

LIFTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Building Education Pathways
to Economic Opportunity
for All



LATINOS
for EDUCATION

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The Education Trust

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We are grateful to all sixteen members of the [Student Pathways to Success Coalition](#) for keeping equity as the cornerstone of our efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

Although Massachusetts still tops most state-by-state rankings of the best public education systems in the country, we know that significant equity gaps have persisted for decades—and that the Commonwealth has fallen behind other states when it comes to preparing students for success after high school.

The Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education (MBAE), along with our partners in the Student Pathways to Success Coalition, has been working to expand access to college and career pathway programs across the state. In an effort to ensure that our advocacy work is informed by and responsive to the lived experiences of people who have navigated these realities for many years, MBAE partnered with The Education Trust in Massachusetts and Latinos for Education to conduct a series of interviews with Black and Latina/o/x leaders from nonprofits, institutions of higher education, youth empowerment organizations, foundations, and more.

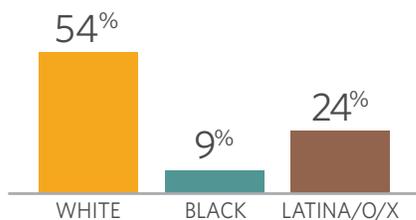
These interviews surfaced a number of important topics that have significant relevance, especially for state policymakers, business leaders, and educators. Interviewees offered insights on how the traditional model used in many Massachusetts high schools fails to consider the unique circumstances of Black and Latina/o/x students and multilingual learners (MLL) who encounter conscious and unconscious bias from educators, counselors, and school staff who often do not reflect the student population they serve.

These systemic barriers, implicit and explicit bias, and lack of cultural awareness impact Black, Latina/o/x, immigrant, and economically disadvantaged students' ability to adequately prepare for college, earn certificates, enroll in secondary education, and obtain a job in a high-paying industry.

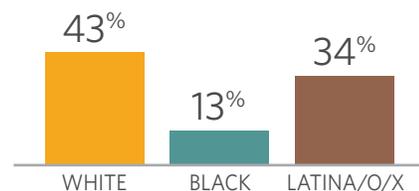
Massachusetts has developed high school redesign models that are meant to prepare all participants for success in the workforce, but there are two issues with the current policy framework: pathways programs are currently only reaching a small fraction of high school students, and not all of the pathways programs have an explicit focus on recruiting and supporting students who are traditionally under-represented in higher education and high-growth industries.

How many students currently participate in pathway programs?¹

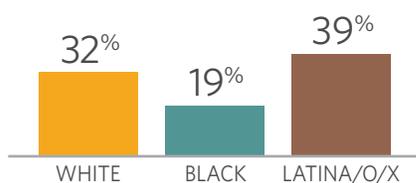
Percentage of all public school students (913,735) by race/ethnicity



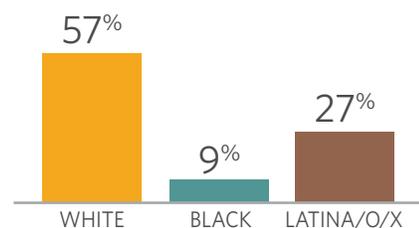
Percentage of Innovation Career Pathways participants (5,673) by race/ethnicity



Percentage of Early College participants (6,504) by race/ethnicity



Percentage of Chapter 74 programs participants (54,811) by race/ethnicity



Leaders we interviewed emphasized a crucial need to diversify classroom educators who can connect with Black and Latina/o/x students from marginalized communities to build their confidence and empower them to pursue challenging courses and careers in rapidly growing fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) occupations.

Throughout the interviews, we heard about access and expectations challenges that result in students of color and those from economically disadvantaged communities often forgoing higher education and opting for low-wage occupations, either because they are unable to envision themselves in thriving sectors of the Massachusetts economy where skilled workers are in demand or because they are simply unaware of what high-growth industries are present in the state.

Closing the opportunity gap is the responsibility of educators and employers who must move beyond diversity, equity, and inclusion policies and actively engage Black and Latina/o/x students from disconnected communities in culturally meaningful ways.

INTERVIEWEES



Dr. Almi Abeyta
Superintendent
Chelsea Public Schools

“It’s not about just getting our students into Early College for us. I’m looking at how do we sustain them, and ensure they graduate with their associate’s because we know that once they graduate with an associates, many of them will go on to a four-year college. How do we support them to finish [their degrees] ?”



Victor Caraballo-Anderson
Head of School
Lawrence High School

“You really have to be grounded in the community’s needs, and start building solutions from scratch. For example, if I’m thinking about internships, well, I’m focusing on paid internships. Why? Because 54% of my kids work. And while they will love internships, they gotta feed their families. And so I gotta think about that component.”



