



Mayor Michelle Wu
State of the Schools - As Prepared for Delivery
Tuesday, October 28, 2025

Good evening, and welcome to Boston's first-ever State of the Schools!

Thank you to our students for leading the pledge, and thank you, **Omar**, for representing our student body and our City so well.

Thank you, **Superintendent Skipper** and **Chair Robinson**, for your dedication and leadership.

And thank you to school leaders **Mr. (Richard) Chang**, **Mr. (Stephen) Cirsuolo** (*SEE-ruh-solo*), and the entire Josiah Quincy Upper School community for hosting us tonight.

To members of the Boston School Committee, Boston City Councilors and state officials, Boston Student Advisory Council and School Parent Councils—thank you for showing up tonight, and every day.

We're here because the state of our schools is the state of our city's future.

We're here to celebrate our incredible teachers and paras, school leaders and family liaisons, nurses and librarians, custodians and counselors, bus drivers and crossing guards, and all our BPS staff. Thank you for working every day to build a better tomorrow.

And we're here tonight because Boston is a city that refuses to settle or sit back.

Wherever I go across Boston—in board rooms or church basements, community meetings, galas, and coffee hours—the question I hear most from our residents is: How can we help?

And my answer is: Join us in creating opportunities for our students. Because if we want Boston to be a home for everyone—the best place in the country to raise a family, run a business, and make a difference—our schools must take center stage in every major conversation about our city.

So tonight is a historic gathering: A call to action for every sector of our city to invest in Boston's success by stepping up for our families and our future.

In this room are leaders from across Boston's business, philanthropic, and civic sectors...from City departments, neighborhood associations, and all 109 Boston Public Schools.

This room is full tonight because we are a city that shows up for our students.

Take a moment and look around at this remarkable village.

Now, look up. Above our heads, you'll see the stars—arranged as they were on the day this building opened its doors for the first time last fall.

It's a fitting tribute to the depth of our teachers' care and the height of our expectations.

As mayor, my goal is to connect every resource in our city to form the constellations of opportunity, support, and accountability for every one of our students to shine.

And as a BPS mom, I'm determined to deliver results not at the usual pace of government—but with the urgency our kids and families feel every day. That's why, over the last four years, we've made record investments to raise standards and create a culture of excellence at BPS.

When our administration started, school communities were feeling the impact of the pandemic—*and* five superintendents in just seven years.

Superintendent Mary Skipper has done more than steady the ship. She's turned the tide.

Under her leadership, BPS has deployed a clear, consistent, research-based strategy to raise expectations for our students district-wide, *and* support educators in helping students meet and exceed those expectations.

After being stuck in the bottom 10% of schools in the state for more than a decade, BPS has leapfrogged 28 other school districts in the last three years.

Today, we're outperforming all ten of what state administrators track as our comparable peer districts.

After years of instability, we're seeing real, meaningful progress.

But we're not yet where we need to be.

This is Boston, and we reject the idea that urban public schools are doomed to do less. That kids are better off when politicians send tax dollars to private schools. Or that because billionaires have given up on public education, we should, too.

Boston has been a target in the federal political storm. We've had grants pulled. Funding cut. Even as we do everything we can to protect our communities, we'll have some hard decisions to make.

These next few years won't be easy, but as we know: Boston doesn't back down.

While the Trump administration tries to dismantle public education by neglect and by force, we're doubling down on setting the highest standards for student achievement by getting the operational details right.

This fall we've had the best start to the school year on record.

More buses arrived on time in September and October than ever before. Yesterday, 96% of buses arrived on time.

96% of school meals are now prepared in-house with fresh food, locally sourced ingredients, and delicious menu options, from butternut squash grown by Massachusetts farmers, to ramen and empanadas. After we open the central kitchen in Dorchester next month, 100% of BPS schools will have scratch cooked meals.

We've planted 60 new school gardens in the last two years.

Four years ago, just 32% of BPS schools had working AC. Today, it's 92% and counting.

We're implementing inclusive classrooms, so multilingual learners and students with disabilities can learn close to home, in the same room as their peers—and we've created 16 new bilingual programs.

Earlier this year, we opened a second campus for Boston Adult Technical Academy dedicated to training new immigrants to join our economy. This fall, we launched NExT—a program to help adult students with disabilities find employment...

Last month, with our partners at the MSBA, we opened the Carter School, a national model for educating students with significant disabilities.

And we're also making a generational investment in BPS athletics, so Boston kids from every neighborhood will be at home in a stadium fit for the pros.

We've launched more major school building projects in the last four years than in the previous 40 years, combined.

