

METCO MERITS MORE

September 14, 2011

TODAY'S DISCUSSION

TOPICS WE'LL COVER:

- What is METCO?
- Historical Overview
- Structure and Funding
- Demographics and the Broader Context of Educational Opportunity in Massachusetts
- Performance of METCO Students
- Recommendations

TODAY'S GOAL:

SITUATE METCO IN THE COMMONWEALTH'S CURRENT

EDUCATION REFORM DISCOURSE

- METCO has been largely left out of public discourse and policy discussions related to education reform in the state
- As policymakers pay positive attention to other choice-based measures such as charter schools, METCO should receive at least equal attention and adequate funding
- Educational leaders should give serious, careful attention to expanding METCO in the future so that it might provide more families meaningful educational choices in a context of well-documented, long-standing, and vast regional inequalities



WHAT IS METCO?

(Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity)

- Massachusetts' METCO program is one of eight voluntary interdistrict school desegregation programs in the U.S. and the second longest-running program of its kind
- METCO enables about 3,300 students who live in Boston and Springfield to attend opportunity-rich suburban schools
- Since the vast majority of the students in METCO are either African American or Latino and most suburban districts remain overwhelmingly white, METCO fulfills two goals: it creates a degree of racial and ethnic diversity and provides students who'd otherwise attend challenged school districts the opportunity to attend schools with reputations for rigor and excellence

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

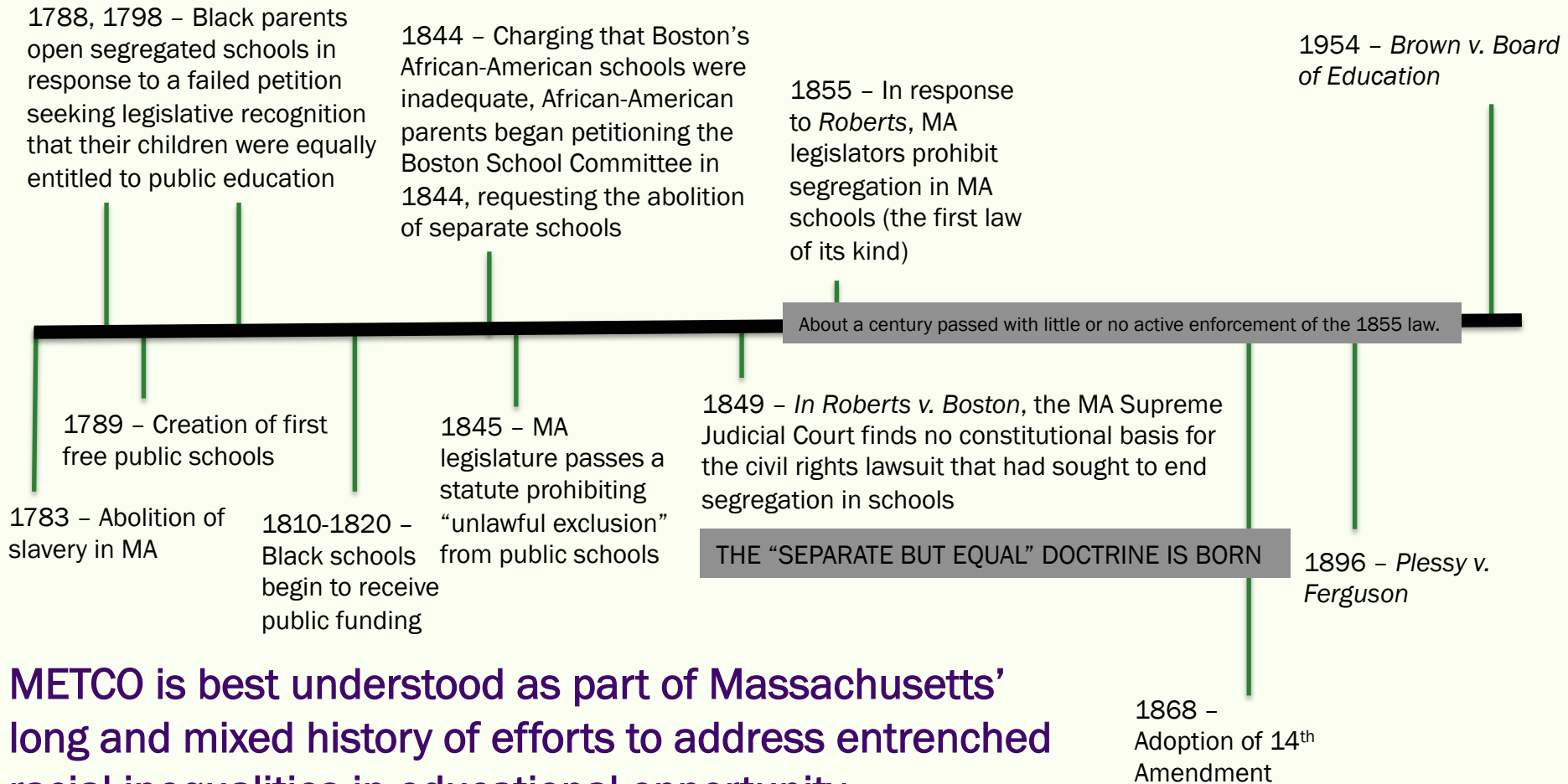
- Nearly a half century ago, a group of African- American parents took action to remedy educational inequality in Boston, laying the groundwork for what would later become METCO
- In the mid-1960s the “Operation Exodus” movement began with mothers and fathers organizing to transport their children from overcrowded, predominantly African- American schools to under-used and better-resourced city schools
- In its first official year, 1966, the Carnegie Foundation funded the program, enabling about 220 African- American children to attend suburban schools in Arlington, Braintree, Brookline, Lexington, Lincoln, Newton, and Wellesley
- Soon afterward, the state began paying for METCO by providing annual grants to a growing number of suburban districts

Every week for the past month, the parents of 327 Roxbury children have been shelling out \$1,260 to get their kids to school in the morning. They are paying for school buses to carry their children out of overcrowded heavily Negro schools, threatened this fall with double sessions, to predominantly white schools outside of Roxbury.

It may be a measure of the frustration in the Boston civil rights movement that Negro parents have finally decided to bypass the conventional forms of protest and do the only thing that can get their children into decent schools. For the last two years de facto segregation has been a focus of the Hub's civil rights activity. There have been two school boycotts, one in 1963 and another in 1964, but the School Committee has refused to recognize the issue.