Turahn Dorsey
Chief Impact Officer
Eastern Bank Foundation

“If you don’t understand that you live in one of the world’s meccas for post-secondary education—if you don’t understand what it means to live in a coastal city that has to solve climate change problems—if you don’t understand that you’re in a global finance city—the way you perceive possibility is constrained.”



Dr. Pam Eddinger
President
Bunker Hill Community College

“There is a lack of awareness of what it means to connect with students of color and of different cultures and ethnicities. And therefore, you’re missing a whole cultural dimension, which is the supportive network for these students as they move into spaces that are unfamiliar to them.”



Dr. Aisha Francis
CEO and President
Franklin Cummings Tech

“There’s uneven access to quality voc-tech opportunities. That narrows the pipeline of students who are aware enough about technical and trade opportunities to want to consider them... it compresses their readiness, which then creates a confidence gap.”



Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson
Stoddard Professor of Management and Dean of the Business School
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

“Representation is important. You need to see people that look like you to help you feel empowered and emboldened that you can succeed.”

INTERVIEWEES



Robert Lewis, Jr.
Nicholas President and CEO
Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston

"It's critical for our business communities because they can no longer wait and hope that college students who come here to go to school that we cross our fingers and hope they stay when we have a talent pipeline that's right in our neighborhoods, and that's what we want to keep front and center."



Grace Moreno
CEO & Executive Director
Massachusetts LGBT
Chamber of Commerce

"Imagine how powerful a coalition of parents of color who inform schools of the real experiences that their Black and Brown students are facing would be. Schools have to seriously listen to the reality of what their students and families are experiencing."



Clinton Ngamne
Everett High School,
Class of 2023
Franklin Cummings Tech,
Class of 2024

"My goal [in being a champion for Early College]... was to definitely try to make this more accessible for the next people coming into my school. I... want to remind [incoming students] that... it's a helpful program that's working, because I'm in it and I'm succeeding in it and I definitely think other people will succeed in it as well."



George Ramirez
Executive Director
Lawrence Partnership

"It is critical for young people to learn and develop soft skills to be successful in college, work, and life in general."



Norma Rey-Alicea
Executive Director and
Co-Founder
NextGen Talent

"The word college should be replaced by post secondary, right? That's the first thing: we need to make sure that young people understand that a four-year degree is just one of the training options for landing a well-paying job."



Claudino Teixeira
Jeremiah Burke High School,
Class of 2018
Franklin Cummings Tech,
Class of 2022

"I always wanted to go to the college, but I didn't really know if I would be able to make it because I have two older brothers, and none of them were able to go to college... I always wanted to, but honestly, I doubted that I'd be able to go..."

INTERVIEW THEMES

Expanding Access to Opportunity

Growing up in the projects of East Boston, everyone Robert Lewis, Jr. knew worked at Logan International Airport, on the docks, or as police officers and firefighters. It wasn't until years later that he discovered higher-paying jobs mere miles away in Boston and Cambridge.

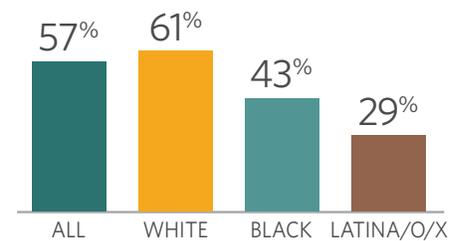
"We're the life sciences capital of the world," said Lewis, Nicholas President and CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston. "Do our kids in the hood know that? Do our kids in the hood know that people from around the world are coming here, getting educated here, buying property here to get the best education and training to travel the world, and it's what, a couple of miles from Roxbury?"

POLICY QUESTION

How can business leaders conduct meaningful outreach to communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities to raise awareness about opportunities in their industries?

Lewis said that in communities of color, everyone knows about the so-called cradle-to-prison pipeline. But Lewis would rather promote the cradle-to-success pipeline by introducing students to career pathways, opportunities, and access. Lewis envisions shifting the narrative about schools, companies, academia, and nonprofits' role in the youth and social sector and creating pathways to close the current opportunity gaps. These gaps are clearly illustrated by the data that show which students completed the sort of higher education degree or post-graduate certificate that would allow them to secure a good job that can support a family.

What percentage of MA residents have attained a higher education degree/post-graduate certificate?²



"It is about access development," said Lewis. "And I joke and say, we can put a place in our phone, and we can GPS it, and it can get us to a destination. When are we going to GPS young folks' paths?"

POLICY QUESTION

How can educators, in partnership with business leaders, work to create structured pathways of coursework (and work-based learning opportunities) that start in middle and high school, prepare students for eventual success in the workforce, and are easy for both students and counselors to follow and understand?

Turahm Dorsey, Chief Impact Officer at the Eastern Bank Foundation and former Chief of Education for the City of Boston, has met generations of young people from Boston, predominantly students of color, who grew up in the Boston neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, but weren't aware of the higher education options in their area that they could think about pursuing because they never stepped foot on a Boston-based college campus until they were teens or young adults.

