactive features including youth worker training resources and calendar of youth events. The project in Ware will create an arts/leadership project for at-risk youth. The project seeks to increase enrollment and attendance rates of participants at Ware High School and in the Ware Adult Basic Education program.

Strategies #2 and #3: Early Identification and Early Intervention. The P21 Initiative includes participation from all state agencies that provides services to at-risk youth and families. There is a growing recognition of the need to coordinate services among schools and social service and family support agencies, especially for youth who are most vulnerable, such as those in foster care or those who are homeless. New partnerships among these agencies and schools are helping school staff to provide assessment and support for these most vulnerable youth.

Strategy #4: Outreach and Support. The theme **of expanding outreach and support for youth** is consistent across all research on dropout prevention and recovery efforts. A key goal of P21 is to remove barriers between agencies and to make it possible to create more effective networks of adults who can support youth inside and outside of schools. Increasing outreach and support for youth is important in dropout prevention and recovery initiatives across the state, with Boston, as the largest city and largest school system, providing an example.

- Large district schools in Boston have been restructured in the past several years to form small schools and small learning communities. These new learning environments are designed to promote "student engagement, positive relationships among adults and students, and a love of learning." According to the Boston Public Schools High School Renewal website (http://highschoolrenewal.org), "National studies have indicated that students who attend small schools enjoy school more, have lower transfer and dropout rates, have closer relationships among students, teachers, and families, and do better academically. In response, the Boston Public Schools (BPS) has made a commitment to creating more small schools and small learning communities in the district as part of an overall effort to dramatically improve teaching and learning."

- At the same time, Boston Public Schools is working with a wide group of community partners specifically on dropout prevention and recovery. The *Youth Transitions Task Force's* citywide strategic plan for addressing the dropout issue: "Too Big to be Seen: The Invisible Dropout Crisis in Boston and America" sets goals for the city. These goals include (1) Developing outreach and referral for dropouts; (2) Increasing the number and variety of alternative education and training options for youth and young adults; and (3) increasing coordination among schools, alternative programs and city agencies.

- As part of the Youth Transitions Task Force, the Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) is piloting outreach to dropouts, in partnership with the Boston Public Schools. Two Outreach and Referral Specialists are reaching out to dropouts to learn why they have left school and what happens when they try to reconnect.

Strategy #5: Increasing Alternative Education and Training Options. Through the Dropout Prevention and Alternative Education Self-Assessment projects described in Part II of this report, school district personnel examined the availability of alternative education options for youth in their communities. Whether programs need to be developed, or whether programs exist but are at capacity, the need for more alternative options was a common theme among these districts. Several of the P21 Implementation grant projects focus on expanding alternative education and training options as well.

- The Boston Public Schools (BPS) and community-based providers in the Boston Youth Service Network (BYSN) are collaborating to increase and coordinate Boston's alternative education and career development options. The BPS is conducting a major longitudinal analysis of off-track students and an evaluation of alternative education programs to inform its long-range planning for programming. BYSN is assessing its special education services and developing a data warehouse to increase program's capacity. Boston's P21 project builds on this work by expanding the capacity of GED and alternative education programs to serve students with learning disabilities. It will also create opportunities for dual enrollment in GED programs and Bunker Hill Community College. Dual enrollment allows students to start earning college credits while completing a high school or GED program.

- In Hampden County, part of the P21 Implementation grant will support the "Anywhere Learning System" (ALS) located at the Career Point Youth Center. Funds will be used to support stipends for a part-time intern overseeing the ALS lab. The project targets dropouts in need of pre-GED and GED skills development. These services will take place while youth are on waiting lists for regular GED classes.

- The Merrimack Valley and Greater Lowell regions are working together to expand use of self-paced computer learning resources in the region's Career Centers. Like the project in Hampden County, this project recognizes that youth can benefit from computer-based learning while waiting to start classroom programs or job training programs.

- P21 Implementation Grant projects in the North Central, Berkshire and Metro South/West regions expand the availability of adult education, GED, career readiness, and job training options for youth.

