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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Connects Expands: Optimized Student Support Model Now in 17 Boston Public Schools

City Connects newly implemented in 7 of Boston's turnaround schools

BOSTON—Sept. 8, 2010—City Connects, a model of optimized student support working to ensure that all children come to school ready to learn and thrive, is expanding to a total of 17 Boston Public Schools (BPS) for the 2010-11 academic year. Made possible by the state's School Improvement Grants, City Connects will be implementing its model into seven of Boston's "turnaround" elementary schools. This expansion increases City Connects' reach to serve approximately 25 percent (~7,000) of BPS's elementary school students.

City Connects (formerly Boston Connects) uses an evidence-based approach to collaborate with teachers in identifying the strengths and needs of every child and connect each student to a tailored set of prevention, intervention, and enrichment services in the community. Developed at Boston College's Lynch School of Education in 2001, this school-based intervention cost-effectively addresses students' academic, social-emotional, family, and physical well-being.

"Children living in high-poverty urban settings face countless challenges that impact learning and healthy development," said Mary E. Walsh, PhD, executive director of City Connects and the Daniel Kearns Professor in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. "We are pleased to join Boston Public Schools' effort to accelerate achievement in turnaround schools. Together with teachers, school staff, and community partners, we will work ensure every student comes to school able to learn and thrive."

In order to receive School Improvement Grants, persistently low-performing schools had to submit a proposal detailing their turnaround plans. Boston Public Schools selected City Connects as a partner to provide school-based student support.

"Boston Public Schools partnership with City Connects allows us to address each student's unique strengths and needs and provide the necessary community- and school-based supports to help every student achieve at very high levels academically," said Carol R. Johnson, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools. "Engaging partners in the community is essential to our overall strategy of improving our lowest performing schools. We are pleased that City Connects will be making these crucial connections that promote the academic, social/emotional, and physical well-being of all of our students."

Since its inception in 2001, City Connects has collected data that demonstrates the model's effectiveness. Overall, students in City Connects schools improve their statewide standardized test scores (MCAS); report card grades; and classroom behavior, work habits, and effort. In particular, City



Connects students at greatest risk experience significant improvement in MCAS performance at grades 3, 4, and 5. English Language Learners (ELL) in City Connects have literacy report card scores similar to non-City Connects students proficient in English—thereby eliminating the achievement gap. Additionally, City Connects students show significantly lower rates of grade retention than their peers, which is a strong predictor of on-time high school graduation. And after leaving City Connects, students outperform their Boston peers in middle school and achieve close to state proficiency levels on both English and math MCAS—these significant long-term effects persist through tenth grade.

A unique aspect of the City Connects systemic approach is its emphasis on health and wellness. Children living in high-poverty neighborhoods suffer disproportionately from chronic illness and health risks like obesity, asthma, and violence, which may negatively impact their academic success. With the longstanding support of the New Balance Foundation, City Connects has been able to include health as a core component of student support, paying particular attention to individual student's health needs, partnering with community health services and programs, and promoting the healthy development of the entire school.

The City Connects/Boston Public Schools for academic year 2010-11 are:

1. Agassiz Elementary School, Jamaica Plain*
2. Elihu Greenwood Elementary School, Hyde Park*
3. Farragut Elementary School, Fenway
4. Gardner Pilot Academy, Allston
5. Jackson/Mann K-8 School, Allston
6. John Eliot K-8 School, North End
7. John F. Kennedy (JFK) Elementary School, Jamaica Plain*
8. John P. Holland Elementary School, Dorchester*
9. Josiah Quincy Elementary School, South End
10. Mission Hill K-8 School, Mission Hill
11. Orchard Gardens K-8 School, Roxbury*
12. Paul A. Dever Elementary School, Dorchester*
13. Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary School, Roxbury
14. Samuel W. Mason Elementary School, Roxbury
15. Thomas A. Edison K-8 School, Brighton
16. William Monroe Trotter Elementary School, Dorchester*
17. Winship Elementary School, Brighton

**turnaround school*

City Connects

<http://www.CityConnects.org>

Developed at Boston College in 2001, City Connects is an evidence-based approach to student support active in 17 Boston Public Schools that ensures that all children engage and learn in school by connecting each child with a tailored set of prevention, intervention, and enrichment services. By leveraging the resources of community agencies, City Connects works efficiently within the existing



framework of schools and society to alleviate barriers to learning. As part of the student support model, City Connects implements the New Balance Foundation Health & Wellness Program in schools. In the 2008-09 academic year, City Connects facilitated the delivery of 11,365 services to 3,029 students in 12 Boston public elementary schools. City Connects is supported by the New Balance Foundation, Strategic Grant Partners, the Hayden Foundation, the Ludcke Foundation, and Boston College. Read our blog at CityConnectsBlog.Wordpress.com or follow us on Twitter [@CityConnects](https://twitter.com/CityConnects).

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