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## A Case Study of the Boston Public Schools School Improvement Awards

Allan Schwedel, Phil Veysey, Eric Conti, Eileen Kellor & Allan Odden  
Consortium for Policy Research in Education  
University of Wisconsin-Madison  
1025 W. Johnson Street  
Madison, WI 53706  
(608) 263-4260  
<http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/cpre>

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Wisconsin Center for Education Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
1025 West Johnson Street, Room 653, Madison, WI 53706-1796 • Phone 608.263.4260 • Fax 608.263.6448

## **Introduction**

Boston's School Improvement Awards were the result of a creative melding of two distinct initiatives that were gaining popularity nationwide during the late 1980's: (1) promoting school improvement through the use of clearly articulated accountability indicators; and (2) providing incentives and acknowledgment to teachers for effective teaching. Providing monetary incentives to schools rather than individual teachers was intended to acknowledge and reward successful whole-school teamwork rather than creating friction among teachers and other building staff as might occur with a traditional merit pay system. The School Improvement Award program was only one piece of the Boston Public School's mission and goals to improve student achievement. The most recent comprehensive strategic plan that embodies the broader set of goals and strategies of the current administration is called *Focus on Children*.

## **Background**

The Boston Public School System enrolled approximately 63,000 students as of Fall 1998. The ethnic distribution of the district's students was about 49% African American, 16.5% White, 25% Hispanic, 9% Asian, and 0.5% Native American. These students were distributed across 125 schools including approximately 80 elementary, 20 middle, and 25 high schools. In contrast to many other places, schools in Boston are funded through city allocations rather than separate property taxes. As of May 1997 the Boston Public School system employed 4,520 teachers, 1,106 teachers aides, and 154 clerical staff. The average teacher salary was \$59,930. The district spent approximately \$8,300.00 per student per year.

In 1982 a historic partnership of business leaders, local schools, and universities called the Boston Compact created a joint mission to reform the district's schools and improve career opportunities for Boston's high school graduates. Initially, their vision largely focused on



improving test scores and lowering drop out rates by providing jobs and higher education opportunities to students from the Boston Public Schools. After an auspicious start, that included national recognition, many of the envisioned improvements did not take place. This failure to live up to the expectations caused a reluctance to continue the partnership unless schools could clearly show more progress.

The uneasiness of the original compact members to continue the partnership led to the development of new methods of measuring school performance. The re-signing of the pact was also delayed because of the difficulties caused by the ongoing teachers' contract negotiation. Both situations were resolved in September 1989 when an historic contract was signed by the Boston Teachers' Union and the Boston School Committee. This contract established a working partnership between the parties with the shared goal of increasing student achievement. At the time, this contract was one of the most progressive in the country and influenced the signing of the second community partnership agreement called the Boston Compact II. The 1989 teachers' contract reinforced the idea of better measures of school performance by asking for greater accountability in exchange for more authority at the school site. These efforts to improve measurement and accountability of whole schools easily translated into the school improvement award language that was first introduced into the 1989 teachers' contract.

Despite the second Boston Compact and the reform minded contract language of 1989, many of the reforms were never implemented during the life of the contract. Similar to the 1989 contract, the 1994 agreement was laden with new programs. Although still not implemented at this time, the school award program had evolved from contract language to a detailed program coordinated by the second Boston Compact's Implementation Group subcommittee.



The 1994 contract provided the backdrop for the signing of the third Boston Compact. This new Compact agreement was signed by the mayor, local school leaders, union leadership, the higher education partnership, the Boston private industry council, and a coordinating committee. The mission of the third compact echoed many of the reforms from the original Boston Compact, however, never before had all parties agreed to sign the document. Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino described the 1994 teachers contract as the signal of, "a new era of hope for the children of the Boston Public schools (*Education Week*, 1994)."

