

July 2009

## Mayor Menino Files In-District Charter School Bill

*Two BTU grievances contributed to Mayor's new reform push*

Delivering on his June speech at the Boston College CEO Club, Mayor Menino filed legislation on July 8<sup>th</sup> that would authorize local school committees and superintendents to promote "rapid academic improvement" in chronically underperforming schools by transforming them into In-District Charter Schools. The creation of these schools would not require the approval from the local teachers union. Currently, the creation of Boston pilot schools and Horace Mann charter schools requires the approval of the Boston Teachers Union (BTU). Under the Mayor's bill, In-District Charter Schools may offer a pay for student performance provision as a monetary incentive to "teams of educators" including more than just teachers.

Lack of any real significant progress in addressing the chronically underperforming schools in the urban centers of Massachusetts is reason enough to present new suggestions for reform. Governor Patrick has proposed his own Readiness Acceleration school plan which includes in-district public schools with high degrees of flexibility and autonomy for underperforming schools.

Mayor Menino has embraced the role of urban school reformer who now talks of bold reform and not being satisfied with just incremental change. This position is certainly welcome and may have been precipitated, in part, by two BTU grievances that are now in arbitration which the Administration believes would impede reform efforts.

### Pilot Election to Work Agreement

Since 1996, teachers in Pilot schools have signed "election to work agreements" which lay out the working conditions and expectations for the school year such as length of the school day, the maximum number of consecutive hours of instruction and professional development requirements. The BTU has grieved this practice arguing that the agreements violate the terms of their contract. The strength of Pilot schools is their flexibility to develop innovative programs not bound by BTU rules or School Committee regulations. This grievance is intended to weaken that advantage.

### Expand AP Course Offerings

The Boston School Department accepted a private grant from ExxonMobil through the Massachusetts Math & Science Initiative organized by Mass Insight to increase student enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) classes by training teachers and developing curriculum starting at the O'Bryant School. This follows a call by Mayor Menino in 2008 to double AP courses for Boston students in five years. One of the provisions of the grant is that individual teachers would receive additional pay for each student who received a grade of 3 or higher on the AP test. The BTU filed a grievance arguing that pay-for-performance involved a change in practice without BTU approval. If this grievance is successful, the City would have to pass on potential future public-private funding to expand AP courses in 10 Boston high schools.