

Richard L. Freed

National Endowment for the Humanities

Philosophers of Education

Dr. Peter H. Gibbon

July 28, 2017

## **Massachusetts Public Education Should Start in Early Childhood:**

### **Restore the ‘Great Equalizer’**

*“Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is a great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery.”*

—Horace Mann, 1848

*“Today, almost 60 percent of children in the United States start kindergarten unprepared, lagging behind their peers in critical language and reading skills.”*

—Too Small to Fail, 2017<sup>1</sup>

The achievement gap begins before students even set foot in a kindergarten classroom. Less than half of American children are prepared for kindergarten, and some 5-year-olds are as much as two years behind their peers.<sup>2</sup> Even by the age of three, children whose parents are professionals have vocabularies that are twice as large as those children whose families receive welfare, a gap of some 30

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://toosmall.org/mission> A 2012 Brookings Institution report by Julia B. Isaacs has a slightly different (but no less horrifying) percentage: “Fewer than half (48 percent) of poor children are school ready at age five, under a summary measure that encompasses early math and reading skills, learning-related and problem behaviors, and overall physical health.” (page 2) [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0319\\_school\\_disadvantage\\_isaacs.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/0319_school_disadvantage_isaacs.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Julia B. Isaacs, *Starting School at a Disadvantage: The School Readiness of Poor Children*, Brookings Institution, March 19, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/starting-school-at-a-disadvantage-the-school-readiness-of-poor-children>

million words.<sup>3</sup> In a 1998 Brookings Institution book *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, researchers estimated that about half of the black-white test score gap at twelfth grade is attributable to gaps that exist at first grade, writing that we “could eliminate at least half, and probably more, of the black-white test score gap at the end of twelfth grade by eliminating the differences that exist before children enter first grade.”<sup>4</sup> Although we have long called the American public school system a “great equalizer,” the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students often remains persistent as students progress from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade,<sup>5</sup> in what has been called the ‘Matthew effect’ of reading: the good readers get better, while the weak readers continue to flounder and get left behind.<sup>6</sup> The achievement gap begins from an early age as an education gap and an equity gap. We must start earlier than K-12 education if we are to close the achievement gap.

Universal education should start not at age 6, but at age 0. To that end, the state of Massachusetts should take the lead in education and provide for early childhood care and education as it currently provides for public elementary and secondary education.

This is a national level problem. But as the July 13, 2017 House of Representatives Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education hearings show, the current U.S. Congress is leaving the problem for the states to address.<sup>7</sup> Like the other states, Massachusetts must now act alone both to protect its most vulnerable children and also to support all families in the Commonwealth. It’s time for public early childhood care and education.

---

<sup>3</sup> The seminal research was done by the late University of Kansas child psychologists Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley. *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young Children*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Meredith Phillips, James Crouse, and John Ralph. “Does the Black-White Test Score Gap Widen after Children Enter School?” *The Black-White Test Score Gap*, edited by Jencks and Phillips (Brookings Institution, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> John K. McNamara, Mary Scissons, and Naomi Gutknecht, “A Longitudinal Study of Kindergarten Children at Risk for Reading Disabilities: The Poor Really Are Getting Poorer,” *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 44, no. 5 (September/October 2011): 421–30.

<sup>6</sup> Keith E. Stanovich, “Matthew Effects in Reading: Some Consequences of Individual Differences in the Acquisition of Literacy,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 21, 4 (Fall 1986), p. 360–407.

<sup>7</sup> [https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/07-13-17\\_press\\_rokita\\_opening\\_pre\\_k\\_hearing.pdf](https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/07-13-17_press_rokita_opening_pre_k_hearing.pdf)

In this brief paper I aim to sketch out *why* this should be done, and give some initial thoughts as to *how* this should be done. Well aware that I am just beginning to wade into a field already deep with research, this current paper should only be read as the introductory foray that it is. Nevertheless, despite the fact that many people have investigated and talked about this problem for years, and despite the fact that there is consensus on the political left and right that something should be done, still nothing has been done.