A new administration led by Thomas Payzant took over the leadership of the Boston Public Schools in 1995. Although focusing on principal performance and curriculum development as major areas of improving school performance, his administration also continued to implement programs that originated as part of the 1989 teachers' contract including the School Improvement Award Program.

### The School Improvement Award Program

It is important to note that the Boston School Improvement Award program was never intended to be the sole or even a major force in school improvement. The School Improvement Award program was one element of a multi-faceted, ten-year approach to promoting better schools. It is now embedded within a comprehensive School Accountability System.

The School Improvement Award program development process began with the work of the second Boston Compact Measurement Subcommittee which, from 1989 to 1991, identified system wide performance indicators and a prototype school report card. The School Improvement Award system was to have four components: (1) a set of performance indicators, (2) a means for measuring growth and status, (3) a procedure for assigning points to each indicator, and (4) a procedure for allocating available funds across eligible schools.



*Performance Indicators:*

The Boston Public Schools School Improvement Award program emphasized both academic scores and other characteristics thought to be critical as indicators of school improvement. The academic areas that are included in the SIA have evolved during the past five years but initially they were limited to mathematics and reading where a norm-referenced standardized test was used to assess annual student progress. Students were tested in grades three through eleven. Performance was reported in many ways including subdividing the results into categories for racial/ethnic characteristics as well as gender. For the purposes of the School Improvement Awards, however, only overall school results were used. The non-academic measurements focused on staff and student attendance across all grade levels and dropout reduction at the middle and high school level.

*Measurements and Setting Targets:*

Originally, Boston used the Metropolitan Achievement Test 6 to measure student achievement. The new and current administration under Thomas Payzant changed to the Stanford Achievement Test - 9 (SAT-9) in SY1995-96 as they determined the Metropolitan Achievement Test was out of date for their purposes. The SAT-9 was selected as it is tied to the NCTM standards, the Citywide Learning Standards, and the state's curriculum frameworks. Student achievement results in math and reading on the SAT-9 Tests are reported by proficiency levels: Level 1-below basic; Level 2-basic; Level 3-solid; Level 4-superior. These levels are part of the standard reporting format of the SAT-9 test. Boston's School Improvement Award program recognizes improvement both at the bottom (fewer students in Level 1) and at the top (more students in Levels 3 and 4). In addition to the SAT-9 scores, Boston developed a measurement process for determining staff and student attendance and dropout rates that is



consistent across the district. Beginning with the SY1998-99 School Improvement Awards, data from the statewide assessment system, MCAS, is also being incorporated into the set of student achievement indicators.

When the SIA procedure was first being developed, staff from the Office of Research, Assessment, and Evaluation (RAE) were charged with the responsibility of taking the set of potential indicators and creating a quantitative system that registered both improvement based on each school's own starting point and the achievement of system wide standards that had been set by the School Committee. Thus, the goal was to develop a scoring system that was equitable in measuring both growth and status. Ideally the scoring system would operate the same across schools and levels so that the same indicators, the same methods of calculating status and improvement, and the same procedures for allocating points would be used system wide. An important secondary consideration was to develop a scoring system that was simple enough that schools could calculate their own points if they wanted to check on the accuracy of the reports or to gauge their own progress.

Staff from the Research Office then designed a scoring plan and conducted simulations, beginning with the system's high schools. When the results of the high school simulation looked promising, simulations were conducted with the middle and elementary schools. Simulations were used to examine the impact of each approach on elements such as the distribution of points, impact on rankings, ease of interpretability, etc. To minimize the chances that the simulations would be evaluated on the basis of the particular schools that scored high or low, schools were assigned pseudonyms. Results of these simulations were then given to the Implementation Group for their review. Feedback from the Implementation Group was used by Research Office staff either to try new approaches or to make refinements.