"If it is the case that you don't have family members, neighbors, close friends who work in these industries, who may themselves be first-time college goers, or you don't have very many college goers in your family, you don't know what that pathway is," Dorsey said. "We need to help you understand and get really, really comfortable, not only with these options but the civic spaces they represent."

In addition to introducing students to careers early in their education, Lewis said we must also help students develop soft skills, introduce them to professional experiences outside of their communities and connect kids with their passion points.

This thought was echoed by George Ramirez, Executive Director of the Lawrence Partnership, who said that “It is critical for young people to learn and develop soft skills to be successful in college, work, and life in general.”

“At the end of the day, for me, that’s the bottom line,” said Lewis. “How are we going to close the opportunity gap so our young people can participate in this incredible economy that we have in particular in our city, state and region?”

POLICY QUESTION

How can state policymakers ensure not only that college and career pathway programs are accessible to students of color but also that all students have opportunities to learn “durable skills,” explore a wide range of career identity options, and participate in internships and other meaningful work-based learning opportunities?

Addressing Basic Student Need

When Clinton Ngamne was in high school, he worried about what his life would be like after graduation, where he would go to college, and how he would pay for it as an immigrant from an under-resourced community in Everett.

“I was trying to figure out where I want to go to school or what I want to do in life,” said Ngamne, an immigrant from Cameroon. “I didn’t have a full understanding of that. I knew I was interested in science and technology, but at the same time, I didn’t know how I was going to take that step.”

He wanted to attend a four-year college or community college but needed a better understanding of what was possible. After searching for programs to help him find his path, he learned about the Advance Standing Associates Program (ASAP)—a partnership that allows students from regional high schools to attend [Franklin Cummings Tech](#), where they can earn college credits and explore career possibilities.

Ngamne is an example of the roll-of-the-dice education system, where Black and Latina/o/x students, immigrants, and economically disadvantaged students may or may not have access to things like early college programs, high-quality school counselors, and rigorous STEM coursework—depending on their zip code.

POLICY QUESTION

How can state policymakers, educators, and local leaders such as school committee members make it easier for immigrant students to learn about the higher education pathway options (including details regarding the true cost of attendance) that are aligned with high-growth industries—while also expanding access to such pathway opportunities for more communities across the Commonwealth?

At Lawrence High School, where 95 percent of students are Latina/o/x and there’s a growing population of unaccompanied minors, the traditional ways to support students don’t work because the situations students face aren’t conventional, said Victor Caraballo-Anderson, Head of School.

“I shouldn’t have a 16, 17-year-old working 40 hours; that shouldn’t be the case,” he said. “I shouldn’t have a minor couch surfing, trying to figure life out. Those are the things that we have to account for and support these students in a real way.”

Caraballo-Anderson balances addressing basic needs like housing while equitably integrating multilingual, immigrant, and newcomer students into the educational framework. Instead of using the track system where students are grouped by their achievement level, every student in grades 9-12, regardless of English proficiency or an Individualized Educational Plan, takes Pre-Advanced Placement (AP) or Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

The model grew from five to 21 AP courses and from 150 to 1,200 students.

“I didn’t want to create a pipeline that would just be for an exclusive class, but it’s more like for our students who want to take up this challenge,” he said. “And so, we run a dual programming in which kids are a part of early college and AP courses, not either or.”

Caraballo-Anderson started an Early College program with a focus on equity, requiring that a fourth of the program include newcomers or special education students. The program has grown significantly over the last four years.

The high school establishes a strong partnership with colleges and implements a robust support system to ensure multilingual learners (MLLs) are successful when they get to college, said Caraballo-Anderson. Dedicated high school staff constantly communicate with professors, receive alerts when a student struggles with coursework and work with the college to identify interventions.

“Before we sign a contract with them, we ensure that they understand that it’s not like they’re doing us a favor,” he said. “It’s a contract in which we’ll all benefit. When it comes down to it, it’s just an expectation when it comes to serving our students. The idea of students dropping [out] and not being a part of the college experience is not an option.”

EDUCATION TRUST STUDY³ OF MLL STUDENTS

1 in 3 don't graduate on time 

1 in 7 drop out entirely 

POLICY QUESTION

How can state policymakers work with educators to ensure that MLLs receive the specific support they need to gain access to—and succeed in—rigorous college and career pathway programs?

Those who attend college enter a system that was formed 30 to 40 years ago and doesn’t reflect the reality of today’s students, said Dr. Pam Eddinger, President of Bunker Hill Community College, the largest community college in Massachusetts.

It’s based on outdated stereotypes that assume students attend college immediately after high school, are between 17 and 21, have two parents, are middle class, live in a house, and attend a four-year college. Eddinger’s students are vastly different from that perception.