As it stands now, if you are the parent of a 10-year-old in a Massachusetts city or town, you can rest assured that your child will be provided with a free public education. If your child is 3 years old, however, you face a stark choice. Either you can stay home with your child, or you can look for, assess the quality of, and then pay for private care. This situation places an enormous economic burden on the parents of children aged 0-5 that is suddenly lifted when the child turns 6. It's not just that parents imagine the pinch of preschool costs: government spending on 0-5 education is dramatically lower than on K-12 education. According to a 2016 report on schools from the National Institute for Early Education research, Massachusetts spends \$18,430 per child enrolled in K-12, but only \$3,309 for those 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in pre-K programs.<sup>8</sup> In addition, state spending has actually declined over the past 15 years: in 2002, Massachusetts state spending per child enrolled in pre-K was \$7,384. Meanwhile, the price a family must pay keeps going up. In Massachusetts, the average annual cost in 2016 of center-based care for one infant was \$17,082, for one 4-year-old \$12,796.<sup>9</sup> To put this in perspective, the cost of one year of college (tuition & fees) at UMass Boston is \$13,828.<sup>10</sup> But at least at UMass, financial aid is available, as an estimated 67% of incoming undergrads receive some form of

---

<sup>8</sup> These numbers include the sum of state, local, and federal contributions, as well as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, commonly known as welfare) spending. *The State of Preschool 2016*. [http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Massachusetts\\_YB16.pdf](http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Massachusetts_YB16.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> ChildCare Aware of America, "Parents and the High Cost Of Child Care: 2016 Report." <http://usa.childcareaware.org/costofcare>

<sup>10</sup> University of Massachusetts Boston: Undergraduate Tuition and Fees (Full-time 12 credits or more) Fall 2017 / Spring 2018. [https://www.umb.edu/editor\\_uploads/images/bursar/FY2018\\_Undergraduate\\_Tuition\\_and\\_Fees.pdf](https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/bursar/FY2018_Undergraduate_Tuition_and_Fees.pdf)

financial assistance.<sup>11</sup> We need to help families pay for early childhood care and education like we already do for college, especially since the younger the student is, the better the rate of return to investment on education is.<sup>12</sup> As Nobel prize winning economist James Heckman says: “The best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the very young.”<sup>13</sup>

\*\*\*

Why should Massachusetts fund early childcare and education like elementary and secondary education? Among the many reasons, I will examine four:

**1. To close the achievement gap, helping the most disadvantaged children.**

Calling education the “civil rights issue of our time” has become a cliché. Donald Trump, Barack Obama, Arne Duncan, Hillary Clinton, George W. Bush, Mitt Romney, John McCain have all invoked this phrase when talking of education.<sup>14</sup> Yet the quest for fair and equal public education long predates the 20<sup>th</sup> century civil rights movement. It is as old as America itself. In 1779, Thomas Jefferson put forth “A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge” that established the philosophical underpinnings for public education in America, decades before Horace Mann. Jefferson argued that public education should be “without regard to wealth, birth or other accidental condition or circumstance; but the indigence of the greater number disabling them from so educating, at their own expence, those of their children whom nature hath fitly formed and disposed to become useful instruments for the public, it is better that such should be sought for and educated at the common expence of all, than that the

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-massachusetts-boston/paying-for-college/financial-aid/>

<sup>12</sup> Pedro Carneiro and James J. Heckman, “Human Capital Policy,” in *Inequality in America: What Role for Human Capital Policies?* ed. James J. Heckman, Alan B. Krueger, and Benjamin M. Friedman, MIT Press, 2003, [http://jenni.uchicago.edu/Berestycki/HCP\\_ch2\\_proofs\\_2005-04-26.pdf](http://jenni.uchicago.edu/Berestycki/HCP_ch2_proofs_2005-04-26.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> James J. Heckman, “Invest in the Very Young,” Ounce of Prevention Fund and the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy Studies, 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Gerard Robinson, “Education Doesn’t Need a Civil Rights Solution” *U.S. News & World Report*. April 12, 2016. <https://www.usnews.com/opinion/knowledge-bank/articles/2016-04-12/the-problem-with-treating-education-like-a-civil-rights-issue>