The current overall systemwide goal is that 99% of all students will be performing at Levels 2 and above by SY2002-03 (refer to Table 1) on the Stanford 9. Thus, the route to these goals is to move students out of Level 1. The district has also implemented targets for having students achieve at higher levels than just basic, i.e., at Levels 3 and 4. The target for SY2002-03 is 60% of the students in Levels 3 and 4. The scoring scheme reflects both objectives. Schools can receive as many points for raising the achievements of the lowest students as they do for the improvements of the highest students. (There are analogous targets for the MCAS.)

There is no differentiation in terms of SIA points for student performance at Levels 3 or 4 as the SAT-9 since the systemwide focus is on helping students achieve academic proficiency. Therefore the School Improvement Award program did not want to emphasize small differences between these two groups of high performing students.

**TABLE 1: School Performance Indicator  
Higher Student Academic Performance in Reading and Mathematics\***

<i>Annual analysis as measured by the Stanford 9 Achievement Test (multiple-choice)</i>	<b>Maximum Points</b>
Fewer students in Level 1 (Below Basic) – Reading	5
Fewer students in level 1 (Below Basic) – Mathematics	5
More students in Levels 3 and 4 (Solid and Superior) – Reading	5
More students in Levels 3 and 4 (Solid and Superior) – Mathematics	5
<i>Cohort analysis as measured by the Stanford 9 Achievement Test (multiple-choice)</i>	
Fewer students in level 1 (Below Basic) – Reading	10
Fewer students in Level 1 (Below Basic) – Mathematics	10
More students in Levels 3 and 4 (Solid and Superior) – Reading	10
More students in Levels 3 and 4 (Solid and Superior) – Mathematics	10
<i>Annual Performance-based assessment-Stanford 9 Achievement Test (open-ended)</i>	
Fewer students in Level 1 (Below Basic) – Reading	5
More students in Levels 3 and 4 (Solid and Superior) – Reading	5
<b>Improved student attendance – annual</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Dropout reduction – annual (middle and high school only)</b>	<b>5</b>



\*Note: To be eligible for an award, schools had to test at least a specified percentage of ‘test eligible’ students. This percentage has varied over time and varied by school level but it was originally set at 95% of the test eligible population tested to be eligible for a full award and at least 90% to be eligible for half of the earned award at the elementary level and slightly lower percentages at the middle and high school levels.

*Annual Analysis:*

The annual analyses are used to measure changes in schools as a whole. Change is calculated year to year from school to school. Points for yearly progress are awarded based on how the school performs compared to itself between one year and the next for each annual performance indicator, academic and non-academic. In general if the school shows average improvement or meets a targeted rate of improvement, it receives 3 points for that indicator<sup>1</sup>. Above average/standard improvement is awarded 4 points, while extensive improvement is awarded the maximum of 5 points. Schools that show below average improvement are awarded 2 points, and schools that make minimal progress or stay the same receive 1 point. A score of 0 indicates a worsening of performance over the previous year. The point allocation system has varied slightly as the SIA and the district’s overall Accountability System has evolved

The non-academic annual measures of attendance and dropout rates were included as these factors were thought to be important for school success. While these indicators track performance from year to year, as with any data element, care has to be taken in interpreting the results. For instance, the annual dropout measure included any student who was enrolled in a school for a day. Once present the student became attached to that school's annual analysis even if they were attending another school for the majority of the year. In a system with high mobility, like Boston, a “cohort” analysis was included to complement the annual analysis, and to provide

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<sup>1</sup> As Boston has continued to move toward having a standards-based accountability system, the procedures for awarding points for yearly progress have changed to capture a school’s status relative to a pre-defined yearly target.

a fuller picture of school effect on those students that were consistently part of the school's program.

*Cohort Analysis:* Cohort analysis provided a measure of a school's effect on those students who the schools have had for a full year. Philosophically, the message from schools was that these cohort students were the children they should be most accountable for improving as they have spent the most time in the school's instructional program. This improvement was at the heart of the School Improvement Award program and as a result typically the academic cohort analysis points were weighted double the annual academic performance points as indicated by the maximum of 10 points in Table 1.

