

## 01.15.13 Education Opportunity Event Remarks

AS PREPARED:

Governor Deval L. Patrick  
Education Opportunity Event  
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Good morning.

Principal Bott, thank you, and your incredible faculty and staff for the generous welcome back today.

Mayor Menino, I know you're right where you want to be – out and about in the city you love. Thank you for being here.

I also want to acknowledge our new Secretary of Education Matt Malone. We all look forward to his partnership.

And finally, and most importantly, good morning to all the young talent here at Orchard Gardens. Thank you for having me back and for bringing your parents out today, too.

I love to listen to their stories about what they want to be when they grow up. As a parent, I hear optimism and energy, eagerness and hope. As a governor, I hear a call to action. Every one of us has a stake in getting them where they want to go. We need to tell and to live their stories, and we need Orchard Gardens and schools like it across the Commonwealth to prepare them for their future. Investments in our schools of ideas, time and money matter, because those investments unlock growth and opportunity for all of us.

You know I have a sweet spot for Orchard Gardens. I will never forget bringing Ms. White-Dottin's first grade class to Washington, D.C. to meet the President last year.

But there are many schools whose students are like those here, kids who are, in spite of our overall exemplary record of student achievement, are stuck in achievement gaps. Poor kids, kids with special needs, kids who speak English as a second language, a disproportionate number of them kids of color. It is an educational and economic issue to have an achievement gap at all. But to let that languish for so many years, that's a moral question. These are our kids, too.

Our 2010 Achievement Gap Act created new rules and tools and new supports to be able to reach those children. Orchard Gardens has made the most of them.

Under the leadership of Principal Bott, Orchard Gardens extended the school day so it was based on the workweek and the workday (not the farm day), and allowed students to stay after school for extra support and help with their homework. Many students eat three meals a day here. Exercise, music and art fill out the school day. City Year and other partners help deal with truancy issues, and serve as mentors to students. Through Boston Medical Center, City Connects and other services, whole families are getting their basic needs met in the school.

And it's working. Student proficiency at Orchard Gardens has increased 184% in English Language Arts, 533% in Math. Test scores are up across the board, truancy is down, students are happier and healthier and parents are more engaged. The pride the students and educators have in this school is palpable – look no further than what we just heard. You have reason to be proud. I am proud of you too.

Orchard Gardens is a testament to the positive change we can make when we strategically invest in education and innovation. But we're not done.

Yesterday I laid out a plan to grow jobs and opportunity with new investments in transportation. Today, I want to propose a plan to grow jobs and opportunity with new investments in education.

We know the Achievement Gap persists. And it will until we go deeper. Being proficient in reading by Grade 3 is a key determinant of future academic success. And yet today in Massachusetts, only 61% of all 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, 38% of African-American 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and 36% of Hispanic 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are proficient in English Language Arts. Nearly 30,000 infants, toddlers and pre-school aged children are on the waitlist for early education programs. Unless we ensure that all children have access to high quality learning opportunities in their earliest years, when learning and achievement gaps begin to form, we will never reach our goal of all students reading proficiently by Grade 3.

This is not only about their social and economic future. It's about ours.

That is why I am proposing that we fully fund the early education programs in our state. We must ensure that every child in Massachusetts has access to high quality learning opportunities in their earliest years, when achievement gaps begin to form. We know from academic research, from years of public policy and from our own experience as parents that investing in our children at a young age pays huge dividends for them and for our community as a whole. To those who say we cannot afford this, I challenge you to show me which 4-year old you think we should not invest in.

The fact is, we have been working on education reform in Massachusetts for twenty years. This is nothing new. We know what works. And now is the time to keep on this path, to do far more what has worked so well for so many students and to fulfill the promise of a great education for every child in the Commonwealth.

That starts with early education, like I mentioned. It continues in elementary, middle and high school. Next week, I will once again propose that we increase funding for K-12 education to record levels. Our lead in education is too important to lose. Our competitor states and competitor countries are not slowing down – neither can we. In addition, we must focus some of our resources on our highest-need districts. With a small amount of investment, we can make extended

learning time a reality in every middle school in every Gateway City in Massachusetts.

And there is more we can do to make a college education more affordable, accessible and relevant for the students of our state. Look at these kids here today. Think about where they want to go. You can hardly contain the promise and potential in this room, and why would we want to? Somewhere here today is the person who is going to cure cancer; or take us to Mars; or invent the next iPad. Somewhere here today is the nurse who is going to care for us; the craftsman who is going to rebuild the skyline of Boston; the musician who is going to draw thousands to Symphony Hall. I want that to happen here in Massachusetts. We have made great strides in higher education, especially with our community college reforms last year. I am proposing to fully fund that reform effort, to raise our investment in state universities and UMass and to reinvigorate the MassGrants program to make sure everyone can get to college, no matter their income.

In my State of the Commonwealth tomorrow, I will further outline a plan for how we should invest in our students and why it's critical for growth and prosperity for all of ours.

We can do this. We just have to make the choice. We can choose to invest in our children, to make education investments that have been proven time and again to work. Or we can choose to do nothing. But as I said yesterday when I was talking about transportation, doing nothing is a choice, too.

And that choice has consequences. It means children going on to middle school without knowing how to read. It means young people dropping out of school and falling through the cracks. It means young adults not prepared with the skills they need for the jobs of the future. It means our students not having the opportunity and support they need to thrive, and our economy not having the fuel it needs to grow.

I choose to invest in these kids, and I know every parent and teacher in this room does as well. We can't rest until every child across the Commonwealth can stand up, bursting with pride, to tell us his or her dream for the future – and have a chance at achieving it.

Thank you for having me today, and for helping us shape the future they deserve.