“I can tell you that at any one time, 50 percent of my students are food insecure,” Eddinger said. “They’re making trade-offs all the time, between books and food, the children’s food and their food, filling a half tank so you can have something to eat. And about 14 percent of them are homeless.”

POLICY QUESTION

How can educators work to identify which basic need supports they are able to provide for students—through supports for K-12 students as well as programs such as the Supporting Urgent Community College Equity through Student Services (SUCCESS) fund—while also partnering with community-based organizations that may be able to provide services outside of the institution’s (or district’s) capabilities? How can they do this in a way that emphasizes that the long-term success of the pathway program depends on student outcome results, including completion of higher education degrees?

Closing the Confidence Gap

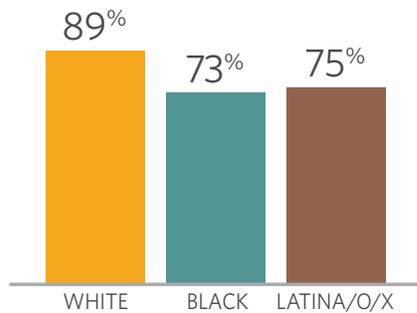
Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson, Dean of the Business School at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), noticed she wasn't seeing many incoming students of color or students from economically challenged backgrounds in her program, presumably because many felt like they wouldn't be prepared to excel in a school like WPI.

WPI started a five-week summer program for incoming college freshman offering rigorous courses—including pre-calculus and computer science—to address the gap. Ultimately, she said that despite the program's benefits, significant challenges remain when it comes to overcoming the persistent stereotypes that send signals to Black and Brown kids that they aren't capable and smart enough to succeed in STEM fields.

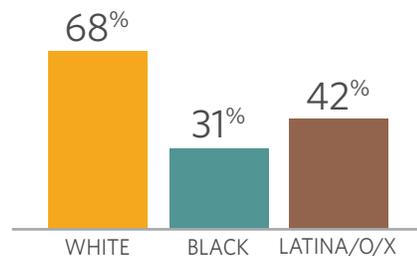
Jackson recounted how her son, now a college junior, was discouraged by a teacher from taking a more rigorous math course in sixth grade. That experience followed him all through the rest of his career, and to this day, he is challenged by math courses.

Which students participate in rigorous coursework?

Percentage of MA high school graduates who complete MassCore⁴
A subset of rigorous coursework aligned with admittance requirements at MA public higher education institutions.



Percentage of MA high school students who participated in AP coursework and scored at least a 3 (out of 5)⁵



“The teacher that is seeing these students, they literally have the power of life and death in their words, to be able to speak an encouraging word to a student,” she said. “The choices they make for sixth-grade math have repercussions all the way to college.”

POLICY QUESTION

How can state policymakers work in partnership with educators to ensure that guidance counselors and other educators are trained in the importance of using an asset-based approach to advising students on which college and career pathways to pursue?

There is an unevenness in high school preparation across public and charter school systems where there isn't enough exposure to challenging courses like calculus and the building blocks of computer science that would help students understand whether they want to move into a particular field, like an IT or technical career, said Dr. Aisha Francis, President and CEO of Franklin Cummings Tech.

For more information on the importance of scaling computer science coursework, please check out the MBE report from March 2023: [Expanding Access to & Participation in Computer Science in Massachusetts](#).

Ninety percent of Franklin Cummings Tech’s students come from the public school systems Francis described.

“A lack of clarity about what options exist narrows the pipeline of students who are aware enough of technical and trade opportunities to want to consider them in high school and beyond. Of those who are aware, constrained tech career exploration compresses their readiness, which means there’s a confidence gap,” said Francis. “There’s a lot of developmental work that colleges like ours take on to help someone’s ambitions meet their expectations.”

“It is crucial to give marginalized students a sense of security so they can feel grounded while they operate in spaces that are often dominated—and designed—by white, male, non-immigrant people,” said Norma Rey-Alicea, Co-Founder and Executive Director of NextGen Talent, which focuses on closing information gaps for Latina/o/x, Black, and low-income students as they consider their postsecondary and career options.

This dynamic was also underscored by Grace Moreno, CEO and Executive Director of the Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce, who said “The education system is systemically built to oppress Black and Brown kids. You’re already placed in certain groups that are often determined by the color of your skin when you walk in, and you must over-prove yourself to be taken seriously to enter a classroom where you can compete with your fellow white students. This psychologically has a negative effect on your ability to perform, how you ask questions, and how you take risks. I saw that in my last two years of high school in this country.”

“Some Black and Brown students may respond to these systemic pressures by selecting college majors that lead to lower-paying jobs because they’re socialized to believe they’re not smart enough, haven’t met anyone like them in their neighborhood in a STEM career, or are by default attracted to the kinds of helping jobs that have played a role in their own development,” said Rey-Alicea.

“The field is huge, and there’s an opportunity to find yourself anywhere in STEM,” said Jackson. “I want to be able to encourage students who think that STEM is [just one thing] because it’s not; it’s so much bigger.”