Finally, the parents got tired of waiting and, just as the School Committee won't recognize their problem, they seem to have resolved not to recognize the School Committee's own authority. They have simply told the School Committee where to get off.

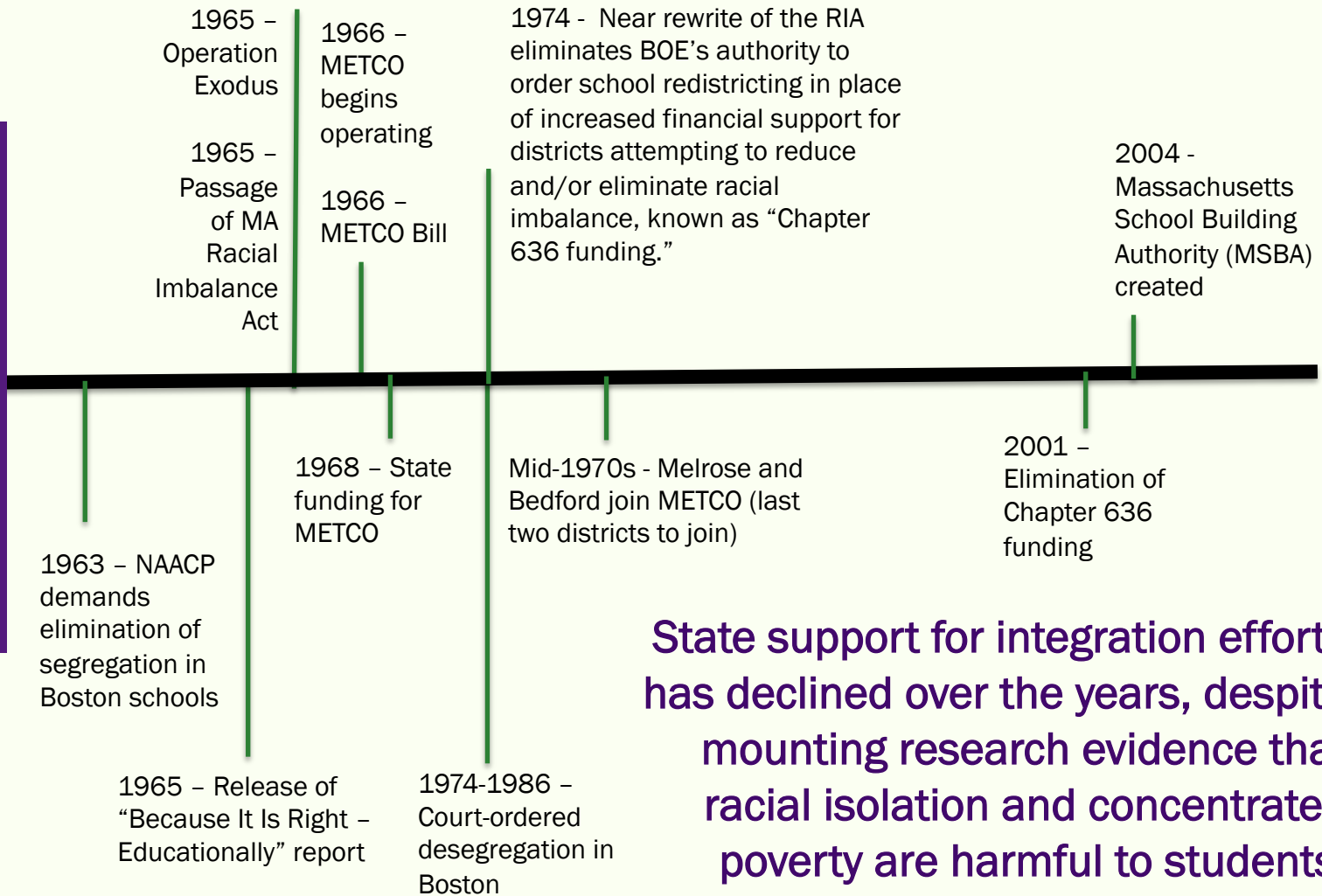
Their defiance didn't develop over-night. It took a history of deliberate inaction and stubbornness to move these mothers. That history illustrates the messy consequences of political exploitation of racial tensions.



METCO is best understood as part of Massachusetts' long and mixed history of efforts to address entrenched racial inequalities in educational opportunity.

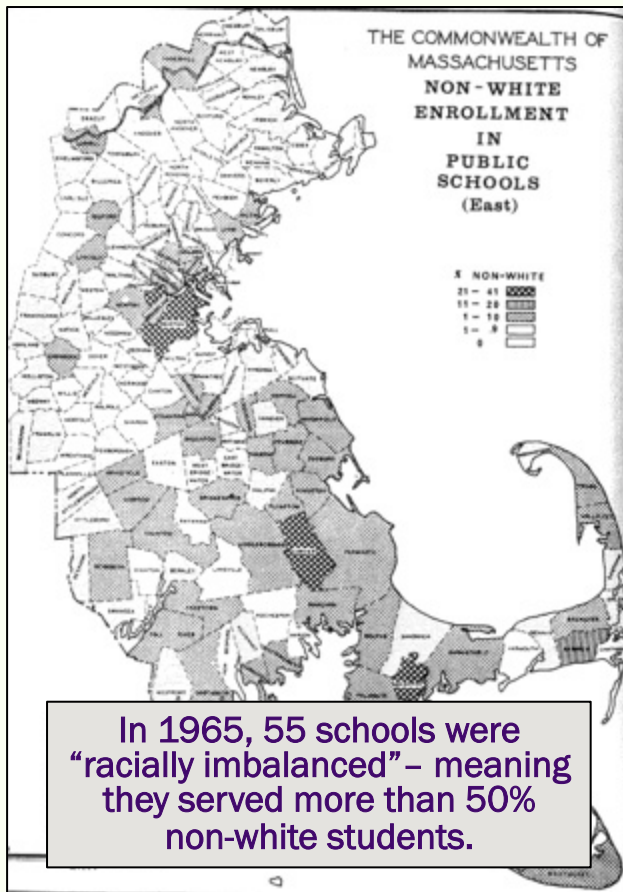
THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN MASSACHUSETTS

Unaddressed educational inequalities in Boston again lead black parents to protest about low school quality and lack of access to more successful, better-resourced schools.