Like the academic indicators, the non-academic cohort indicators were used to track the reduction in dropout rates of individual student groups as opposed to the school as a whole. The cohort dropout analysis was a snapshot of students who were in the school at the start of 9th grade. This group was tracked for 5 years. Only these students were used to calculate the cohort dropout rate. Boston selected 5 years as they wanted to include students who repeated a grade and students who dropped out and returned in the measure. Any student who entered the class after 9th grade by transfer or relocation was not included in the cohort analysis.

*Points Procedure:*

Points were rewarded for moving students to a higher level of performance. As discussed for certain indicators, i.e., the cohort achievement test indicators, the points are multiplied by two for a maximum possible of 10 points. Specifically, in the example in Table 2, points were earned by moving students out of the Level 1 performance category. While improvement was ultimately the goal, the point system is designed to accommodate those schools that have already reached a ceiling on specific indicators by rewarding them for maintaining very high levels of



performance. In other words if a high level of student performance in reading is maintained the maximum number of points will still be earned. In short, growth is not always required to earn the maximum points.



**TABLE 2: Example of Procedures to Assign Points to a Performance Indicator**

<b>Points Awarded</b>	<b>TARGET Reading (Cohort): 15% Fewer Students Performing in Level 1</b>
10	Above 19.4% reduction
8	15.5% - 19.4%
6	14.5% - 15.4%
4	0.5% - 14.4%
2	0% - 0.4%
0	Less than 0%

*Making the point calculations even more fair:*

As part of the districtwide testing policy, all students were encouraged and indeed expected to take the SAT-9 tests (and now the state's MCAS) but the reporting population was limited to those students for whom the Stanford 90 was normed. The Stanford 9 reporting population included all regular education students, bilingual education program students with higher levels of English competency, and special education students who were tested under either regular or with standard test accommodations.. Beginning with SY1998-99 there have been changes in the reporting population that reflect federal legislation to include virtually all special needs students in the districtwide assessment system. Changes in the reporting population, beginning in SY1999-00 also reflect the state's guidelines for determining which Limited English Proficient students are expected to take the MCAS in English. Also, in terms of school accountability, the target groups for assessing school improvement have been refined so that only those students who have been enrolled for essentially the entire school year are counted in terms of Stanford 9 achievement results.

Finally, to ensure that all schools have a fair chance to compete for School Improvement Awards, there were five separate categories of schools. In addition to elementary and middle school categories, the high schools were divided into two categories and there was an additional



category for special schools that did not have standardized test information. The two standard high school categories included one for "open-enrollment" high schools and the second for the three competitive "examination" high schools. The category for special schools included those that enroll only special needs students and early learning centers.

In addition to these efforts to promote fairness and inclusion, as noted above, Boston incorporated its policy of expecting all students to take the Stanford 9 as a means of preventing schools from "gaming" the award program by not testing certain students. To guard against this, full awards were given only if 95% of the test eligible population were tested and at least 90% of the test eligible population must be tested for a school to receive any award.

*Procedure for Allocating Funds:*

After points have been calculated for each school, schools are rank ordered by school level, i.e., elementary, middle and high school. Until SY1998-99, the \$500,000 earmarked for School Improvement Awards was apportioned by level based on the number of students at each level.<sup>2</sup> This money is then awarded to schools beginning with the schools with the highest points until all of the money is distributed. The \$500,000 is sufficient to cover schools enrolling about one-third of all students. While providing some incentive, Boston would need to triple the award pool to \$1.575 million, 63,000 students at \$25 per student, to cover all schools and all students.