Strategy #6: Providing Workplace Readiness Assessment for Youth. One area of strong partnering between schools and the community has been the School to Career/Connecting Activities initiative. Through the support of business partners and Connecting Activities staff, students learn about careers, visit companies for a "job shadow" day, participate in employer-paid internships and partake in a whole variety of relevant work-based learning experiences. These experiences help students to build career and academic skills that help them to feel more motivated and connected to school.

This year, Massachusetts has launched a new version of the Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan, a diagnostic, goal-setting, and assessment tool that helps to structure work-based learning experiences.

- Partners in several regions are implementing employability skills workshops and activities that will help youth to build skills for the workplace. For example, in Hampden County, the Workplace Readiness Program provides a series of workshop sessions on job search and workplace readiness skills.

- Nine regions have "Work and Learning" programs that connect MCAS remediation with work-based learning opportunities. For example, Greater Lowell Technical High School sponsors a school year and summer "Work and Learning" program in concert with two community-based organizations, the Greater Lowell Boys and Girls Club and the Mercier Center, where academic instruction is delivered, and the Greater Lowell Workforce Investment Board which brokers relevant employer paid student internships. Public, private, and non-profit employers sponsor internships for participating students. Boston's "Classroom in the Workplace" has students interning with several major Boston employers in health care, financial services and other industries. Students receive 8-10 hours per week of classroom instruction in English Language Arts and math at the worksite while participating in relevant paid internships.

Massachusetts is also one of 29 states participating in the American Diploma Project, a coalition committed to improving America's high schools and to aligning state standards with college and work-ready standards. The American Diploma Project is organized around the view that students need challenging courses that provide the skills demanded by today's global economy, and that students will be more engaged in school and more successful when courses are challenging and relevant to real-world careers and postsecondary education.

According to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (http://21stcenturyskills.org), core academic subjects taught in high school curricula should be infused with 21st century skills, including thinking and learning skills, information and communication technology literacy, life skills (including leadership, ethics, personal productivity, self-directed learning) and twenty-first century content (including global awareness, financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, and health and wellness awareness). Through the American Diploma

Project, School to Career/Connecting Activities and other initiatives, Massachusetts schools are creating ways to infuse curriculum with real-world lessons relevant to the skills needed in postsecondary education and careers.

Strategy #7: Unified Staff Development. National reports indicate a growing interest in creating more unified networks for professional development for youth workers, in order to strengthen the quality of youth programs and improve outcomes. P21 partners have begun offering cross-agency professional development opportunities based on core competencies that are common across youth-serving agencies. This year, P21 has opened up several events as "cross-agency" events. For example, the statewide November 2006 Connecting Activities conference was opened to 300 staff from a wide range of youth-serving agencies to learn about and discuss tools for helping youth to build employability skills. This and other cross-agency events provide awareness building and connections across agencies and support the mission of finding common approaches to professional development, recruitment and retention.

- A model system of unified staff development for youth workers was started in Boston in 2001 (pre-dating the P21 initiative) through AchieveBoston. Since coming together in 2001, AchieveBoston partners have created a web directory (hosted by The Medical Foundation) of youth worker training opportunities across the city, disbursed over five hundred individual vouchers and 92 organizational vouchers to subsidize the cost of training and published the "Blueprint for Action," a working document regarding the formation of a professional development system. AchieveBoston has also led a statewide effort to identify and publish a set of core competencies for after-school program workers and youth workers.   This work provides a foundation for statewide P21 efforts toward unified staff development.

- The North Shore region's P21 Implementation Grant project will provide training to staff in twenty or more local youth-serving agencies on the Search Institute's *40 Developmental Assets*. Agencies will then survey the youth in their programs on the developmental assets and will use survey results to shape programs both for individual youth and for the community overall. The Developmental Assets model presents the concept that youth thrive best when they are provided essential assets, such as opportunities to work alongside caring adults, opportunities to volunteer in the community, and opportunities to participate in after-school activities. Research shows that given these assets, youth are more likely to be successful, and less likely to engage in harmful patterns of behavior, including dropping out of school.