These dynamics highlight the importance of having a diverse educator workforce who look like the student population they’re working with and can connect with them in authentic and meaningful ways. Dr. Almi Abeyta, the Superintendent of Chelsea Public Schools—a district that has increased their educators of color by 18 percent over the last two years—told us that “Seeing people who look like them every day in teaching or as a principal is important [for students of color] because they see it, and they even say ‘Oh, wow, that’s really cool. I could do that.’”

POLICY QUESTION

What steps can state policymakers take to diversify Massachusetts’ educator workforce so that more students of color have teachers, administrators, and guidance/career counselors who look like them and can help them envision themselves succeeding in rigorous pathways?

Creating a Culture of Belonging and Inclusion in the Workplace

Employers have a significant role in proactively raising awareness about career options in marginalized communities. To lay the groundwork for having the diverse, skilled workforce they’ll need to fill future jobs, employers—especially those in high-growth industries—will need to expand the pool of young people aware of and seeking pathways into specific fields.

“We’re going to need companies that are going to invest in our young folks because they’re going to add to their bottom line,” said Lewis. “This isn’t charity. They’re not doing this because it’s a nice thing to do. They’re doing it because there’s a critical need, positions they need to fill. I actually think when companies do this, and we’re very public about who

those companies are, others will want to follow.”

Eastern Bank Foundation’s Dorsey said more corporate leaders are realizing they need to come upstream to be partners in creating the developmental experience. While some employers have been reluctant to put time and money into training young people, there are industries where a lack of talent, especially diverse talent, is spurring investment.

“Diverse talent is not walking in the door,” Dorsey said. “There’s a premium that you should expect to pay for diverse talent.”

Employers must then create a workplace that makes diverse employees want to stay. These efforts around belonging and inclusion in the workplace are essential for retention—especially for new employees who are also dealing with a transition from higher education to the workplace, which can be especially jarring.

Claudino Teixeira, a first-generation immigrant student from Cape Verde, said that after he graduated from the ASAP program at Franklin Cummings Tech and got a job in the electrical engineering field, “It was fun at first, but it was also challenging... it was totally different. Because it’s not like you’re studying something... it’s a different reality. And I had to get used to it.”

Employers have to develop strategies for how they will support students making this transition. “It’s one thing to bring diverse students into your workplace and onto your campuses,” said Jackson. “But they also have to have a sense of belonging. You can’t just have one person or two people and think they’re all of a sudden going to be able to thrive. They need community, just like the rest of us. We’re communal creatures and want to find people who share our values, experiences, and cultural identities.”

POLICY QUESTION

How can business leaders work to create inclusive spaces that allow incoming employees—as well as students who are participating in internships or other on-site work-based learning experiences—to feel welcome (both on the job and in the community) and understand how their backgrounds and experiences will add value to the workplace?

POLICY QUESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy recommendations listed here are responses to specific topics that surfaced during the interviews conducted for this paper. The complete Policy Playbook that has been endorsed by the Pathways Coalition is available on our site: www.studentpathwaystosuccess.org.

Expanding Access to Opportunity

QUESTIONS

- How can business leaders conduct meaningful outreach to communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities to raise awareness about opportunities in their industries?
- How can educators, in partnership with business leaders, work to create structured pathways of coursework (and work-based learning opportunities) that will prepare students for success after high school—and are easy for students and counselors to follow and understand?
- How can state and local policymakers ensure not only that college and career pathway programs are accessible to students of color but also that all students have opportunities to learn “durable skills,” explore a wide range of career identity options, and participate in internships and other meaningful work-based learning opportunities?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- State policymakers should work to greatly expand access to designated pathway programs—including Early College, Innovation Career Pathways, Chapter 74 (and non-Chapter 74), and STEM Tech Career Academies—and they should prioritize the approval of new pathway programs that would recruit and support students who are traditionally under-represented in higher education and high-growth fields.
 - As they look to expand pathway opportunities in more and more communities across the Commonwealth, state policymakers should also consider approaches that allow them to invest in, and learn from, institutions and schools that have a track record of successfully implementing pathway programs.
- Business leaders should take concrete steps to remove any barriers that may be preventing the establishment of more and deeper partnerships with schools and districts, with a particular focus on conducting outreach to communities of color and economically disadvantaged areas.
- Various stakeholders—including educators, state and local policymakers, business leaders, school committee members, and more—should work to ensure that all students have access to high-quality work-based learning opportunities—as well as opportunities to acquire “durable skills” as part of an integrated curriculum.

Addressing Basic Student Need

QUESTIONS

- How can state policymakers, educators, and local leaders such as school committee members make it easier for immigrant students to learn about the higher education pathway options (including details regarding the true cost of attendance) that are aligned with high-growth industries?
- How can state policymakers work with educators to ensure that multilingual learners (MLLs) receive the specific support they need to gain access to—and succeed in—rigorous college and career pathway programs?