The first awards were given in the fall of 1995 for SY1994-95. The total amount of the School Improvement Award funding "pot" is specified in the Boston Teachers' Union contract as \$500,000 on a yearly basis. The monetary awards were given to qualifying schools on a \$25 per

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<sup>2</sup> Beginning with the SY1998-99 School Improvement Awards, the procedure for allocating funds was revised so that there would be three categories, i.e. (1) Improvement in student achievement from the previous year (\$300,000); (2) Success in reaching the Superintendent's target goals in student achievement for that school (\$100,000); and (3) Success in implementing innovative changes in instructional practice in accordance with the Superintendents six Essentials for Whole School Change (\$100,000). The third category is intended to reward schools for improvements that are more process oriented relative and less quantifiable.

student basis up to a maximum of \$25,000 per school. The awards can only be used for school improvement purposes, i.e., they cannot be used as a salary bonus. The School Site Council makes the decision as to the specific use of the funds, e.g., supplies, field trips, purchasing equipment, professional development, etc. All award monies were to be targeted for use to improve teaching and learning as specified in the school's improvement plan.

Another significant aspect of the School Improvement Award program reward was the publicity surrounding the announcement of the awards. This event was covered by the local media. In 1997, out of a total of 128 schools, 33 elementary schools, 13 secondary schools and one special school won awards representing about 37% of all schools involving about 36% of all students. So even though the \$500,000 is a relatively small amount of money the award program can affect a significant percentage of students. During the initial years of the SIA, 'winning schools' sent teachers, parents, and sometimes students to the awards ceremony that typically were held in a large public venue (in 1997 the ceremony was held at the New England Aquarium). In recent years, the awards process has occurred on a small scale with presentations at individual schools.

### **Program Funding**

The program is funded by a \$500,000 allocation in the school system's city budget. This represents about 0.12% of the school system's yearly budget. Given the fact that the awards can not be used for teacher salary bonuses, it would be appropriate to show how the \$25 per student award would increase a school's discretionary revenue. In 1998-99 secondary schools received \$71 per student, elementary schools received \$55 per student for supplies and other discretionary purposes. Thus, for schools that receive the full award, the \$25 per student represented a 35% increase in the student supply allocation at the secondary level and a 45% increase in the student



supply allocation at the elementary level. The city would need to increase the percentage of the budget set aside for the award allocation to .37% or approximately \$1.5 million to potentially reward all students instead of the third currently funded under the present budget.

### **Enablers**

The shift to the current concern about school outcomes and accountability began with the first Boston Compact in 1982. Since then, reform efforts have often been recycled depending upon the popularity of an idea or with the change in district level administration. However, the foundation of the reform agenda has remained in the successive Boston Compact agreements. For instance, the second Compact in 1989 called for school-based management and first introduced the language of a school-based performance award. These enabling programs were implemented with varying degrees of success, but the call for reforms continued through the third Boston Compact signed in 1994. The third Compact was adopted concurrently with the 1994 teachers' contract and again provided a reform agenda.

The third Boston Compact set five broad goals for the public schools that included:

- Access to employment and higher education. The document calls for a greater commitment to school-to-work transition programs and new efforts by business and higher education to offer jobs and college placement.
- Commitment to innovation. The compact voices strong support for reforms included in the new teachers' contract, such as school-based management with the new school-site councils. Businesses and colleges also agreed to support management training for school administrators, teachers, and parents of six pilot schools.



- Curriculum, standards, and assessment changes. The Boston Higher Education Partnership will provide curriculum coordination between high schools and colleges. All parties agreed to develop better assessments.
- Training and professional development. The signers all agreed to provide teachers and administrators with training in school-based management skills.
- Support for parents and families. The compact will support preschool programs, family outreach by schools, and efforts to help parents get more involved in schools.

*(Education Week , 1992)*

These broad goals resulted in specific new programs designed to facilitate improved student performance as well as the continuation of programs initiated in 1989. Several of the more significant programs were the continued movement toward school-based management, the initiation of the Center for Leadership Development, the creation of a Lead Teacher position, and the introduction of pilot schools. At this time the Center for Leadership Development primarily provided training for teachers and parents in school-based management. The center was also expected to train 200 to 300 Lead Teachers, a new position, who would serve as mentors to new teachers and would conduct professional development activities. Pilot schools allowed teachers, administrators, and parents to create new schools from scratch or within existing schools based on their ideas, and were often referred to as in-district charter schools.