And I'm proud to announce that for the first time ever, families don't have to go in person to a welcome center to sign their kids up for school. Every family can now register *online*, in ten languages, at greatstarts.boston. Every year under our administration, our spring BPS family engagement survey has shown a steady rise in school safety, climate, and academics. That's a testament to not only the educators and staff who care for our kids, but the families who are determined to see them succeed.

Last Tuesday morning in East Boston, parents made their way into classrooms at the Otis Elementary, catching up over coffee and pastries at the desks where their kids usually sat.

Before Boston was home...their family constellations stretched through El Salvador, Brazil, China, Morocco (and, yes, even New York). Some were professional educators. Others never learned to read.

But all of them made time before work that morning for the Academic Parent-Teacher Team meeting.

After going over the latest MAP test results, teachers handed out bags for families to take home:

Inside were dice for math games, glue for vocab collages, and find-the-word spelling challenges...

Materials handpicked by each student's teachers, designed to target the specific areas where students showed the most room for improvement.

Side by side with translators, parents and teachers talked through how the contents of each bag could open up new worlds at home.

Diana (*dee-ah-nuh*) is a mom from Colombia who runs a small business in East Boston. These days, when she takes her kids to a restaurant, instead of asking for the coloring book and crayons, they ask for the math games.

Being a home for everyone means involving **everyone** who loves our students. It means engaging and challenging every student, together.

Our schools are improving because our educators, our families, and our city's leading institutions are building the village every child needs to reach their potential.

Dozens of our world-class museums and cultural institutions have thrown open their doors for Boston Family Days, with 65,000 free visits and counting. And this fall, we launched the inaugural season of Boston Family Day performances at the symphony, ballet, and every other major stage in the city.

Thanks to Boston Children's Hospital, Vertex, Bank of America, John Hancock, Liberty Mutual, State Street, the Private Industry Council, and so many more of our corporate partners...

This year, more than 10,500 young people worked paid summer jobs—the most in our city's history.

And we just launched a school-year jobs program too.

We've grown Boston Pre-K to serve more than 5,000 families, and added programming for our littlest learners, like music lessons from the New England Conservatory.

Over the last four years, City programs and partnerships have helped almost 9,000 kids learn to ride bikes. We've taught nearly 12,000 more how to swim, and we've expanded youth sports across every neighborhood...

Thanks to our partners at Boston After School and Beyond, we had a record 18,000 students take part in 5th Quarter summer learning this year.

Starting this fall, the WPS Institute is helping us reimagine 7th and 8th grade as an engaging launchpad into secondary school.

And our colleges and universities funded \$72 million in scholarships for BPS students last year.

This is the kind of community-wide support that it takes to provide the education our students and families deserve.

And it's on this strong foundation, that we're building a unified academic strategy, applied consistently across all our schools.

In the past, when some students struggled, too often the response was to lower expectations. To settle for easy wins instead of pushing every student to engage with rigorous, grade-level content.

But the research is clear: when we shelter students from challenge, we stunt growth. When we expect less, they deliver less.

So yes—students will be supported. They will have fun. They will be part of a community.

And they will also be **challenged.**

Every student will be expected to do what educators call “heavy lifting:”

That means that when you walk into any BPS classroom, instead of teachers standing at the board lecturing students, you'll see teachers **facilitating** the learning while **students** do the work to drive the lesson forward:

Students reading aloud and writing down reflections on the content they're learning; students solving math problems together and discussing the material with one another.

The shift to hands-on, active learning with high-quality instructional materials doesn't happen by accident. It's guided by measurement, accountability, and alignment.

Teachers and school leaders now meet regularly to review effective teaching strategies, and district leaders and coaches conduct classroom observations to give teachers feedback.

At the Winship Elementary School in Brighton, instructional coaches like **Ms. Katie Hickey** help teachers empower students to close each other's learning gaps.

One morning two weeks ago, she watched as **Ms. Ruhi's** (*roo-heeze*) third graders arranged colorful tiles to calculate area.

As they worked in small groups, one student traced the sides of a square with her finger to illustrate the equation to a classmate: "base times height."

As the pair wrote down their answer, the friend who needed help became the helper, remembering the tricky q-u in spelling the word "square."

Down the hall, science teacher **Mr. Kapura** (*kuh-poor-uh*) passed soil sifters out to his students so they could classify sediments...and learn to think like scientists.

And every spring, first graders at the Winship learn about business by creating a pop-up market for the rest of the school—setting up banks, cafes, and bookstores for their classmates.

The Winship community is bringing the district's strategy to life.

They're encouraging students to engage creatively with grade-level, culturally relevant materials. And the state's accountability ratings show the Winship has consistently improved student achievement over the last three years.

