***Boston Wins The High School Dropout Race***

Ten percent of all students attending public high schools in the City of Champions would drop out, according to data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

[Maggie Wang](https://github.com/wxiaonanw/sds236-mass-edu), Feb 19, 2018

*Education Week*’s annual [*Quality Counts*](https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2018-state-grades/report-card-map-rankings.html)report that came out last month once again lauded Massachusetts as the nation’s best in overall quality of public education, now four years in a row. However, the capital of Massachusetts that harbors an array of prestigious universities does not live up to the state’s shining reputation: last year, among the 11 Boston towns, dropout rates clang at over 10% for six. Overall, nearly 10% of the 17,000 students who attended public and charter high schools in Boston discontinued their secondary education in the past year.

High-schoolers from Jamaica Plain, Boston, for example, are clearly not reaping the benefits of the overall quality of Boston’s public education. Here, in the predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, three out of every ten students attending local high schools dropped out in 2017, making Jamaica Plain’s public high school dropout rate the highest among all towns in Massachusetts.

For those familiar with how poverty can [induce hindrances](https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/05/what-are-massachusetts-public-schools-doing-right/483935/) into students’ academic pursuits, this statistic might appear less jarring: 85% of the student body enrolled in the two public high schools in Jamaica Plain are categorized as students of high needs. Boston, ranked [number one in the nation for income inequality](https://www.boston.com/news/local-news/2016/01/14/boston-is-the-no-1-city-in-america-for-income-inequality-which-is-not-good), also documents 85% of its public high school attendees as high-needs students. In Beantown neighborhoods such as Dorchester and Brighton, these rates even top 95%.

Similar patterns are also evident in Massachusetts’ public school data. Last year, a total of 18 towns in Massachusetts produced dropout rates above 10%. This list of towns, featuring Chelsea, New Bedford, and Fall River, heavily overlaps with the list of towns with the [lowest household income](https://www.metro.us/boston/these-are-the-10-poorest-cities-in-massachusetts/zsjpbc---0ejuizlercibo)s in Massachusetts.

Yet despite the grave difficulties confronting Boston’s public education, the city’s private school system continued to thrive. Taking advantage of its abundance in educational resources, the [fourth largest college town](https://www.citylab.com/equity/2016/09/americas-biggest-college-towns/498755/) in the United States hosts the [most private schools in Massachusetts](https://www.privateschoolreview.com/massachusetts): 21 of them in total. The six private high schools charge an average [tuition](https://www.privateschoolreview.com/massachusetts/boston/high) of more than two times the national average and enroll around 1,500 students in total – a very small student body, compared to the 15,000 high-needs public high school attendees.

As Massachusetts continues its attempt to level the playfield for students of various socio-economic backgrounds, one should further keep in mind that racial and ethnic background is a factor that interplays with income levels. Public high schools in Jamaica Plain have an overwhelming 98% minority enrollment, while only [one third](https://www.privateschoolreview.com/massachusetts/boston/high) of the students in Boston private high schools come from racial or ethnic minorities. For Massachusetts’ “[All Means All](https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/14/10/getting-%E2%80%9Call-means-all%E2%80%9D)” public education system, the most formidable challenge now exists outside of campuses.