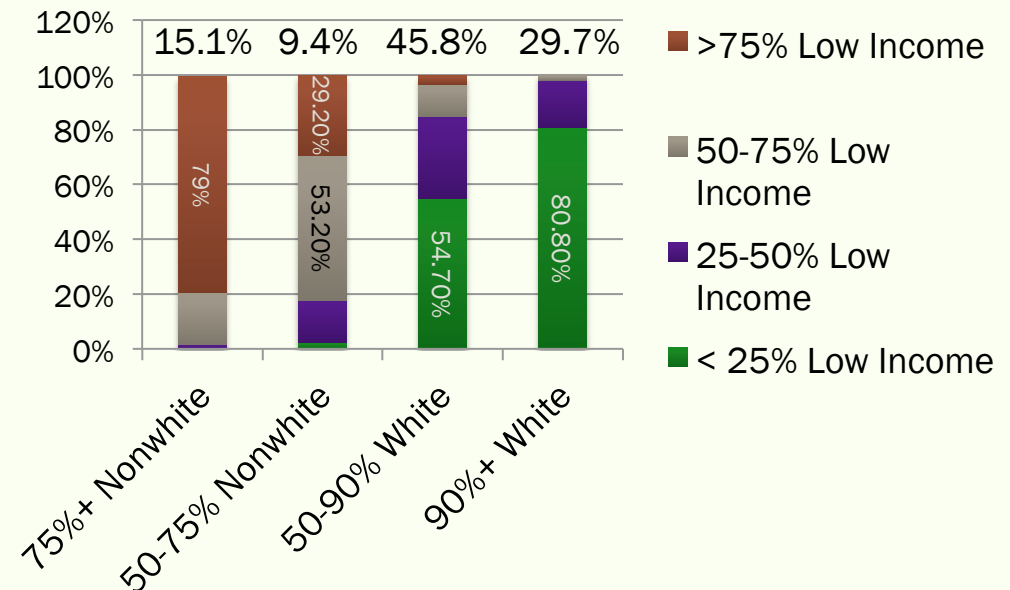
State support for integration efforts has declined over the years, despite mounting research evidence that racial isolation and concentrated poverty are harmful to students.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN MASSACHUSETTS



“Because It Is Right – Educationally” (1965)

Schools and school districts in Massachusetts continue to be racially and economically isolated. Nationally, most metropolitan segregation exists between (not within) districts (Clotfelter 2004).

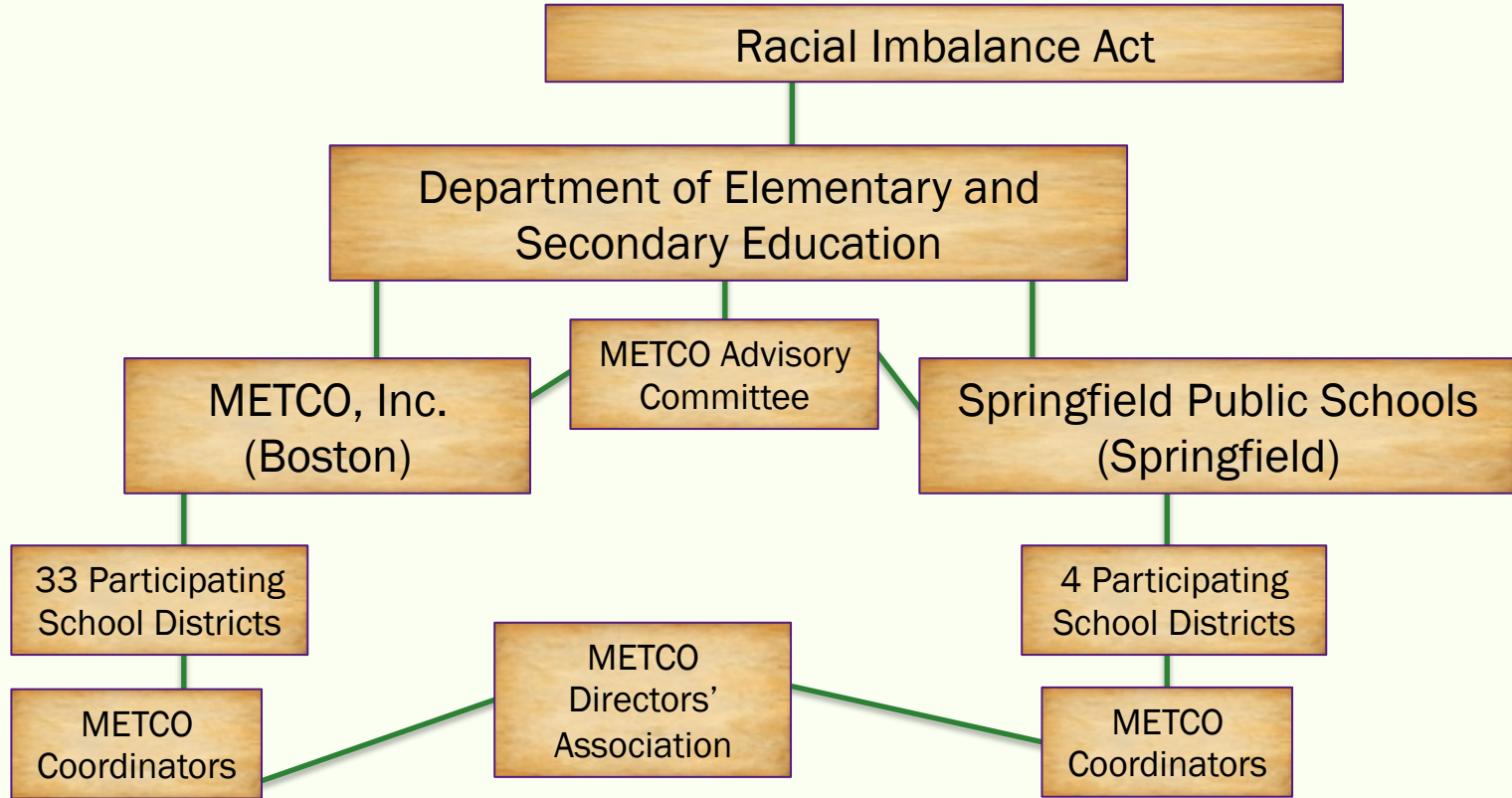


Massachusetts Public Schools, Including Charters (2010-11)