- The Metro North region plans to establish a series of forums for youth service providers in the region. Topics may include: 1) How to connect and increase real training and employment opportunities for at-risk youth; 2) How to overcome the challenge of connecting suburban opportunities and urban youth; 3) How to develop new options for out-of-school youth; and 4) How to overcome the challenges of disengaged in-school youth.

Strategy #8: Addressing Persistent Barriers. This strategy focuses on addressing a broad array of issues that complicate the lives of youth and families across the state. From the barriers posed by a lack of transportation in rural communities to the challenges faced by youth who have been court-involved, there are many different barriers that make it hard to connect youth with the job and training opportunities they need.

Several cr0ss-agency initiatives are working statewide to address barriers to education and employment. For example, the Massachusetts Coalition for Youth Violence Prevention (MCYVP) has brought together a strong coalition of state agencies, educational partners, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based partners to support youth violence prevention initiatives and to foster youth leadership in all aspects of violence prevention. And, for example, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services is working with educational partners to provide easier access to higher education for youth aging out of foster care.

- The Franklin/Hampshire region's P21 Implementation Grant in Franklin County will provide, for the first time, bus transportation for out-of-school youth to the Youth Opportunity Fair and Construction Career Days. Along with the Community Coalition for Teens, they will also conduct a survey of out-of-school youth to look for youth risk/protective factors.

- The Cape and Islands P21 Implementation Grant will provide services for court-involved youth, ages 18-24. Services will include intensive case management aimed at linking offenders with education and training. The goals of the project are to increase the number of offenders using the existing programs and enrolling in ABE, GED, or postsecondary classes and to reduce the number of individuals who re-offend.

- The South Coastal region's project serves youth who are unable to access education services due to external barriers, specifically childcare and transportation. Transportation and on-site child care services will be matched with intensive case management services for participants, so that youth can participate in GED programs, job training, and other services.

- The Greater New Bedford P21 Implementation Grant focuses on "bridging" services to get at-risk youth ready to be involved in adult education, job training or other programs. The region will hire a coordinator who will act as a case manager between the P21 partners, especially the Department of Social Services, the Department of Youth Services, the Department of Mental Health and other agencies. The coordinator will work with case managers of other agencies to coordinate referrals and to make program slots and other resources and supports available to these youth as needed.

These project descriptions provide just a few examples of what is possible and include a small sampling of activity across the state. For more examples of successful programs and partnerships, you may view the materials from the March 5, 2007 **Graduation Rate Summit: The Power of Community Partnerships** online at http://p21.us.

Conclusion

Several themes emerge from this look at the issue of raising graduation rates.

- **Importance of Education**. The importance of education in today's labor market is clear. Earnings for high school dropouts are much lower than for those with high school diplomas or college education, and unemployment rates are higher. The differences have become greater in recent years: the Census Bureau reports that the ratio of earnings of high school dropouts to earnings of high school graduates has dropped from 90 percent in 1975 to 70 percent in 1999.   Research shows that dropouts are well aware of the benefits of education, and that many return to school to seek GEDs and postsecondary credentials.

- **A Statewide Issue**. The data shows that there are dropouts in every region in Massachusetts and that the dropout issue is not confined to any one region or one type of community.   Because there are so many factors related to dropping out of school, there is no single profile of a "typical" dropout.

- **Experiences Leading to Dropping Out of School**. The decision to leave school is not made in a single moment, but is usually influenced by experiences in middle school and early in high school. Dropouts have often had a history of academic problems, discipline problems, or family or personal challenges. A pattern of poor attendance often precedes dropping out.

- **School-Based Factors**. School climate can make a difference. Dropout rates are lowest in schools with high attendance rates, low rates of out-of-school suspensions, and high numbers of graduates going on to postsecondary education.   These correlations suggest that a positive school climate, engaging learning opportunities, high expectations, positive approaches to discipline, and access to postsecondary opportunities can make a difference in reducing school dropout rates.