- How can educators work to identify which social service supports they are able to provide for students while also partnering with community-based organizations that may be able to provide services outside of the district’s capabilities?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- State policymakers and district leaders should work to recruit and retain diverse educators who understand the specific needs of immigrant and MLL students, and should work with local stakeholders and school committee members to develop supportive programs and other resources to help educators address the needs of both immigrant and MLL students.
- State policymakers should provide continued support to existing programs—such as the SUCCESS fund—that provide funding to meet the basic needs of students attending institutions of higher education (including those in pathway programs).
- High schools should consider the establishment of wrap-around services to support high-needs students in a comprehensive approach to address social-emotional needs and support learning.
- State policymakers, educators, and local leaders should work in partnership to identify which social services students may be able to receive from the public education system, and provide referrals for those services that are outside the scope of what schools can deliver.
 - In providing referrals, schools should establish partnerships with community-based organizations who serve, and have established relationships with, their students and the communities they come from.

Closing the Confidence Gap

QUESTIONS

- How can state policymakers work in partnership with educators to ensure that guidance counselors and other educators are trained in the importance of using an asset-based approach to advising students on which college and career pathways to pursue?
- What steps can state policymakers take to diversify Massachusetts’ educator workforce so that more students of color have teachers, administrators, and guidance/career counselors who look like them and can help them envision themselves succeeding in rigorous pathways?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- State policymakers should act urgently to consider and approve legislative and regulatory proposals that would increase educator diversity within the context of promoting high-quality teachers for all students.
- State and local policymakers should provide resources that educators in school districts could use to recruit and retain guidance and career counselors who are culturally diverse, who look like the students they work with, and who share similar life experiences/can relate to their students.
- It is essential that state and local leaders work to ensure that all educators have been trained in cultural competency and explicit/implicit biases so that they do not discourage traditionally under-represented students from pursuing rigorous coursework or career pathways.

Creating a Culture of Belonging and Inclusion in the Workplace

QUESTION

- How can business leaders work to create inclusive spaces that allow incoming employees—as well as students who are participating in internships or other on-site work-based learning experiences—to feel welcome (both on the job and in the community) and understand how their backgrounds and experiences will add value to the workplace?

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- Business leaders should consider how they can create communities of practice to learn from each other on the best ways to create inclusive spaces for their employees.
- Business leaders should commit to, at a broader scale, entering into more and deeper partnerships with districts/schools—to gather and develop information on the range of work-based learning opportunities that an employer can offer, to create sample MOU templates for establishing an internship program with a school, and to create a guide for putting together meaningful school visitation days—with the goal of sparking more proactive engagement resulting in greater work-based learning opportunities for students who are currently under-represented in high-growth fields.

Interviewee Biographies

Dr. Almi Abeyta

Superintendent, **Chelsea Public Schools**

Dr. Almudena (Almi) G. Abeyta has spent 27 years working to improve teaching and learning for students in urban education. Prior to her appointment as Superintendent of Chelsea Public Schools, she worked as an assistant superintendent for teaching and learning in several districts: Somerville Public Schools (2017–2019), Santa Fe Public Schools (2012–2017), and Boston Public Schools (2009–2012). In 2015, she was awarded the first Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) Latina Administrator of the Year award, and in 2021 she was awarded the Latinos for Education La Lucha Award. Dr. Abeyta was the principal of the Donald McKay K-8 School (McKay) in Boston Public Schools from 2004–2008. Before becoming a principal, Dr. Abeyta taught kindergarten.

Victor Caraballo-Anderson

Head of School, **Lawrence High School**

Four years ago, Victor Caraballo-Anderson started his journey as the Head of School at Lawrence High School Campus. As the Head of School at LHS, he supports high school principals across the high school network, including an exam school, two alternative schools, a newcomers academy, and three conventional schools. He has been an educator for over sixteen years, and spent the first ten years of his career as a middle and high school History, English Second Language (ESL), and English teacher in the City of Boston. He also has served as an ESL Director, Ethnic Studies Coach, Fundraising Director, and School Administrator. Victor is passionate and thrilled to serve in his current role, which enables him to maximize autonomy and leverage school transformation. He is proud to be at the forefront of the Equity Work in Lawrence, in addition to being an active participant in the district vision of a Portrait of a Graduate.

Turahh Dorsey

Chief Impact Officer, **Eastern Bank Foundation**

Turahh Dorsey is a researcher, policymaker and strategist whose career has focused on systems change and civic innovation. As Chief Impact Officer at the Eastern Bank Foundation, he helps the foundation invest in strategies to expand economic mobility and inclusion across the region and is among the leaders reshaping the early childhood landscape in Massachusetts. Additionally, Dorsey is the co-founder of the Jazz Urbane Cafe, a new arts hub and full service restaurant slated to open in Boston's Nubian Square. He's also Franklin Cummings Tech's current board chair. Finally, Dorsey served as Boston's Chief of Education in Mayor Martin J. Walsh's cabinet from September 2014 to November 2018.