RACIAL ISOLATION IN MASSACHUSETTS, THEN AND NOW

STRUCTURE AND FUNDING OF METCO

METCO'S STRUCTURE

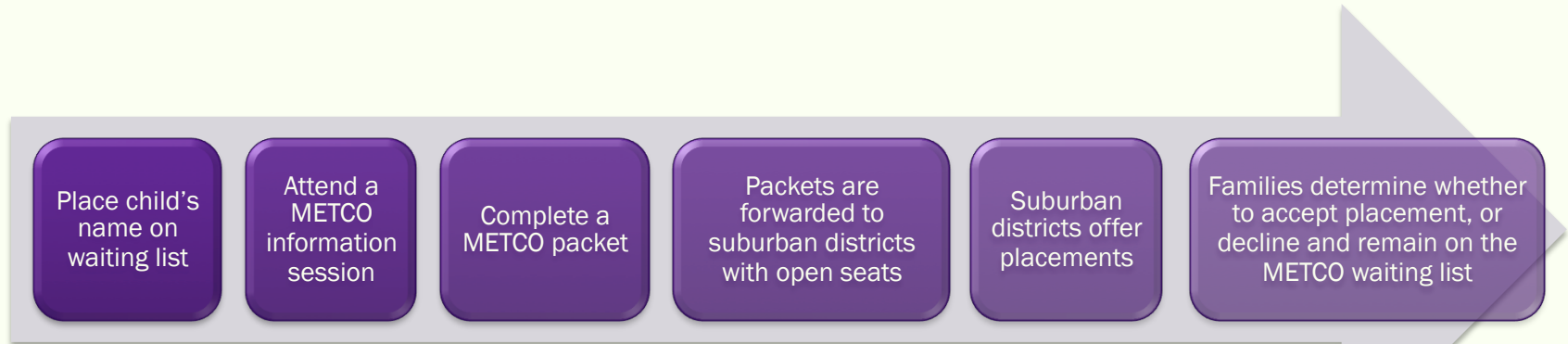


FUNDING OF METCO

1	Transportation	Amount of reimbursement is determined on a district-by-district basis. The total FY2011 transportation grant is \$6M, an average of about \$1,800 per student.
2	METCO Grant	In FY2011, the per-pupil METCO grant is \$3,100.
3	Chapter 70 Aid (all MA students)	METCO receiving districts count METCO students as part of their official enrollment, thus districts receive Chapter 70 aid for METCO students. The sizes of Chapter 70 allocations vary widely, depending upon a range of variables (e.g. enrollment, share of low-income students and/or students with special needs, and the ability of a community to raise a state-determined adequate amount of education funding through local taxes).

In FY 2011, total funding for METCO was about \$16.5 million, which represents a reduction from recent years. From 2005-2011, funding has ranged from 15.5 million (2005) to a high of 20.2 million (2008).

ADMISSIONS AND PLACEMENT PROCESS (BOSTON)



Districts prefer to enroll students in the earliest grades. Thus, a student's chance of being placed in METCO decreases considerably after the second grade.

About 2,100 students are currently on waiting lists for grades K through 2, according to METCO officials.

According to METCO officials, the program places about 350-400 students annually.

SPRINGFIELD

In Springfield, the application process is different. There, families apply to the METCO program through the Springfield Public Schools. Participants are selected through a random lottery.

There are no entrance examinations or other requirements for entering METCO. Students with special education needs are permitted to enroll in the METCO program, as are students who have limited English proficiency (LEP).

WHO PARTICIPATES IN METCO?

METCO Student Demographics and the Broader Context of Educational Opportunity in Massachusetts

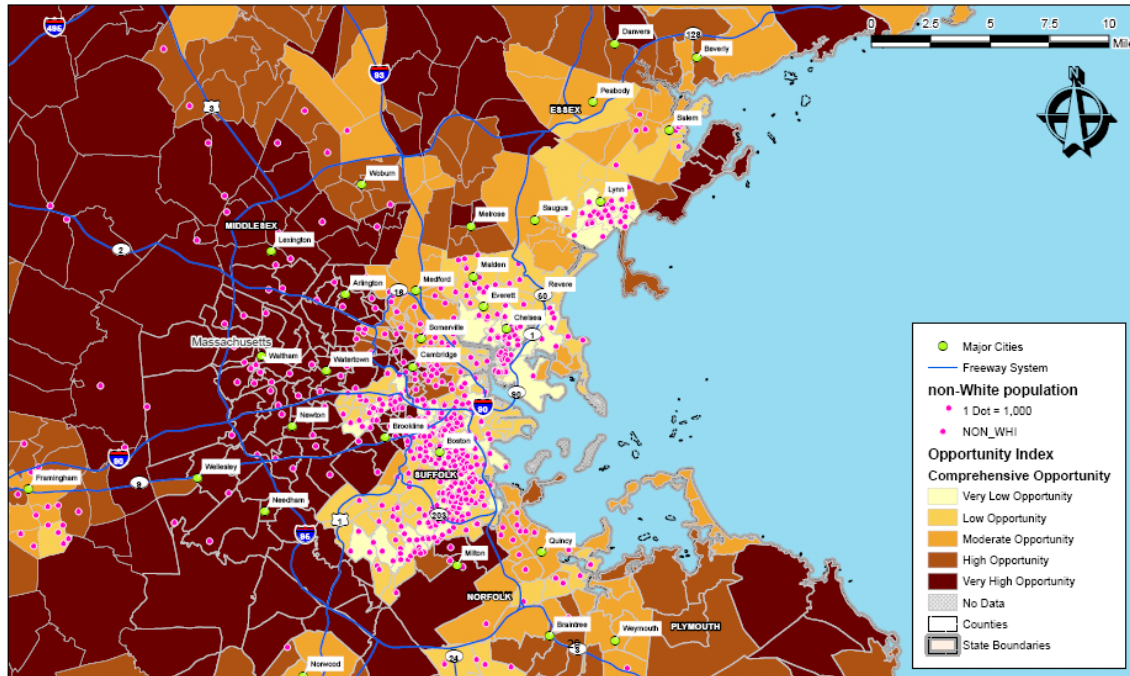
- We found that the demographic data provided challenges the assumption that METCO students represent an elite educational group
- 1 in 2 METCO students come from low-income families and 1 in 4 METCO students have special educational needs
- It is crucial to acknowledge that demographic realities place enormous burdens upon urban educators
- For example, Boston and Springfield educate far higher shares of students with limited English proficiency, a challenge that METCO districts do not confront in nearly the same concentrations

METCO WITHIN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF OPPORTUNITY

Map 3A: Comprehensive Opportunity Map with non-White population overlay
GREATER BOSTON

This map displays the spatial pattern of distribution of opportunity based on Education, Economic & Mobility, and Housing & Neighborhood indicators overlaid with non-White population.