happiness of all should be confided to the weak or wicked.”<sup>15</sup> Right here in Boston, the first steps towards public education in America were taken with the General School Law of 1642 and the 1647 Old Deluder Satan Law. Yet the history of education in Massachusetts, as throughout the United States, has been one of a struggle for equity and access. In October 1787, Rev. Prince Hall submitted a petition to the Massachusetts State Legislature for access to the “free schools of the town of Boston.”<sup>16</sup> Hall’s petition was denied. The formation of Girls’ Latin School in Boston tells a similar story about the long struggle for public education for all. In 1877, a group of parents wanted their daughters educated at the Public Latin School. Their request was denied. With support from the Massachusetts Society for the University Education of Women, a separate Latin School for girls was established in 1878.<sup>17</sup> To the present, education is held up as a fundamental human right and even enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>18</sup> and the benefits of an education are now shared by all—at least those who have attained the age of six. The moral argument for universal early childcare and education is a question of equity and access, “without regard to wealth, birth or other accidental condition or circumstance,” in Jefferson’s words, and is a deeply civic concern that affects all citizens.

***2. Economic impact. To promote productivity and economic efficiency, both in the short-term and in the long-term.***

Beyond the moral imperative for public early childhood care and education, there are compelling economic reasons, both short-term and long-term. Allowing parents to return to the workforce has an immediate positive impact on the economy, as there is a comparative advantage for an individual to do the job for which they have trained. And the lasting effects of educating all young children to a high standard provide economic benefits to the whole society for decades to come.

---

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge,” 18 June 1779.

<sup>16</sup> *Civil Rights Since 1787: A Reader on the Black Struggle*, edited by Jonathan Birnbaum, Clarence Taylor. New York: NYU Press, 2000: 35.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Mastrobattista Curran. *Her Greatness Proclaim: The History of Girls’ Latin School*. 2014. Girls’ Latin School went co-ed in the 1970s, and is now Boston Latin Academy, where I teach.

<sup>18</sup> Article 26 begins: “Everyone has the right to education.” <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

Nobel prize winning economist James Heckman argues that ECCE promotes productivity and economic efficiency. “Early interventions promote schooling, reduce crime, foster workforce productivity and reduce teenage pregnancy. These interventions are estimated to have high benefit-cost ratios and rates of return.” Heckman goes on to say: “The longer society waits to intervene in the life cycle of a disadvantaged child, the more costly it is to remediate disadvantage.” Current policy debates focus on standardized testing. But standardized tests are not a good predictor of long-term success. “The importance of noncognitive skills tends to be underrated in contemporary policy discussions.”<sup>19</sup> Investing on ECCE yields the best ROI for money spent on education.

Writing for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Katharine Stevens puts forth a business case for high quality childcare, arguing that there are benefits both for the workforce of today and the workforce of tomorrow.<sup>20</sup> Stevens argues that corporations large and small have a vested interest in taking a more proactive role in supporting early childhood care and education.

For many mothers, the thinking goes something like this: One kid? Day care. Two kids? Stay at home mom. What is sometimes framed as a “choice” to stay at home with a child is more often an invisible hand holding that mother back, keeping her from sharing her talents and training with the world. The economic impact on stay-at-home parents is long-reaching: a parent who leaves the workforce to become a caregiver may lose as much as four times their annual salary for every year they are not working.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> James J. Heckman. (2008). Schools, skills, and synapses. *Economic inquiry*, 46(3), 289-324.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2812935/>

<sup>20</sup> Katharine B. Stevens. “Workforce Of Today, Workforce Of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High-Quality Childcare.” June 2017.  
<https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Workforce%20of%20Today%20Workforce%20of%20Tomorrow%20Report.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/06/21/139731/calculating-the-hidden-cost-of-interrupting-a-career-for-child-care/>

### ***3. Parents overwhelmingly want it.***

According to a national 2017 poll by the First Five Years Fund, only 18% of voters say they have affordable, high-quality early childhood care and education programs in their area. “In fact, 79% of voters—including 80% of Trump voters and 79% of Clinton voters—want Congress and the administration to work together to improve the quality of child care and preschool, and make it more affordable for parents.”<sup>22</sup> It’s not just families in poverty that struggle with early childcare and education costs. Middle and upper-middle class families face challenges as well: “respondents making over \$100,000 per year are virtually just as likely (46%) as those who earn less than \$40,000 per year (51%) to say that only some or few programs near them are affordable and high-quality.”

