

# **PUBLIC EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS**

## **MYTHS & FACTS**

### **MYTH: Since education reform, no children are left behind**

**FACTS:** From 2001 to 2005, more than 40,000 students dropped out of school in MA. Over 1,900 students dropped out of the Boston Public Schools last year alone, while only 3,000 graduated. 57% of Chelsea High students drop out before their senior year.

### **MYTH: There is no longer a real achievement gap in MA**

**FACTS:** Achievement for all students as measured by MCAS scores has risen over the last few years. But a racial gap remains. White students scored 35 percentage points ahead of black students and 38 points ahead of Hispanic students on the 2007 10<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS. The urban-suburban achievement gap is even worse. The gap between the scores of MA's poor and better-off 8<sup>th</sup> grade math students was the worst in the entire country. While the 4-year graduation rate was 80.9% statewide last year, it was only 53% in Chelsea, 53.8% in Springfield, and 57.9% in Boston.

### **MYTH: MA already spends too much money on schools**

**FACTS:** 46 other states spend more on public education than MA. If MA had matched the national average for state and local spending on education in 2005, it would have spent an additional \$800 million dollars on primary and secondary education.

### **MYTH: No tolerance policies keep schools safe for kids who really want to be there**

**FACTS:** Zero Tolerance Policies have pushed children into court even when juvenile crime and arrest rates were going down both in MA and nationally. A recent study showed that introduction of high stakes testing in Florida (like MCAS), led schools to disproportionately punish low performing students to exclude them from school during the testing period. Recent studies show that African American students are punished for less severe rule violations than white students, and punished more harshly for the same offenses. 25% of all African American male students will be suspended at least once over a four year period.