Source: US Census 2000; County Business Pattern; ESRI; EPA; Massachusetts Department of Education; MA State Police Date: July 17, 2008



diversitydata.org 2010 Report		Rank
Boston	Latino Students	4 th
	Black Students	28 th
Springfield	Latino Students	2 nd
	Black Students	9 th

School level poverty rate norms	Poverty rate comparison
65% students in poverty	3.8x rate of white students
61% students in poverty	3.5x rate of white students

METRO BOSTON

Districts in the Boston metropolitan region are some of the most fragmented in the country, with approximately one school district per 3,500 students.

METCO is the only state-funded program explicitly designed to reduce racial and economic isolation in the Commonwealth's schools.

RECEIVING DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS

	% White	% Black	% Latino	% Asian	% Multi-Race	% Low Income	# of METCO Students	# of Students in District
BOSTON	13.1	36.5	39.6	8.6	1.8	75.6	n/a	55,371
SPRINGFIELD	14.7	22.3	56.7	2.2	4.1	81.4	n/a	25,141
BROOKLINE	59.3	7.4	9.1	18	6.1	11.6	302	6,472
LEXINGTON	62.2	4.5	3.4	26.2	3.6	4.8	255	6,182
LINCOLN	65.3	12.1	9.3	6.4	6	11	91	1,050
NEWTON	68.8	5.1	6.3	14.7	5	10.3	422	11,765
BEDFORD	72.8	8.5	4.2	10.7	2.9	8.1	89	2,429
SHARON	73.8	5.5	3	14.9	2.7	6.7	67	3,426
BELMONT	73.9	3.8	4	13.6	4.6	7.7	112	3,974
WESTON	76.7	6.2	3.1	10	3.9	4.2	167	2,388
WAYLAND	76.8	4.5	3.7	11.9	3.1	5.1	133	2,738
ARLINGTON	78.5	3.7	5.2	9.5	2.9	10.8	88	4,713
CONCORD	80.7	5.6	4.2	6.2	3.1	5.9	108	1,894
BRAINTREE	81.7	4	3.9	9.2	1	13.6	37	5,377
WELLESLEY	81.8	3.8	3.8	7.2	3.2	4.3	159	4,868
CONCORD CARLISLE	83.5	5.2	3.1	5.9	2.2	3.9	74	1,245
NEEDHAM	84.4	3.1	3.2	6.3	2.8	5.7	147	5,311
LINCOLN SUDBURY	85.9	5.4	2.1	4.2	2.4	4.4	91	1,615
DOVER	86.5	3.1	1.4	7.7	1	2.4	13	572
MELROSE	86.9	4.7	2.5	3.1	2.3	12.7	121	3,767
NATICK	87.2	2.4	2.7	4.9	2.6	8.2	50	4,734
LONGMEADOW	88.1	2.8	2.1	5.9	1.1	3.4	40	3,102
SUDBURY	88.2	2.1	1.9	4.7	3	3.7	64	3,164
HAMPDEN WILBRAHAM	88.9	3	3.4	2.8	1.6	10	38	3,600
WESTWOOD	88.9	2.4	1.9	6.1	0.7	4.1	43	3,100
WALPOLE	89.6	3.8	3.1	2.7	0.7	9.5	55	3,954
SHERBORN	90	2	0.7	2.9	4.4	2.9	8	450
SWAMPSCOTT	90.4	3.2	3.5	1.8	0.8	9	69	2,256
FOXBOROUGH	90.8	3	2	2.9	0.5	10.5	45	2,867
LYNNFIELD	90.8	1.6	2.7	3.6	1.1	4.7	34	2,353
EAST LONGMEADOW	91	3.1	1.9	3.6	0.2	9.6	48	2,850
READING	91.7	1.8	1.4	3.8	1.1	4.6	67	4,392
DOVER SHERBORN	91.8	1.7	1.4	4.3	0.6	1.7	17	1,150
MARBLEHEAD	92	2.7	3	1.5	0.8	7.6	78	3,232
WAKEFIELD	92.5	1.9	2	2.3	1	12.9	42	3,360
HINGHAM	92.6	1.3	1.8	1.5	2.7	3.9	37	4,058
SOUTHWICK TOLLAND	93.4	2	2.5	0.8	1	14.8	20	1,797
COHASSET	94.3	3.2	0.7	1.3	0.3	1.8	47	1,496
SCITUATE	94.9	2.2	0.7	0.8	1.3	5.7	58	3,278

Boston	Black	Latino	Asian	White	Low Income
2006-2007	40.9	35.2	8.5	13.5	72.7
2007-2008	39.3	36.7	8.5	13.4	71.4
2008-2009	37.9	38.1	8.5	13.3	74.3
2009-2010	36.5	39.6	8.6	13.1	75.6
2010-2011	35.5	40.9	8.4	12.9	74.4

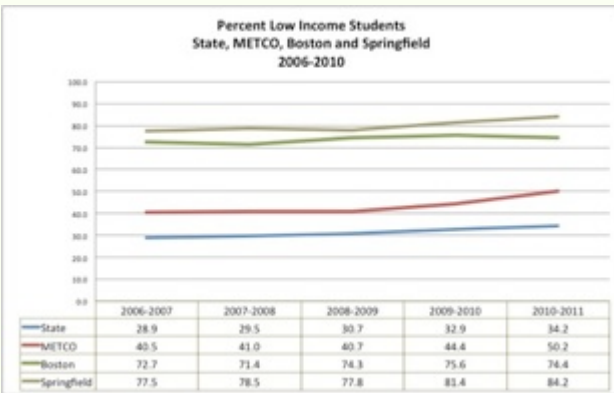
Springfield	Black	Latino	Asian	White	Low Income
2006-2007	25.5	49.9	2.1	18.3	77.5
2007-2008	22	57	2	15	78.5
2008-2009	23.2	54.8	2.2	15.7	77.8
2009-2010	22.3	56.7	2.2	14.7	81.4
2010-2011	21.4	58.3	2.2	14.2	84.2

- The two METCO sending districts have racial, ethnic and SES profiles that differ markedly from most of their suburban neighbors (and the Commonwealth as a whole)
- Currently, 13 of the 37 METCO receiving districts are more than 90 percent White, even with the addition of METCO students
- In several districts, METCO students make up nearly the entire Black and Latino school enrollment
- The highest poverty rate in a receiving district is 14.8 percent

Even with the addition of METCO students, the vast majority of the student enrollment in participating suburban districts remains overwhelmingly White.