Help with childcare and preschool is clearly a major concerns in the minds of voters across the political spectrum. A candidate who could put forward a compelling plan to help families, and who delivered on the promise, would satisfy a great need.

### ***4. Support the whole family: help parents return to work while preparing children for school and life.***

Family values shouldn’t just be a slogan. It should mean something and be backed up with effective programs that actually help families.

Less than half of American children grow up in a two-parent household.<sup>23</sup> In 1960, about 5% of American children were born to unmarried mothers. Now, that number is over 40%.<sup>24</sup> One in four

---

<sup>22</sup> <http://ffyf.org/2017-poll/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/22/less-than-half-of-u-s-kids-today-live-in-a-traditional-family/>

American children is now raised by a single parent.<sup>25</sup> And in nearly half of families that do have two parents, both parents work full time.<sup>26</sup> In Massachusetts, 70.4% of children under age 6 have all parents in the labor force.<sup>27</sup>

Working families need real support from the state of Massachusetts. How can we help them?

\*\*\*

*How?* What might state-funded early childcare and education look like? I will briefly examine two international models and two in the US Northeast.

### **1. France: nationalized *crèche* and *école maternelle***

France has a nationalized system of early childhood care and education. For an amusing overview of the French way of child rearing, see Pamela Druckerman’s writings.<sup>28</sup> From the age of 2½ months to 3 years a child can be placed in a *crèche* (nursery/daycare). Highly sought-after by French parents, admission is by lottery. The state funds 80% of the care, largely out of France’s high tax rate, which at 45% of GDP is the highest among OECD nations. Some French 2-year-olds and almost all children aged 3 to 5 years old are enrolled in an *école maternelle*, which is completely free to parents, just like public school—which it is. There are currently 15,079 such public kindergartens in France, as well as 137 private kindergartens.<sup>29</sup> That ratio alone shows how popular the public *école maternelle* system is.

---

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/75\\_Births\\_to\\_Unmarried\\_Women.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/75_Births_to_Unmarried_Women.pdf), which is a restatement of data from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/unmarried-childbearing.htm>

<sup>25</sup> OECD data: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/apr/27/1-4-children-us-raised-single-parent/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/11/04/raising-kids-and-running-a-household-how-working-parents-share-the-load/>

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 ACS 5-year estimates. Found in: Early Education for All, “Massachusetts Fast Facts: Children, Families and Education.” [http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/doc\\_research/07\\_MAFastFacts.pdf](http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/doc_research/07_MAFastFacts.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Pamela Druckerman, *Bringing Up Bébé: One American Mother Discovers the Wisdom of French Parenting*. NYC: Penguin, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> [https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cole\\_maternelle\\_en\\_France](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cole_maternelle_en_France) (translation mine)

While the nationalized care program is widely popular in France, it is difficult to imagine a similar system being adopted on a wide scale in the U.S. Still, it should not be entirely overlooked, especially on a more targeted scale in some of the areas of highest need in Massachusetts, particularly in those areas known as “child care deserts.”<sup>30</sup> When the free market fails, government must step up.

### ***2. England: a mixed program providing 30 free hours of childcare to working parents***

All 3 to 4-year-olds in England can get free early education or childcare.<sup>31</sup> Some 2-year-olds are also eligible, for families who receive certain benefits. All 3-year-old children already get 570 free hours of childcare per year, in a flexible arrangement, usually taken as 15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year. Starting in 2017, the number of hours is being doubled, to 30 hours of free care a week. The program is available to working families earning at least the minimum wage, but individuals earning more than £100,000 (about \$130,000) are not eligible. England has a mix of direct subsidies, tax credits, tax-free childcare, and free childcare. This sort of hybrid system could easily gain traction in a Massachusetts electorate: almost every parent gets some help, but those families who need the most get more help.