The Payzant administration has continued and expanded many of the reforms begun before 1995, and added several new programs focusing on principal performance and curriculum development. As an example of an expansion of an existing program, the Boston Public Schools has promoted site-based management that includes the authority to reallocate resources. As this was a new responsibility for schools, the district has invested in professional development in the



area of fiscal management. This professional development is primarily focused on principals, however, teachers may also participate. In addition to the fiscal management training, the district is also providing training aimed at helping principals gather and use data to improve the school's instructional program. In this way the district is attempting to facilitate the successful implementation of site-based management which includes school level control over large portions of the budget.

Another facet of the current administration's overall program to improve student performance is the focus on whole school change. The district has attempted to accomplish this goal by dividing schools into four cohorts. The plan is that each cohort receives a coach approximately 25% of the time to facilitate the change process. The district requires that the decision to adopt a whole school change require a two-thirds vote by all certified staff at the school site.

The Payzant administration has also redesigned The Center for Leadership Development. Currently, the center coordinates all professional development throughout the city. The district's goal was to centralize training as this organizational structure would be easier to align with district and school improvement plans. A part of this training is aimed at providing district support to assist schools with the analysis of data from their individual sites. This information can then be used to construct, revise, and refocus a school's improvement plan.

The current administration is also promoting another form of professional development through teacher inquiry groups. These are groups of teachers at a school site who apply for a stipend from the Center for School Leadership to conduct action research. It appears that this form of professional development is desired by teachers as there were 80 groups active in the district during the 1997-98 school year.



Teachers also continue to participate in the district's Lead Teacher program. The Lead Teacher position is the fourth step of the career ladder and is focused on standards-based teaching in the district. Each school has a Lead Teacher who is a standards facilitator, whose role is to help the school align its curricula with new state standards in the four major core areas. These subjects were introduced individually, beginning with English, followed by mathematics, science, and concluding with social studies.

In addition to these enabling factors aimed at improving the instructional program and school management, the district has instituted a new promotion policy and transition services at key grade levels for students who are not academically ready for grade level promotion.

The district has also considered specific desires and problems within the greater community. One example is the implementation of a new school assignment policy that is intended to provide opportunities for parents to enroll their children in neighborhood schools while maintaining racial/ethnic diversity in the schools. This new plan will go into effect beginning with the 2000-01 school year. A second example is with respect to absenteeism and mobility, the district and the union have agreed to form a restructuring task force charged with instituting smaller learning communities with approximately 200 to 300 students in the high schools. In addition, a high school student will only be able to transfer to a different high school only once in his/her four-year career.

### **Evaluation Results**

Specific evaluation data have not been collected about the impact of the School Improvement Award program on student achievement. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the monetary awards to successful schools are very much appreciated but they are not perceived by school personnel as a strong motivational tool. Past receipt of School Improvement Awards is



used by some schools in their informational literature to parents. However, while the School Improvement Award acknowledges a school's accomplishments, it does not drive the school's agenda. Instead, schools are striving to improve teaching and learning because that is the clear mission as described in the district's strategic plan, and reinforced and particularized in each school's Plan for Whole School Change.

Individuals involved in establishing the School Improvement Award program suggest that an unanticipated positive outcome has resulted from the process itself. As the Boston Public Schools move toward a unified accountability system and other school reforms the School Improvement Award program may change. The development and refinement of the indicators will help focus the discussion at both the school and system levels on what types of change are meaningful and how can they be measured.