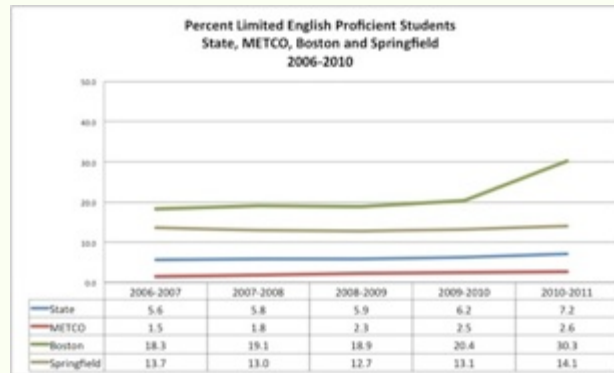
In 2010-2011, the Commonwealth's public schools were, on average, 68 percent White, 15.4 percent Latino, 8.2 percent Black and 5.5 percent Asian.

METCO STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



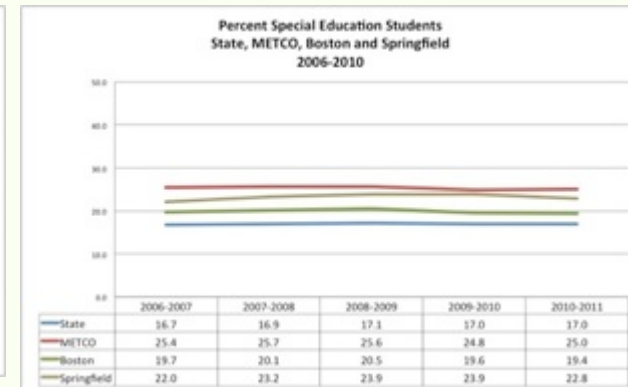
INCOME

- In 2010, more than 50 percent of METCO students came from families that qualified for free or reduced lunch (FRL)
- The share of low-income METCO students qualifying for FRL has increased slightly since 2006
- The share of low-income students is far higher in Boston and Springfield – currently 74.4 and 84.2, respectively



ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

- In 2010, less than 3 percent of METCO students have limited English proficiency
- In contrast, about 30 percent of students in Boston and 14 percent in Springfield had limited proficiency in English



SPECIAL EDUCATION

A higher share of METCO students are categorized as having “Special Education” needs (25 percent in 2010) than the share of students so designated in Boston (19.4 percent in 2010) and Springfield (22.8 percent in 2010).

There are substantial differences in income levels and English language proficiency between the METCO population and the general student population in Springfield and Boston. Students in the urban schools are more likely to come from low-income families and to be English language learners. However, neither could METCO students be categorized as an elite group, as some detractors have charged.

HOW DO METCO STUDENTS PERFORM?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- In general, METCO students are performing at levels close to the state average by the time they are in 10th grade
- In general, gaps in achievement between METCO students and their peers in Boston and Springfield emerge early
- Graduation rates for METCO students are higher than the state average

WHAT THESE FINDINGS DO, AND DO NOT, DEMONSTRATE

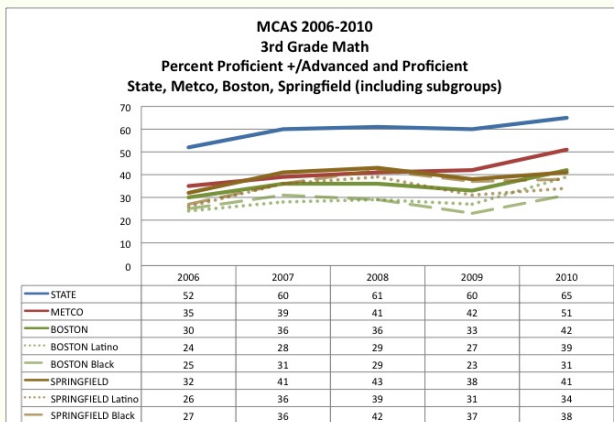
- While the data presented are encouraging signs for METCO, it is also extremely important to recognize the limitations of this data
- Because of “self-selection” bias, the high relative performance of METCO students revealed here cannot be fairly attributed to the METCO program itself
 - The very qualities that plausibly cause METCO students and their families to choose the program – say, perseverance, foresight, planning, drive, ambition – might themselves be factors contributing to higher relative academic performance
 - In other words, it is plausible that METCO students would be performing at similar levels if they had remained in the Boston or Springfield schools
- That said, this data does paint a clear picture of METCO students’ relative academic success in what are typically highly competitive college-preparatory academic environments

The comparably lower scores registered by students in Boston and Springfield’s public schools are likely in large part due to immense challenges beyond the control of educators. Suburban educators simply do not face such challenges in concentration, which is precisely one reason why we recommend that more students be given the chance to attend less overwhelmed public schools of the sort found not far from the city line.

This data paints a clear picture of METCO students’ relative academic success in what are typically highly competitive college-preparatory academic environments.

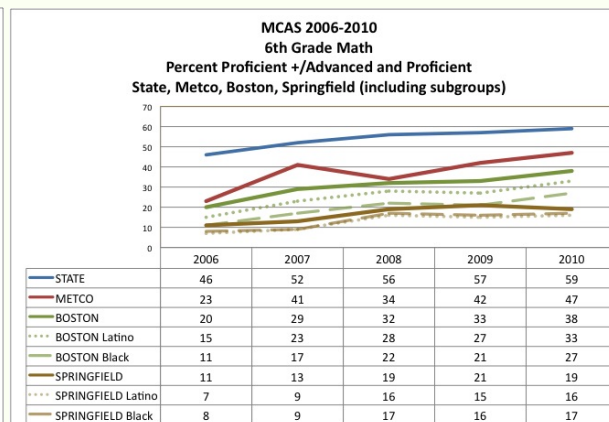
MATH PERFORMANCE (MCAS)

- The share of METCO students scoring Advanced and/or Proficient on MCAS has fluctuated
- The gap between state average performance and METCO performance is largest in grade 3 (in 2010 a difference of 14 percent points) but, in most years, tends to narrow by grades 6 and 10