- **External Factors.** Factors that are external to school can influence a student to drop out of school. Effective collaboration among schools and youth-serving organizations can help to support youth who are facing family and personal crises, who are involved with foster care system, who are juvenile offenders, who are homeless, or who are experiencing physical health or mental health issues.

- **Importance of Community Partnership**. This report has focused on many of the projects sponsored by the "Pathways for Success by 21" (P21) initiative, as well as many other partnerships and projects. Whether building on existing programs or creating new partnerships, *collaboration* among schools, communities, state agencies, businesses and higher education to address the dropout issue and to support youth is essential.

Massachusetts partners have chosen to pursue a broad approach to supporting youth to complete high school, to be supported by and engaged in their communities, to pursue postsecondary options, and to realize their personal goals. The vision of the P21 partners is that young people will be connected to and supported by their schools and communities and excited by and engaged in the many diverse learning opportunities offered, both in school and outside of school. Through this vision, young people will not just graduate from high school, but will be well-prepared for postsecondary education and their future careers.

APPENDIX
Appendix Figure 1
Detailed Cohort 2006 Graduation Rate Data

$$\text{Graduation Rate} = \frac{\text{\# of students in cohort (denominator) who graduate in 4 years or less}}{[\text{\# of 1st time entering 9th graders in 2002-03}] - \text{transfers out/deaths} + \text{transfers in}}$$

	Graduates		Non-Graduates				
	Cohort #	4-Year Rate	Still in School	Non-Graduate Completer	GED	Dropped Out	Expelled
Total	74,380	79.9%	6.4%	1.0%	0.8%	11.7%	0.2%
Male	37,778	76.4%	7.9%	1.0%	0.8%	13.6%	0.3%
Female	36,602	83.5%	4.8%	1.0%	0.7%	9.8%	0.1%
Limited Eng. Prof.	4,652	54.5%	14.7%	4.6%	0.3%	25.6%	0.2%
Special Education	13,814	61.1%	16.1%	2.3%	0.5%	19.5%	0.3%
Low-Income	24,305	62.3%	12.0%	2.1%	1.2%	22.0%	0.3%
African-American	6,646	64.4%	13.5%	2.5%	1.1%	18.0%	0.4%
Asian	3,240	83.9%	6.7%	0.6%	0.6%	8.0%	0.1%
Hispanic	8,393	56.9%	12.0%	3.0%	1.2%	26.5%	0.3%
Native American	212	69.8%	8.5%	2.8%	0.0%	17.5%	1.4%
White	55,074	85.1%	4.6%	0.5%	0.7%	8.9%	0.2%
Pacific Islander	109	50.5%	23.9%	1.8%	0.0%	23.9%	0.0%
Multi race, Non-Hisp.	706	86.1%	5.5%	1.7%	0.3%	6.4%	0.0%
Urban	22,242	62.3%	11.9%	2.2%	1.5%	21.8%	0.3%

Notes:
- In the reporting of aggregate results, students are included in the first column (from left to right) for which they qualify. For example, students who dropped out or were expelled, but earned a GED, are included in the GED category. Students who have earned a Certificate of Attainment but are still enrolled in school are included in the "Still in School" column. "Non-Graduate Completer" includes 1) students who earned a certificate of attainment, 2) students who met local graduation requirements but the district does not offer certificates of attainment, and 3) students with special needs who reached the maximum age (22) but did not graduate.
- Students that earn a GED or Certificate of Attainment are not counted as graduates.
- The Limited English Proficient, Special Education, and Low Income groups include all students that were reported in those categories at least once in high school. Students can be counted in more than one group.
- The cohort count is as of the end of the 2005-06 school year. The status (e.g. graduate, enrolled) is updated as of October 1, 2006.
- Results based on data submitted to the Department of Education by school districts through the Department's Student Information Management System.

