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**BEYOND FAILING SCHOOLS:
National Expert on Black-White Achievement Gap to Speak at Local Forum**

Boston – As national and local policymakers call for tougher accountability and debate the fine points of “Average Yearly Progress,” they may be neglecting what will truly narrow the achievement gap. This according to Richard Rothstein, author of *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*. Rothstein will give the keynote address at a forum titled “Addressing the Barriers to Academic Achievement: Partnering for Boston’s Students’ Success” on Monday, May 16, from 8:30 –11:30 am at The Boston Foundation.

Rothstein, former New York Times education columnist and currently research associate at the Economic Policy Institute, and visiting professor at Columbia University’s Teachers College, argues that blaming the achievement gap mostly on failing schools is a mistake because it diverts attention from the need to address the economic and social gaps between children that thwart academic potential.

“Closing the gaps between lower-class and middle-class children doesn’t just require better schools. It requires social and economic reforms that would give children more equal chances to succeed in schools,” Rothstein said. “Unfortunately, the trend is to shift most of the burden to schools, as if they alone can eradicate poverty and inequality.”

Rothstein was invited to Boston as part of a collaborative effort to increase the connections among the various organizations serving young people in the city. He will be joined at Monday’s forum by a panel of four local leaders in the fields of education and human services: Thomas Payzant, Superintendent, Boston Public Schools; Laurie Cammisa, Vice President of Children’s Advocacy, Children’s Hospital Boston; Robert Lewis, Jr., Executive Director, Boston Centers for Youth and Families; and Milton J. Little, Jr., President and CEO, United Way of Massachusetts Bay. Blenda J. Wilson, President and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, will moderate. Panelists will address how each of their respective organizations is improving outcomes for young people. Their presentations will be followed by open discussion among the panelists and questions from the audience.

"While we must continue to improve learning outcomes in schools, we must also expand the conversation around the achievement gap to include non-school hours and community values," said Dr. Wilson of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. "Boston is at the forefront of building a system that supports young people's learning through after-school, early childhood and summer programs. These programs can reduce the barriers to achievement, increase opportunities for educational equity, and make a meaningful difference in the lives of Boston's children and their families."

Sponsors of "Addressing the Barriers to Academic Achievement" are Massachusetts 2020, the Boston Full- service Schools Roundtable, the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Boston Foundation, Boston Public Schools, Boston Centers for Youth & Families, Boston After School & Beyond, and United Way of Massachusetts Bay.

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