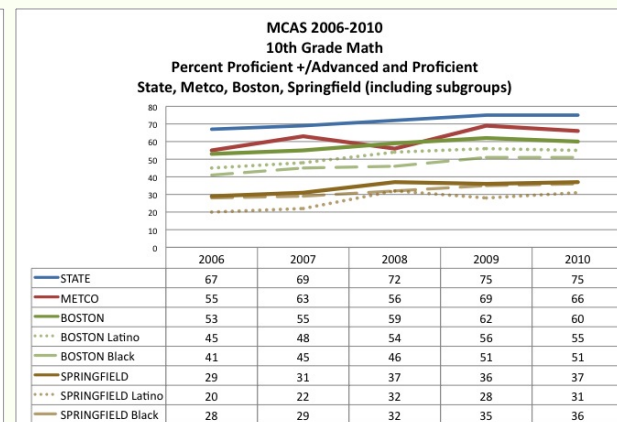
3rd Grade

- In 2007 and 2008, Springfield students overall and Springfield's Latino students either slightly outperformed or matched METCO students share scoring Advanced and/or Proficient on the MCAS
- In 2009 and 2010, with METCO students outperforming all other groups, with the exception of the state average



6th Grade

- METCO students outperformed all categories of students except for the state average
- In 2006 and 2008, Boston student scores were only slightly lower than METCO scores
- In 2010, 47 percent of METCO 6th graders outscored every group, except for the state average

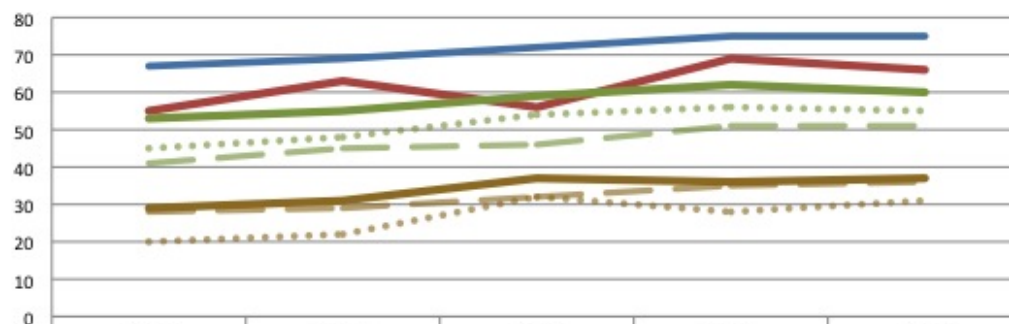


10th Grade

- The gap between METCO students MCAS scores and the state average for MCAS Advanced/Proficient narrowed considerably since 3rd grade
- METCO students outperformed all categories of students (except for the state average) in four of five years
- The exception was 2008, when Boston students overall slightly outperformed METCO students

The gap between state average performance and METCO performance is largest in grade 3 but, in most years, tends to narrow by grades 6 and 10.

MCAS 2006-2010
10th Grade Math
Percent Proficient +/Advanced and Proficient
State, Metco, Boston, Springfield (including subgroups)

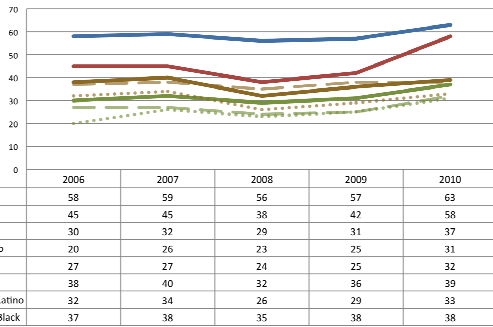


	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
STATE	67	69	72	75	75
METCO	55	63	56	69	66
BOSTON	53	55	59	62	60
BOSTON Latino	45	48	54	56	55
BOSTON Black	41	45	46	51	51
SPRINGFIELD	29	31	37	36	37
SPRINGFIELD Latino	20	22	32	28	31
SPRINGFIELD Black	28	29	32	35	36

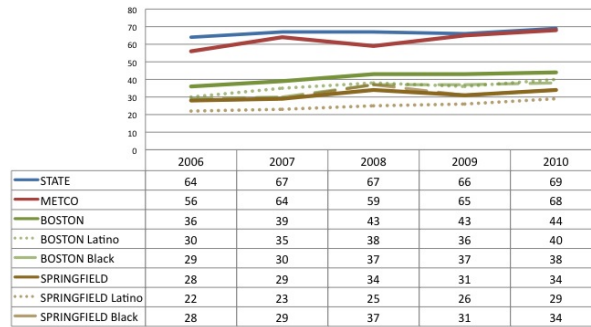
READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS

PERFORMANCE (MCAS)

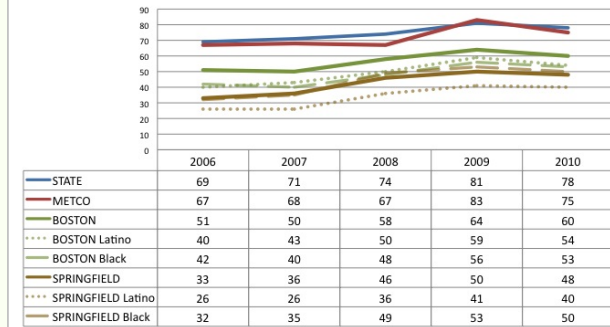
MCAS 2006-2010
3rd Grade Reading
Percent Proficient +/-Advanced and Proficient
State, Metco, Boston, Springfield (including subgroups)



MCAS 2006-2010
6th Grade English/Language Arts
Percent Proficient +/-Advanced and Proficient
State, Metco, Boston, Springfield (including subgroups)



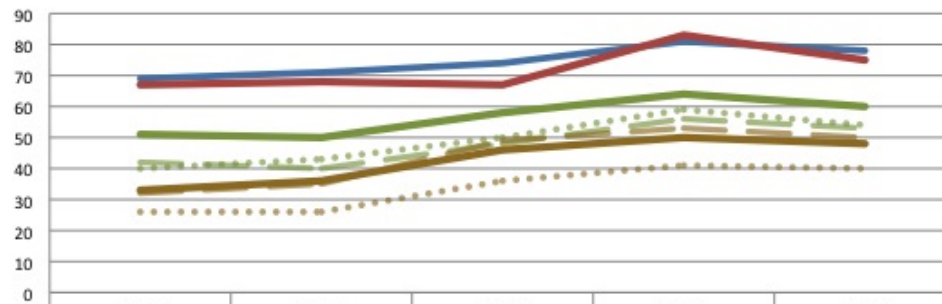
MCAS 2006-2010
10th Grade English/Language Arts
Percent Proficient +/-Advanced and Proficient
State, Metco, Boston, Springfield (including subgroups)



- Far higher shares of METCO students consistently scored in the Proficient and/or Advanced categories on the MCAS when compared with Black and Latino students in Boston and Springfield. This is true in all three grades and all consecutive five years examined
- METCO students outperform Boston and Springfield students overall in these subjects in all five years
- The small gap between METCO student performance and state overall performance is largest in 3rd grade (5 percentage points in 2010) but consistently narrows or else disappears entirely and in one year even reverses by 6th and 10th grades, with METCO students scoring above the state average

The small gap between METCO student performance and state overall performance is largest in 3rd grade (5 percentage points in 2010) but consistently narrows or else disappears entirely and in one year even reverses by 6th and 10th grades, with METCO students scoring above the state average.