By the end of next year, our goal is for 100% of school observations across the district to show that "heavy lifting" is happening—meaning all students are actively learning at grade level, and students who are ready to move faster have the supports to do so.

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That's why we're raising the bar for early college and career opportunities across the city.

At the Dearborn STEM Academy, school leaders **Ms. Marcano** (*mar-kaw-no*) and **Mr. Coakley** decided that every student needs access to accelerated coursework to prepare for college.

So, today, **every** ninth grader at the Dearborn takes AP Biology.

Because when we challenge students to take on college-level material, they're more likely to **go** to college—and succeed there.

And, thanks to partnerships with Franklin Cummings Tech, Roxbury Community College, Wentworth, Bunker Hill Community College, and UMass Boston, we're offering more opportunities to earn college credits than ever before.

In 2022, just 179 high schoolers took early college courses at BPS. Last year, that number increased to **790**. This year, so far, it's more than twelve hundred.

Since 2019, Boston has seen a greater rise in students taking AP courses than virtually every other American city.

In 2025, our students took nearly 7,500 AP exams—and earned a three or higher on more than two thirds of them.

That's a nine-point jump in just one year—and the best performance on AP exams in our city's history.

We got there by adding AP-specific professional development for teachers, and adding prereqs so students are prepared for AP classes.

But APs aren't the only way to add rigor.

Our young people spend just 20% of their waking hours in the classroom.

We know the day doesn't end at 3PM for kids *or* working families—so we're ensuring students have the opportunity to be challenged before and after the bell rings.

Right now, 17% of our schools don't have before- and after-school programs.

At the 83% of schools that *do,* many families still can't afford or access these critical supports because programs don't accept state vouchers—or have enough spots.

That needs to change.

Tonight, I'm announcing a citywide goal:

To provide quality, enriching before- and after-school programming at every BPS school, available and accessible to every BPS family.

We're starting with new programs at our 20 community hub schools.

Thank you to the Boston Teachers Union, YMCA, United Way, and the Lubin Family Foundation for your continued support.

And we're making it simple: If you qualify for a voucher, you can use it at the school your child attends.

In March, I shared that we'd be bringing advanced math into our afterschool programs and classrooms.

Tonight, I'm announcing the launch of Wicked Math—a brand new partnership with EdVestors, The Young People's Project, and The Calculus Project to start advanced math clubs, strengthen math pathways, and train juniors and seniors as tutors for younger students.

We're creating a culture of excellence at BPS, built on a rigorous foundation and shaped by partnerships connecting young people all across Boston:

Name another city where every young person is guaranteed a paid summer job.

Name another city blazing pathways from high school into health careers with a partner like Mass General Brigham.

Name another city partnering with dozens of cultural institutions so every child and their family has free access to spaces that spark curiosity and wonder.

No community on earth fights harder for the future we know our children deserve.

And we need your help to do even more.

So I'm directing our Partnerships team in the Mayor's Office, and at BPS, to pursue a new round of collaborations with the goal of signing up every anchor institution in the city.

Partner with us to invest in our kids. Join us in building more career pathways, early college options, and after-school opportunities.

Every BPS school needs strong partners.

Businesses, labs, colleges, and hospitals—that help our students learn, and put that learning to work.

Get to know our school leaders and students through the Principal Partners program on November 12th.

Volunteer this winter and spring. Attend our Youth Jobs Fair in April. And hire BPS students as interns this summer.

In the city of champions—in the birthplace of public education—calling Boston home means being a part of *this* village.

And that means helping us raise our next generation of leaders.

Less than a mile from here, Boston opened the first public school in America.

At a time when schooling was reserved for the wealthy...

When educating young people was seen as an individual family's choice, not a civic responsibility...

Boston transformed education from a tool for preserving power into a tool for sharing it.

It's a choice that we continue to make every day...

To do what it takes to give *every one* of our young people the skills to build a future that shines brighter for all of us.

In my kitchen at home, one side of the doorframe marks the passage of kid time.

Every few months since they could first stand, my boys press their heels against the wall and straighten up tall as Conor and I record a new notch.

Then they step away to grin as we gasp: another inch, already!

Blaise's first mark is now down by his hip. Cass is catching up fast. At nine months old, Mira just made her first mark.

I know one day I'll blink and I'll be standing in *their* kitchen watching them wonder at how fast *their* kids are growing.

Our families can't wait around for our schools to catch up; we feel, every day, how fast our future grows up.

We are the oldest public school system in the nation. And, together, it's time that we make it the best.

Thank you for being the village that does this work with us.

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