### ***3. NYC: Mayor Bill de Blasio’s push to expand existing public schools to offer universal pre-K and universal “3-K” for 3-year-olds.***

In New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio was elected in part on a platform of expanding existing public schools to offer universal education to 4-year-olds and 3-year-olds.<sup>32</sup> De Blasio’s program has tripled the number of free, full-day pre-K spaces in NYC. Notably, this program is free for everyone in the city, regardless of family income level. In the 2013 mayoral election, de Blasio proposed a tax increase of less than 1 percent on income over \$500,000. Rather than letting de Blasio’s tax proposal come to a vote, Governor Andrew Cuomo found \$340 million per year to fund the program for five years.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/10/27/225703/child-care-deserts/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/09/bill-de-blasios-prek-crusade/498830/>

A few years previously, a similar expansion had already happened in Boston, but on a more limited scale.

#### **4. Boston Public Schools: a system similar to NYC's, but on a more limited scale**

The Boston Public Schools now offers full-day kindergarten starting with K0 (3-years-old) or K1 (4-years-old), plus before and after school care from 7:30 am to 4:35 pm, all free. But seats are limited and wait lists can be long for these popular programs.<sup>33</sup>

A logical next step would be for Boston (and other MA cities) to follow de Blasio's lead and expand its pre-K program on the same model as NYC. Infrastructure already exists for K1 and K0 programs, it's just a question of scaling up. But the question of how to provide for children who have not yet reached their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday remains.

\*\*\*

Finally, I will sketch out a plan and attempt to answer the question, *why not?* I will examine the potential objections to such a plan.

Although there is an anti-statist critique to be made, that the state has no role in raising children, and families should raise their own children, that same critique is as leveled at existing public K-12 schools. The option for families to homeschool their children will continue. That will still be an option for age 3 as it is for age 13. But this view relegates disadvantaged children to poverty. They need our support.

It is also possible that there may be unintended fecundity effects. The high cost of daycare may presently be working as deterrent for families to have children. A subsidy might slightly increase the

---

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/6521>

birthrate to families who had avoided having children. Yet I suggest that this effect would probably be slight, and highest among the most highly educated women, who are already putting off having children until later in life.

How will we pay for it? Although public schools are largely funded by their district city or town, Massachusetts also has an existing state-level program designed to help support every school district, with more support going to needier districts. This program is known as Chapter 70.<sup>34</sup> Through a formula that has not substantially changed since it was created in the Education Reform Act of 1993,<sup>35</sup> a base level of per-pupil funding each district needs is determined, as well as how much a district ought to be able to fund from local taxes. The state then makes up any gap in funding. This base funding level is called the “foundation budget.” This foundation budget is a floor not a ceiling, and municipalities can raise more money locally. The Chapter 70 funding formula is already due for a review, which was attempted and failed in spring 2017.<sup>36</sup>

A revision to the funding formula should include support for universal pre-K and 3-K, in every district across the state. Expand existing kindergarten access to full day programs where it already exists. In addition, enact a voucher system like that in England to help working families pay for their choice of the existing assortment of day care and nursery school options. This support could start with full support for families making the minimum wage and phase out along a sliding scale up to households earning more than \$250,000 a year, which is the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile in Massachusetts.

Increasing the standard deduction would help support those families who choose to have a parent stay home with their child.

---

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/chapter70/>

<sup>35</sup> A great visual explanation is available here: <http://learninglab.legacy.wbur.org/topics/school-funding/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/education/school-funding-fix-needed/>

Early childhood care and education is a fragmented market, and there have been fragmented efforts for change. Federal level change has been more talk than action. The state level is where this needs to happen.

There is an opportunity to make ECCE public like the library. Some people use it more than others. But everyone has access, for free. And it is a powerful tool for advancement.

\*\*\*

I agree with Katharine B. Stevens of the American Enterprise Institute when she writes that: “Today’s federal care and education programs for poor children from birth through age four must have two purposes: supporting parents’ work in a modern, 24/7 economy and advancing children’s healthy growth and learning.”<sup>37</sup> The question remains: how can we bring this about.