MCAS 2006-2010
10th Grade English/Language Arts
Percent Proficient +/Advanced and Proficient
State, Metco, Boston, Springfield (including subgroups)



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
STATE	69	71	74	81	78
METCO	67	68	67	83	75
BOSTON	51	50	58	64	60
BOSTON Latino	40	43	50	59	54
BOSTON Black	42	40	48	56	53
SPRINGFIELD	33	36	46	50	48
SPRINGFIELD Latino	26	26	36	41	40
SPRINGFIELD Black	32	35	49	53	50

GRADUATION & DROPOUT RATES

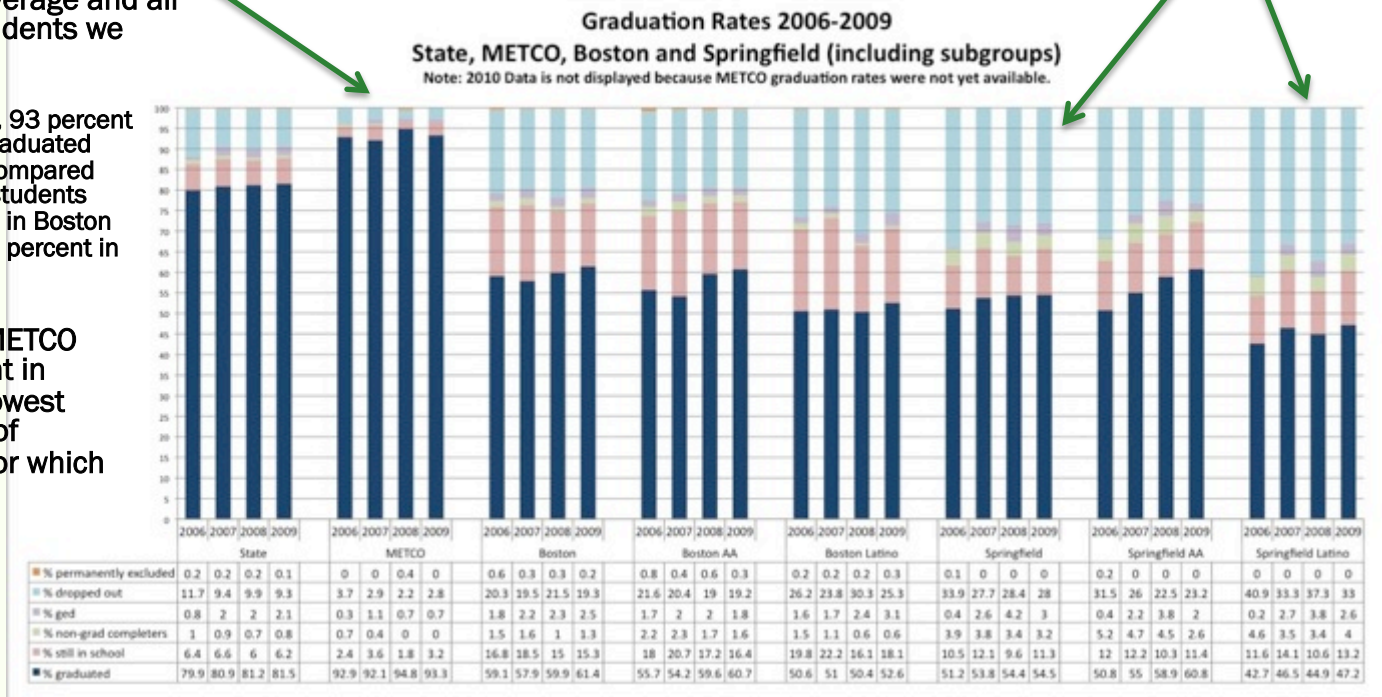
METCO students consistently graduate high school at far higher rates than the state average and all other categories of students we examined.

For example, in 2009, 93 percent of METCO students graduated high school on time compared with 81.5 percent of students statewide, 61 percent in Boston and approximately 54 percent in Springfield.

The dropout rate for METCO students – 2.8 percent in 2009 – is by far the lowest among all categories of students in all years for which data is available.

For example, in 2009, 9.3 percent of students statewide dropped out.

The lowest graduation rates and highest dropout rates are observed in Springfield, particularly for Latino students, with 33 percent dropping out in 2009.



METCO students consistently graduate high school at far higher rates than the state average and all other categories of students we examined.

BEYOND THE TEST SCORES: METCO'S LONG TERM BENEFITS

- Even in spite of the encouraging data we present here, **we do not believe it fair to judge METCO's worth – or any program's worth – on test scores and shorter- term quantitative data alone**
- Rather, it is important to preserve METCO and put energy and resources into improving it because it effectively provides thousands of students access to well-functioning, opportunity rich schools and creates racial and ethnic diversity, which is linked to numerous educational benefits for students of all racial backgrounds
- Interviews with graduates of METCO demonstrate that many of METCO's benefits were manifest long after graduation and while tangible, are not easily quantifiable

"You do see as a child what you're going to see later in the outside world. You see it in a METCO school, the good and the bad, right? Do you really have a choice about integrating or not integrating? I don't think so. So let's try to make it work better for everyone."

"It's scary how separate we are, and I don't know what'll come of it and I think it might be bad. I never really realized 'til I got out [of METCO] how separate everyone else is – I mean how blacks are separate from whites and whites are separate from blacks. So, how are we supposed to come together, to work together, really?"

METCO's worth should be judged over the long term and based on multiple measures, including assessments from students who experienced the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide adequate, reliable funding for METCO
- State educational leaders should publicly endorse and promote the program
- Find new ways to support school districts participating in METCO program, possibly by tying building reimbursements to participation and offering competitive grants for teacher training or innovative programs that enhance the educational experience of METCO students and help foster positive relationships between METCO students and resident students
- Appoint a working group or advisory committee to explore the feasibility, cost and community interest in expanding the METCO program to provide more students from other challenged urban communities access to high-performing public schools
- Invest in further study of METCO, to ensure more effective allocation of resources