2006 Graduation Rates, by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Region

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Region	Cohort	Graduated	Still in School	Non-Graduate Completer	Dropped Out	GED	Permanently Excluded
Berkshire	1,550	80.1%	5.3%	0.1%	13.8%	0.6%	0.0%
Boston	4,970	59.4%	16.9%	1.6%	19.8%	1.7%	0.7%
Bristol	3,980	75.4%	4.9%	1.1%	18.0%	0.2%	0.4%
Cape and Islands	2,940	84.0%	4.5%	0.4%	10.4%	0.6%	0.1%
Central Massachusetts	6,826	82.0%	5.3%	1.6%	9.7%	1.2%	0.2%
Franklin / Hampshire	2,748	78.6%	6.8%	0.5%	13.1%	0.6%	0.4%
Greater Lowell	3,755	84.1%	5.5%	0.9%	7.6%	1.4%	0.7%
Hampden	5,854	68.6%	7.6%	2.1%	20.4%	1.1%	0.2%
Merrimack Valley	4,312	74.5%	7.2%	0.8%	15.7%	1.4%	0.4%
Metro North	6,800	82.1%	6.4%	0.7%	10.2%	0.4%	0.2%
Metro South (Brockton)	3,252	79.7%	5.3%	0.7%	12.5%	1.4%	0.2%
Metro South/West	10,524	91.4%	3.8%	0.4%	3.9%	0.4%	0.1%
New Bedford	2,683	75.4%	6.7%	1.3%	15.8%	0.7%	0.1%
North Shore	4,801	79.3%	7.0%	1.5%	11.1%	0.9%	0.1%
North Central	3,233	80.8%	5.1%	0.9%	12.4%	0.5%	0.2%
South Coastal	6,235	86.3%	4.5%	0.5%	8.1%	0.4%	0.1%
Statewide Total	74,380	79.9%	6.4%	1.0%	11.7%	0.8%	0.2%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, based on analysis of 2006 graduation rate data.

2004-2005 Dropout Profile by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Region

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Region	Number of Enrolled Students	Number of Dropouts	Annual Dropout Rate	Percent of Statewide Dropouts
Berkshire	6,290	266	4.2%	2.5%
Boston	19,960	1,475	7.4%	13.7%
Bristol	15,622	798	5.1%	7.4%
Cape and Islands	11,589	371	3.2%	3.4%
Central Massachusetts	27,437	877	3.2%	8.1%
Franklin / Hampshire	10,665	369	3.5%	3.4%
Greater Lowell	15,240	454	3.0%	4.2%
Hampden	23,083	1,456	6.3%	13.5%
Merrimack Valley	16,388	751	4.6%	7.0%
Metro North	26,654	824	3.1%	7.6%
Metro South (Brockton)	12,583	516	4.1%	4.8%
Metro South/West	42,263	475	1.1%	4.4%
New Bedford	10,466	561	5.4%	5.2%
North Shore	18,525	589	3.2%	5.5%
North Central	12,447	427	3.4%	4.0%
South Coastal	24,523	562	2.3%	5.2%
Statewide Total	293,399	11,145	3.8%	100.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, based on analysis of dropout data, School Year 2004-2005.

Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Regions

The 1998 Workforce Investment Act (WIA) created a system of Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) that bring together private sector and public sector leadership to guide workforce development in a region. Massachusetts has sixteen WIA regions, each with a board that guides the One-Stop Career Centers, WIA Job Training for youth and adults, School to Career Connecting Activities, and other employment and training activities in the region. The sixteen regions, with some of the communities that are part of each region, are the following.

Berkshire
Pittsfield, North Adams

Boston
Boston

Bristol
Fall River, Attleboro, Taunton

Cape and Islands
Cape Cod, Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard

Central Massachusetts
Worcester, Blackstone Valley, Southern Worcester County

Franklin / Hampshire
Greenfield, Amherst, Northampton, Ware, Athol

Greater Lowell
Lowell

Greater New Bedford
New Bedford

Hampden
Springfield Holyoke, Chicopee, Westfield, Palmer

Merrimack
Lawrence, Haverhill, Newburyport

Metro North
Cambridge, Woburn, Chelsea, Revere, Wakefield, Medford

Metro South (Brockton)
Brockton

Metro South/West
Framingham, Marlboro

North Central
Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster

North Shore
Lynn, Salem, Gloucester

South Coastal
Quincy, Plymouth

Appendix Figure 5
Educational Attainment of U.S. Population Age 25 and Over, U.S. and Massachusetts, 2005