Dr. Pam Eddinger

President, **Bunker Hill Community College**

Dr. Pam Eddinger is president of Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), the largest of 15 community colleges in Massachusetts, serving 16,000 students. Dr. Eddinger began her tenure at BHCC in 2013 and previously served as president of Moorpark College in Southern California from 2008. Dr. Eddinger's service in the Community College movement spans 30 years, with senior posts in academics and student affairs, communications and policy, and executive leadership. Dr. Eddinger serves on several boards and commissions, including the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), WGBH Boston, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, the Boston Foundation (TBF), the Massachusetts Workforce Development Board, The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS), Achieving the Dream (ATD), the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy, and the American Association of

Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Dr. Eddinger was honored by the Obama White House as a Champion of Change. Most recently, she was appointed by US Secretary of Labor Martin Walsh to serve as the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship.

Dr. Aisha Francis

President and CEO, **Franklin Cummings Tech**

In 2021, Aisha Francis, PhD, became the first female President in the 113-year history of Benjamin Franklin Cummings Institute of Technology, now known as Franklin Cummings Tech. Dr. Francis is an award-winning academic, nonprofit leader and strategist with broad experience in organizational planning, philanthropy, board development, and corporate communications. She believes in the ability of effective organizations and well-supported individuals to transform underserved communities for the better, which is her life's work. Recognized by the Boston Business Journal as a 40 Under 40 leader to watch, and by the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce with a Pinnacle Award For Arts and Education, Dr. Francis contributes to the civic health of Boston through volunteer work and advocacy. Dr. Francis was appointed by former Governor Charlie Baker to the board of directors at Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, the state agency dedicated to the growth of the clean energy sector in MA.

Rev. Dr. Debora Jackson

Stoddard Professor of Management and Dean of the Business School, **Worcester Polytechnic Institute**

The Reverend Dr. Debora Jackson is the Harry G. Stoddard Endowed Professor Management and Dean of The Business School at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. The WPI Business School develops adaptive leaders who create sustainable solutions, deliver globally responsible impact, and conduct transformative research at the intersection of business, technology, and people. As a non-profit leader, Dr. Jackson served as Director of Operations of All Girls Allowed; Director of Lifelong Learning at Yale Divinity School; Executive Director of the Ministers Council of the American Baptist Churches, USA, and Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church in Needham, MA. Dr. Jackson was a 20-year business leader, with an emphasis on IT and software engineering, before heeding the call to ministry.

Robert Lewis, Jr.

Nicholas President and CEO, **Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston**

As Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston's Nicholas President and CEO, Robert Lewis, Jr. is a nationally recognized thought leader, public speaker, and social innovator. He's a tireless advocate for our urban youth, believing it is our moral obligation to help them succeed. Robert's advocacy has brought him numerous awards and honors, including: NonProfit PRO's Lifetime Achievement Award (2022); King Boston's Embrace Award (2022); The Boston Business Journal's Power 50 (2019, 2020, and 2021). Robert launched The BASE in 2013 to shift the national mindset about what it takes for urban youth to succeed. The BASE leverages their passion for sports to create pathways to higher education and meaningful careers through scholarships, academic support, and internships.

Grace Moreno

CEO and Executive Director, **Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce**

Experienced senior executive, startup nurturer, and mission-driven entrepreneur, Grace Moreno has over 20 years of experience leading state and national not-for-profit organizations. Within those twenty years, Grace has been a change-maker in the fields of politics, health, housing, civic education, and economic development. She has served in previous roles as Vice President of Community Programs at The Community Builders, Inc. and Vice President for Operations and Finance at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the US Senate, among others. Currently, Grace is the CEO and Executive Director of the Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce, a statewide non-profit that cultivates inclusive relationships between LGBT-owned and ally-owned businesses and the corporate sector that drive economic impact throughout the Commonwealth.

Clinton Ngamne

Everett High School, Class of 2023. Franklin Cummings Tech, Class of 2024

Clinton Ngamne is a recent graduate of Everett High School in Everett, Massachusetts. He currently studies Renewable Energy at Franklin Cummings Tech. Ngamne was born and raised in Cameroon, Africa. He immigrated to the United States midway through high school. Determined to find a way to afford higher education without accumulating crippling debt and to secure a good job, Ngamne enrolled in Franklin Cummings Tech's Advance Standing Associates Program (ASAP)—a program for high school juniors and seniors who want to start earning an associate degree while they are still in high school. His gratitude for the opportunities that the ASAP program/Franklin Cummings Tech has connected him to moves him to help students with stories like his gain access to and awareness of similar opportunities.

