

#1 FOR SOME SUMMARY

This year, Massachusetts marks the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA). But as we celebrate our progress since that milestone, we must also reflect on what we have not yet accomplished. Because underneath Massachusetts' high rankings are glaring and persistent disparities that separate low-income students and students of color from their peers.

There is no excellence without equity. If Massachusetts truly wants to be No. 1, the next phase of educational improvement must focus on confronting and addressing these disparities.

That begins with an honest look at the data — data that show dramatic gaps in student outcomes.

- In Massachusetts, less than 1 in 3 Black and Latino fourth graders are on grade level in reading — half the rate for the state's White students.
- Only 28 percent of low-income eighth graders are on grade level in math — again, less than half the rate for higher income students.
- 1 in 3 English learners don't graduate on time — and 1 in 7 drop out of school entirely.
- Less than 1 in 3 Black and Latino students who take the SAT meet college-readiness benchmarks in reading and math — compared to 2/3 of their White peers. Too many graduates of color don't enroll in postsecondary education at all, and among those that do, too many have to take remedial courses.

These disparities in achievement are the direct result of inequities in opportunity, both outside and inside the classroom. Today, 30 percent of Black and 36 percent of Latino children grow up in poverty in Massachusetts. In 2016-17, 20,000 children in the commonwealth were homeless.

And inside the education system, low-income students and students of color get fewer resources that matter for educational success.

- Massachusetts is no longer among the states that direct more state and local dollars to the districts serving the most low-income students.
- Latino students and students from low-income families are less likely to access early childhood education programs.
- Black and Latino students in Massachusetts are three times more likely than White students to be assigned to a teacher who lacks content expertise in the subject they teach.
- Black and Latino students are under-represented among students completing AP courses — and over-represented among students suspended out-of-school.

These disparities have profound and lasting consequences for individual students, for our economy, and for our democracy.

In our state, as across the country, the relationship between education, individual earnings, unemployment, and civic engagement are undeniable. With the state's continuously changing demographics, Massachusetts' success depends largely on the success of low-income students and students of color.

To truly be excellent, we have to do dramatically better by students and families who have been underserved in Massachusetts for far too long. As a diverse group of equity advocates, we stand ready to tackle this challenge head-on. And we stand ready to support educational leaders who are willing to do the same, and put pressure on those who aren't.