### **Conclusion**

The Boston School Improvement Award was first introduced into the language of the 1989 teachers' contract. Like many reforms, the program was an idea much before the details of implementation had been discussed or developed. However, having the language in the contract facilitated the creation of the Boston Compact Implementation Group subcommittee charged with developing the specifics of the program between the 1989 agreement and the teachers' contract signed in 1994. Because of these efforts, when the current administration was hired in 1995 the program had evolved from contract language to a program with structure and details. Therefore, the Payzant administration's role in the School Improvement Award process has been one of augmentation. One example of this continuing development mentioned previously was the change from the Metropolitan Achievement Test to the SAT-9 test as the measure of student



academic performance. Since 1995, the program development has continued to evolve, most recently with the inclusion of MCAS results and new award categories.

Most of the changes have resulted from reviews conducted each year since the inception of the School Improvement Award. For example, only three high schools received awards for SY1996-97 even though many high schools showed significant improvement in test scores. This discrepancy resulted from the fact that many of the improved high schools tested fewer than 90% of their test eligible population. Rather than awarding the allocated funds to additional elementary and middle schools, the decision was made by the Implementation Group to use these moneys to fund another system initiative: high school restructuring. Thus, high schools' achievements were acknowledged by allowing the School Improvement Award funds dedicated to their level to be used for a related purpose.

However, other changes have resulted from larger developments within the district. For example, in the spring of 1998 the School Committee approved an enhanced school accountability system which included the School Improvement Award as one element embedded within a comprehensive approach to academic accountability at each school. The accountability system was built upon seven core components: (1) Boston's mission and goals as described in the district's strategic plan entitled Focus on Children; (2) Boston's Citywide Learning Standards; (3) Boston's plan for whole school change; (4) a comprehensive assessment system which includes standards and indicators; (5) a school quality review that incorporates a Yearly Checkpoint Review of all schools and an In-Depth Review of one fourth of the schools each year; (6) reporting to constituents through public report cards; and (7) a mechanism of refining the accountability system.



All in all the School Improvement Award initiative appears to be stable and well accepted by the union, administration, and the community. The awards acknowledge the collective successes of a school without disrupting the focus on improving teaching and learning. Phil Veysey, a Lead Teacher and union representative from a local elementary school<sup>3</sup>, suggests that in their day to day teaching most teachers are "oblivious" to the School Improvement Award program in and of itself. Rather, the district has encouraged them to concentrate on implementing curricula aligned with state and city standards and the refinement of their individual teaching techniques. Mr. Veysey noted that teachers are concerned with the standardized test scores that are part of the School Improvement Award formula and use the scores to determine the specific instructional needs of their students. This analysis of test data is a critical part of achieving whole school change.

It is critical to note that the Boston School Improvement Award program is a work in progress. Not only has Boston reviewed and changed their measuring device, from the Metropolitan Achievement 6 test to the SAT-9 test, the performance indicators have evolved over time as well. As an example, the indicators that were in use for SY1996-97 are listed in Table 1. For each indicator the frame of reference was the change in a school's performance between SY1995-96 and SY1996-97. As of fall 1998, the School Improvement Award's for SY1997-98 were being determined by using the same indicators listed in Table 1, however, a cohort analysis of the open-ended achievement test in reading and an annual analysis of open-ended mathematics achievement were added. It is expected that the future will bring further innovations and changes to the School Improvement Award program.

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<sup>3</sup> Now on leave with the BPS and working at the Massachusetts Federation of Teachers.

It is evident that even with all of these changes in the School Improvement program, the basic concept of the program will not change. There is always a balance between providing a stable target for schools to achieve, and adjusting the program to accurately measure school performance. In other words, if schools are getting better there should be improvements in many different areas. The problem is attempting to include them all in the performance measure as too many yearly changes can be demoralizing to teachers and administrators.

Nonetheless, from the start, the School Improvement Award program was seen as one feature in the overall effort to improve Boston's schools that was viewed positively by the union, administration, and the public. Each group viewed the rewarding of money for improved performance as a new direction for public schools.

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