George Ramirez

Executive Director, **Lawrence Partnership**

George Ramirez is the Executive Director of the Lawrence Partnership. The Lawrence Partnership is a collaboration of business and civic leaders committed to building a local economy that benefits all people in Lawrence. Prior to coming to the Partnership, Mr. Ramirez worked as an attorney in private practice providing consulting services to businesses and non-profits. He's also served as General Counsel to the Secretary of Housing and Economic Development under former Massachusetts Gov. Deval L. Patrick's Administration, in addition to being a chairman of the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council, a member of Emerging Technology Fund Advisory Committee, and a member of Gov. Patrick's Development Cabinet. Earlier in his career, Mr. Ramirez served as a member of the City Council for the City of Lowell, MA. He has also served as a Trustee for Suffolk University and is on many other boards and commissions.

Norma Rey-Alicea

Executive Director and Co-Founder, **NextGen Talent**

Norma Rey-Alicea is the Executive Director and co-founder of NextGen Talent. She has dedicated her career to the development of new educational models and career advancement solutions to close the opportunity gap for low-income students, with a focus on Latinx, Black, and immigrant students. Prior to NextGen Talent, she worked for Jobs for the Future (JFF), where she co-developed its Best Bets Services, providing professional training and tools to help students find career pathways meeting their interests and filling regional employer needs. Earlier in her career, Norma worked for the Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation (HOPE) in Jamaica Plain, where she designed curricula, taught, and managed tutorial services for low-income Latinx students attending the Boston Public Schools. She is a proud indigenous Guarani Latina from Jamaica Plain, as well as a community activist on racial justice issues, affordable housing, and the rights of indigenous peoples and immigrants.

Claudino Teixeira

Jeremiah Burke High School, Class of 2018. Franklin Cummings Tech, Class of 2022

Claudino Teixeira is a graduate of Jeremiah Burke High School in Dorchester, Boston and Franklin Cummings Tech. He is a proud immigrant from Cape Verde, and came to the United States in 2017. Determined to pursue his dreams to attend college and become an engineer, he participated in Franklin Cummings Tech's Advance Standing Associates Program (ASAP)—a program for high school juniors and seniors who want to start earning an associate degree while they are still in high school. Throughout his college journey, he faced numerous challenges as an immigrant, but his unwavering dedication and perseverance allowed him to persist and become the first in his family to graduate with a college degree in 2022. With his B.S. in Electrical Engineering, he now works as an Electrical Engineer at SynQor. He hopes to grow in the field and inspire others to follow their dreams, regardless of their background or circumstances.

APPENDIX B

Self-concept, Self-efficacy, and Asset-based Approaches to Education

Transforming schools into affirming places for marginalized youth is critical to increasing their postsecondary readiness and achievement. Although we did not delve deeply into concepts such as self-concept, self-efficacy, and asset-based approaches to education within this report, it is important to recognize the volume of literature underscoring the role social-emotional supports must play in efforts to boost Black, Brown, immigrant, and low-income adolescents' academic success.

Below you will find some information about the effects of marginalization in school contexts on minority students: alienation, disempowerment, and untapped student potential. This information helps to paint a more comprehensive picture of the challenges for marginalized youth, which are both material and social-emotional.

The Makings of a Confidence Gap: Identity Formation in Marginalized Youth

- Self-concept refers to the beliefs one holds about themselves and the responses of others. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their competency to achieve a task/goal. During adolescent development, youth "... begin to create the blueprint of who they envision themselves to be in the world and how capable they are to navigate life's challenges."⁶
- Classroom environments and broader school cultures influence the social-emotional development of adolescents, as they spend the majority of their time in school. Consequently, racial/socio-economic bias in learning environments profoundly impact minority students' burgeoning identities, perceptions of intrinsic value, skill, and talent, ambitions, and confidence in the trajectories of their lives.⁷
- Exposure to overt racism and microaggressions in school can lead to students of color internalizing negative stereotypes and limiting beliefs about themselves. This impacts their academic performance and ability to envision themselves in college and careers.⁸

Deficit Thinking and a Culture of Low Expectations

- Deficit thinking leads even well-meaning educators, counselors, and administrators to make false assumptions about the intrinsic traits and capabilities of Black, Brown, and low-income students. It attributes poor academic performance and postsecondary unpreparedness to marginalized students' intelligence or motivations, rather than overarching educational and societal inequities.⁹
- Deficit thinking contributes to a culture of low expectations for marginalized students. It rationalizes thinking that non-white, middle, or high-income students are disinterested in or incapable of succeeding in rigorous course offerings that best prepare students for college and career.¹⁰
- An asset-based approach to education and counseling can help address the issues summarized in this report. "School counselors, administrators, and educators need to work together to ensure that a career and college-going culture is promoted and integrated into their school climate. Students who feel supported [and] empowered... are more likely to attend post-secondary schooling and are more prepared for their future careers."¹¹

APPENDIX C

Endnotes

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