

Questions for Future Leaders mayoral candidates forum August 1, 2013

1. Without further education and training, high school dropouts and unemployed high school graduates will face a lifetime of low employment prospects and bouts of poverty. There are very few career pathways through education, employment and vocational training for this population.

What goals, policies, and resources will you consider to address the needs of the approximately 12,000 young men and women who fit this profile in Boston? How will you organize and motivate your administration to address this crisis?

2. Over the past six years, Boston has reduced the number of students who drop out annually from 1,936 to 1,219 – a 37% reduction – by opening a Re-Engagement Center for returning dropouts and by providing teacher-supervised on-line credit recovery. Despite the overall reduction, this annual dropout number has moved back up by 100 students over the past two years. Currently, there are long waiting lists for successful alternative education programs and last year hundreds of students could not be placed through the Re-Engagement Center.

What will you do to decrease the number of students who drop out of school annually and to increase the number of dropouts who return to school successfully?

3. The Boston public school system has made significant progress on MCAS scores and graduation rates, yet Black and Latino proficiency rates still trail White and Asian rates by over 20 percentage points. An even greater gap persists for English Language Learners.

What steps will you take to address student engagement, and achievement for Black and Latino youth, particularly young men?

4. In November of 2008, Mayor Menino set a goal of doubling the college graduation rate for Boston public school graduates. Since then, the six-year completion rate for BPS graduates enrolling in college has risen from 39% to 49% - due in large part to the combined efforts of the partners within the Success Boston initiative.

What is your strategy for increasing college graduation rates, and how do you see disconnected young adults in the community fitting into that strategy?

In preparing to answer the questions above, candidates were asked to consider the following:

- About one-fourth of young people who drop out of school cite parenting as a leading reason. Can you speak to what your approach would be to keep parenting students in school and to help them graduate?

- Many struggling students and disconnected youth are hampered in their pursuit of education and employment success by a lack of stable housing. How would you create short- and long-term housing options for homeless youth pursuing education, training or employment options?
- If elected Mayor of Boston, what contribution will you make to bring greater racial equity to our city's neighborhoods, specifically increasing opportunities for youth of color, to ensure that they stay in the classroom and out of the courtroom?