



TIMELINE OF STRATEGIES AND IMPACT

Promoting Transformational Change at the Intersection of Policy, Research and Practice

This timeline presents an abbreviated history of Mass Insight Education & Research Institute and a summary of the impact that we have had on school reform in Massachusetts and, increasingly, on the national level.

1990-1993: Supporting Reform (Mass Insight Corporation)

- Began regular polling on education issues (which has continued to the present)
- Provided briefings on key reform issues to Massachusetts business and government leaders

1994-1996: High-Quality Standards, a Model Testing Program

Following passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act in 1993, Mass Insight Corporation took a lead role in the early planning for state standards and testing.

- Assembled the Education Leadership Group, which informed civic and business leaders on MCAS and skills that matter through high-level, monthly briefings
- Convened annual joint leadership briefings and reports with Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation that focused on accountability and school finance
- Published issue and progress reports in our role as articulator, consensus-builder, and policy-shaper in these early years of Massachusetts' school reform drive
- Part of a small network of leading state organizations brought together by the National Business Roundtable to coordinate nationwide strategy

1997-2003: The Leading Independent Voice for Higher-Standards Reform in Massachusetts

In the first great phase of Massachusetts' standards-based reform drive, the new nonprofit Mass Insight spin-off played a critical role in supporting leadership and public commitment to higher standards and in connecting policymakers with practitioners to help build what became the nation's "poster-child" model for effective standards-based reform.

- Mass Insight Corporation created Mass Insight Education and Research Institute (MERI) as a separate 501c3 organization in 1997. The group's first initiative: formation of the **Coalition for Higher Standards**, a group of forward-thinking superintendents representing one-third of the Commonwealth's public school population and committed to using standards as a lever to achieve genuine reform and higher achievement.
- MERI launched the **Campaign for Higher Standards** (1998) to engage the business community, connect it with leading educators through the Coalition, and lend it an informed voice to provide support and "air cover" for public policies supporting higher-standards reform. These efforts were critical to important policy decisions and

investments made during these years on student graduation requirements, processes to ensure fairness in student accountability, and investments in targeted support for students struggling to meet the new state requirements.

- Produced and distributed, twice per year under a state contract, 1.4 million newsletters (*Reaching Higher*) to inform public school parents about the nature, goals, and strategies of higher standards and accountability; defended the state's higher-standards approach in countless community forums and through twice-yearly gatherings of the **State Leaders Group** – fifty of the state's most prominent education, government, and business leaders
- Launched the **Building Blocks Initiative for Standards-Based Reform** (2000), to document and disseminate effective organizational reform strategies by sending teams of educators into **Vanguard** schools and districts that outperform those with similar demographics. Research has since produced 100 step-by-step strategies with downloadable tools and documents developed by Vanguard educators, available at www.massinsight.org.
- Produced annual "**Building on Success**" **Conferences** drawing 400-500 educators and top policy leaders (including Senator Edward M. Kennedy) to celebrate Vanguard districts and provide training in the effective-practice strategies
- Produced the **Keep the Promise Initiative**, the nation's most intensive examination of the effect of standards and accountability-based reform on high school student attitudes and behaviors and of the impact of major-district efforts (with targeted state funding) to provide extra help to students who need it in order to earn a diploma
- MERI was named the **2002 State Coalition of the Year** by the National Alliance of Business at a Conference Board annual meeting
- In part through our efforts, the graduation requirement remained in effect for the Class of 2003; 95 percent passed the MCAS exam and earned a high school diploma. One year later, additional support and testing brought that total to 97 percent.

1998-2005: Intensive Field Service Partnerships to Build School and District Capacity

As the focus of reform shifted from policy development to school and district improvement, Mass Insight devoted increasingly larger shares of staff time and budget to intensive field services, building on our own research into demonstrably effective organizational reform strategies.

- Organized six-day Regional Leadership Development Institutes that provided "Standards-Based Reform 101" training to 1,000 principals, lead teachers and staff in district teams
- Helped member districts win more than \$3 million in competitive state grants to advance comprehensive school reform
- Created **Standards Maps** (2000), widely used by Massachusetts school districts to build on the Commonwealth's curriculum frameworks, breaking down by grade level and subject the specific skills students in grades K-10 must master in English, math and science
- Drawing from Building Blocks effective-practice strategies, created the **Math Achievement Partnership** (2002-2005), an integrated math reform initiative aimed at making math at crucial grade levels (3-8) – for most districts, their toughest challenge – into an exemplar of curricular and instructional reform. With partners including WestEd/Learning Innovation and Lesley University, MERI provided intensive training and guidance to leadership, coaches, and teachers.

- Based on research that pinpoints when U.S. students often begin to lag their international peers, the program focused on grades 3-8
- In all, the initiative trained more than 1000 teachers in 12-16-day institutes and provided leadership/coaching training to 400 school and district leaders

2004-Present: Transformational Change and World Class Achievement

The success of the Class of 2003 in meeting minimum MCAS achievement requirements marked the completion of the first phase of Massachusetts reform – bringing all students to at least minimal (eighth grade) competency requirements. A 2003 Mass Insight report, “The Unfinished Agenda,” outlined three major goals for the next phase, aimed at delivering students to college- and job-ready proficiency:

- *Raise the Ceiling of Achievement (especially in math and science)*
- *Raise the Floor of Achievement (college-readiness)*
- *No Excuses for Failing Schools.*

Mass Insight has shaped our strategies since then around those goals, as follows:

Making Massachusetts World-Class in Math and Science Achievement

- Launched the **Great Schools Campaign** (2005), the successor to the Campaign for Higher Standards – a Massachusetts coalition of civic, business and education leaders focused on delivering the goals outlined above in the second phase of statewide reform
- Led a partnership-building and application process that resulted in Massachusetts becoming one of seven states to receive a **\$13.2 million multi-year grant from the National Math & Science Initiative**. Goal: to improve college readiness by significantly increasing participation and achievement in Advanced Placement® math, science and English.
 - Mass Insight now manages the **Massachusetts Math and Science Initiative** and has launched the work in 11 high schools in the first cohort; the five-year objective is to bring it to 90 high schools across the state
 - The initiative will bring a culture of excellence to urban schools by helping 6th-12th grade teachers develop the skills needed to effectively teach AP classes in high school and – in part through the **Great Schools Network** of partner school districts – to prepare younger students to successfully participate in AP

Meeting the Turnaround Challenge: Urban District Redesign through School Transformation

- Published ***The Turnaround Challenge*** (2007), the first part of a multi-phase effort, funded with \$2 million in three separate grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, focused on strategies to turn around the nation’s worst-performing schools
 - Report was downloaded more than 100,000 times in the year after its release
 - Currently working with selected partners (including The Parthenon Group, Cambridge Education, and the law firms of Holland + Knight and EducationCounsel), and selected states and districts to begin operationalizing the report’s turnaround framework
 - \$1.5 million grant from the Carnegie Corporation (January 2009) supports the launch of a new, five-year, \$36 million initiative to create “proof-point” turnaround zones in three states as models of district redesign