	Less than H.S.	High school graduate	Some college no degree	Assoc. degree	Bach. Degree	Master's degree	Prof-essional degree	Doctoral degree
U.S.	14.8%	32.2%	16.8%	8.6%	18.1%	6.8%	1.5%	1.2%
Mass.	12.0%	27.4%	16.0%	7.7%	21.1%	15.7% (Masters or above)		

Educational Attainment of the U.S. Population, Age 25 and Over, 2005
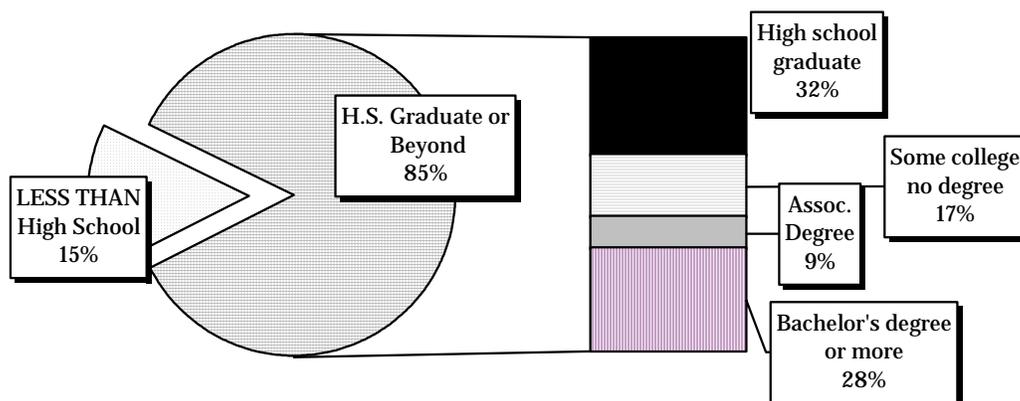
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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ONLINE RESOURCES FROM THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Home Page	*Massachusetts Department of Education:* http://www.doe.mass.edu
Statistical Data	*School/District Profiles (main page):* http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/
	Indicators (Including dropout rate): http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/indicators.aspx
	Public School Enrollment: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/enrollmentbygrade.aspx
	Plans of High School Graduates: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/plansofhsgrads.aspx
	Graduation Rates: http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/gradrates/06state.html
Reports Cited	"High School Dropouts 2004-05, Massachusetts Public Schools"
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	Available at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/dropout/
	"Dropouts in Massachusetts Public Schools: District Survey Results, April 2006" Available at: http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/dropout/06survey.doc
	"Youth Voices - How High Schools can Respond to the Needs of Students and Help Prevent Dropouts: Findings from Youth Focus Groups, February 2007"
Other Resources	Student Support, Career and Education Services: http://www.doe.mass.edu/ssce
	Secondary School Improvement/High School Reform: http://www.doe.mass.edu/hsreform/
	Connecting Activities: http://www.doe.mass.edu/connect

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American Diploma Project (Achieve, Inc.): http://achieve.org

Boston Public Schools High School Renewal: http://www.highschoolrenewal.org

Developmental Assets (used in North Shore project): http://search-institute.org

Franklin/Hampshire Youth: http://www.fhyouth.org

Hampden County Workplace Readiness Modules: http://p21.us/resources.asp

Partnership for 21st Century Skills: http://21stcenturyskills.org

Ready, Set, Go to College: http://readysetgotocollege.com

Shared Youth Vision: http://www.doleta.gov/ryf/

COMMONWEALTH CORPORATION – "YOUTH UPDATE"

Current Issues of "Youth Update" Newsletter: http://commcorp.org/youth/newsletters.html

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS BY 21 WEBSITE

http://P21.us