I agree with former Procter & Gamble CEO John Pepper, who said at a White House Early Education Summit in December 2014: “Early childhood development is the compelling economic, social, and moral issue of our time. It helps provide all children with the opportunities they deserve to develop their natural abilities. It is also the most effective way to build the workforce...we need. Investing in young children’s healthy development is a financial and social imperative for any country.”<sup>38</sup> The question remains: how can we bring this about.

I agree with Dana Suskind, MD, who has become an advocate for bridging the 30 million word gap:

“unless we truly understand the science and address this 0-to-3 issue, we will never be able to truly

---

<sup>37</sup> From “Federal Early Childhood Care and Education Programs: Advancing Opportunity Through Early Learning,” in the 2017 book *A Safety Net That Works*, edited by Robert Doar. (page 230). <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-Safety-Net-That-Works-final.pdf>

My work in this paper has been greatly informed by Stevens’s research, which is thorough and well-supported. We part ways slightly, but by no means irreconcilably, in our policy prescriptions.

<sup>38</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/early-learning/matter-equity-preschool-america.pdf> (pg. 12)

start moving the needle on this achievement gap. We have to reconcile the fact that we're going to have to rethink how we approach education in order to get the results that we want."<sup>39</sup> The question remains: how can we bring this about.

\*\*\*

In Massachusetts, in the 1840s, Horace Mann put forth the radical idea that all children deserved an education. Not only the sons of wealthy gentlemen John Locke was concerned with educating, not the scions of industry Rousseau wanted to raise, but every single child in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, argued Mann, should be educated not only for himself or herself but for the good and welfare of all the citizens of Massachusetts. A radical idea at the time, free public universal education has spread now to all fifty states in the United States, and is considered a basic human right in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Massachusetts is rightly proud of the being the cradle of the American Revolution as well as the birthplace of American public schools. Massachusetts public schools have been ranked best in the nation,<sup>40</sup> and among the best in the world.<sup>41</sup>

But Massachusetts also ranks 44<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 states in income inequality.<sup>42</sup> And according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, income inequality has gotten worse in Massachusetts over the last decade.<sup>43</sup> And as income inequality grows, so too does the achievement gap, explains Sean F.

---

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/09/14/437515492/the-surgeon-who-became-an-activist-for-baby-talk>

<sup>40</sup> *Education Week* Quality Counts Rankings 2016 <http://www.edweek.org/ew/toc/2016/01/07/index.html>

<sup>41</sup> On the 2012 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) exam, Massachusetts 15-year-olds tied for fourth in the world, behind Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore. (<http://legacy.wbur.org/2013/12/03/massachusetts-pisa-test-results>) Massachusetts eighth graders rank second in the world in science, behind only Singapore, according to TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study). (<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/03/science/expecting-the-best-yields-results-in-massachusetts.html>)

<sup>42</sup> Economic Policy Institute, June 2016. <http://www.epi.org/multimedia/unequal-states-of-america/#/Massachusetts>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/Massachusetts.pdf>

Reardon of Stanford University: “First, the income achievement gap (defined here as the average achievement difference between a child from a family at the 90th percentile of the family income distribution and a child from a family at the 10th percentile) is now nearly twice as large as the black-white achievement gap. Fifty years ago, in contrast, the black-white gap was one and a half to two times as large as the income gap. Second, ... the income achievement gap is large when children enter kindergarten and does not appear to grow (or narrow) appreciably as children progress through school.”<sup>44</sup> A targeted investment in ECCE is the best way and most cost-effective way to solve the achievement gap.

It is not enough to rest on our laurels. Just as Horace Mann responded to the needs of society of 19<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts, so must we adapt and respond to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century lives.

It’s time for universal early childhood care and education.

---

<sup>44</sup> Sean F. Reardon, “The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations” Chapter 5 in *Whither Opportunity?: Rising Inequality, Schools, and Children’s Life Chances*, edited by Greg J. Duncan and Richard J. Murnane: 91-116.  
<https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/reardon%20whither%20opportunity%20-%20chapter%205.pdf>