

## **Massachusetts Experimental School System: A Guide and Inventory**

**Collection Title:** Massachusetts Experimental School System (M.E.S.S) also called Experimental School System of Massachusetts (E.S.S.M) records, c.1968-1975

**Collection Size:** Approximately 2 cubic feet

**Collection Donor(s):** Larry Allen, Beverly Adams, Carroll McCloud (former Development Team at M.E.S.S.)

**Date of Accession:** July 19, 2010

**Accessioned by:** Gena Pliakas, Librarian Archivist, RCC.

**Processed by:** Autumn Haag, Librarian Archivist, RCC.

**Referral:** Mel King

### **Collection Description Abstract:**

The start-up of M.E.S.S was a parallel process to the beginnings of RCC—M.E.S.S. was a part of the larger African-American community movement and effort to empower youth and to instill a sense of personal responsibility and community. Operating from 1971-1975, M.E.S.S. consisted of 3 “parallel” school systems – lower, middle, and high [upper school], which were authorized by the Commonwealth in 1967. The upper school system (records donated to RCC) was a state-supported experimental public secondary school, located in Dorchester, which enrolled students between 14-18 years-of age. The overall M.E.S.S. system was governed by a School Committee, comprised of parents, school staff, and students, elected by their constituents and overseen by a Unit Board. Students designed his/her individual learning program in conjunction with his/her counselor, and emphasis was placed on group activities and the direct empowerment of students. Consisting of ‘learning experiences’ as opposed to ‘courses’ , students were contracted out to a bank of consenting individuals and institutions recruited throughout the Metropolitan area. The City of Boston became the learning environment, and graduation requirements were competency-based. John Breemer, one of the principal architects of M.E.S.S. (along with Mel King) hailed the system as a “high-school without walls.” Following the resignation of Principal Carroll

McCloud, which resulted from tension with the MA Board of Education and problems internal to the organizational structure of the school, M.E.S.S. collapsed in 1975.

**Scope and Content:**

The collection consists of records related to M.E.S.S., including correspondence, financial records, publications, governance documentation, forms, and records related to students, faculty and staff. There are several reports in the collection by and about M.E.S.S. and the New Urban League of Greater Boston. Series are M.E.S.S., Project J.E.S.I. (Jobs and Education for Self-Improvement), and (REPC), the Racial Ethnic Parent Council. M.E.S.S. subseries are Career Development, Correspondence, Events, Faculty & Staff, Financial Records, Forms, Governance, Policies and Procedures, Publications, and Students.

**Restrictions:**

Several folders in this collection are closed to researchers because they contain restricted information, including personal, medical, and evaluative information. Please speak to the Librarian Archivist for more details.

**Related Archival Material:**

Boston City Archives:

[Desegregation Related Grants 1967 - 1986; bulk: 1972 - 1981](#)  
[Boston Public Schools: Desegregation-Era Records Collection](#)

Northeastern University, Archives and Special Collections:

[Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston, Inc. records](#)  
[Freedom House, Inc. records](#)  
[Dept. of African American Studies records](#)

**Related Published Material:**

Alson, Allan. *An Historical and Political Case Study of the Governance Mechanism of the Experimental School System of Massachusetts*. 1980. Print. Thesis, Boston University.

[Janssen, K. C. Cole. \*Matters of Choice. A Ford Foundation Report on Alternative Schools.\* 1974.](#)

Kelley, Brian S. *A Report on the Organization and Development of the Massachusetts Experimental School System.* Cambridge: Harvard University, 1974. Print. Special qualifying paper, Harvard University Graduate School of Education. March 1975.

King, Mel. *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development.* Boston: South End Press, 1981. Print.

Box	Series	Subseries	Description	Date(s)	Notes
1	M.E.S.S. (Massachusetts Experimental School System)		Information from the Council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education	n.d.	
1			Article about the Tavistock Model	c. 1970	
1			Boston Evening Globe Article	1973	
1			M.E.S.S. Community News Service Memo on Martin Luther King Day	1974	
1		Career Development	Goals and Objectives for Project Career	n.d.	
1			New Urban League of Boston Career Development Project report	c. 1971	
1			The Career Development Project: A Brief History	c. 1971-1972	
1			New Urban League of Boston Career Development Project Career Fair Committee agenda, report	1972	
1		Correspondence	Letters to and from M.E.S.S. faculty and staff	n.d., 1971- 1975	Restricted
1		Events	Staff Retreat agenda and report	1974	
1			Commencement Programs	1974, 1975	
1		Faculty and Staff	Psychologist's Report on meeting between teachers and students	1972	

1			Abigail Figueroa Resignation	1973	Restricted
1			Larry Allen Counseling Notes. 2 folders.	1973-1974	Restricted
1			Records related to the resignation of Carroll McCloud	1974	Restricted
1			Memo to Model High Teacher-Counselors on the Learning Experience	1974	
1		Financial Records	Invoices, receipts, service notices	n.d., 1971-1972	
1			New Urban League Vocational Education Project Reimbursement Vouchers	1972	
1			Career Development Student Vouchers	1972-1973	
1			Model High School/Experimental School System Budget FY 1975/1976. Working draft, memos, projected budgets	1974	
1		Forms	Model High Stationary	n.d.	
1			Set of evaluation forms and performance contract	n.d.	
1			Student Profile Forms	n.d.	
1			Model High School Family Contract	n.d., 1973	
1			Pre, Middle, Final Evaluation Forms	n.d., 1974	
1			Voucher Performance Contract	n.d., 1976	
1		Governance, Policies, Procedures	Graduation Requirements	n.d.	Restricted
1			Memo about the opening of the Model High School	n.d.	
1			Minutes from Meeting at Highland Park Free School	n.d.	
1			Overview of Model High School	n.d.	
1			School programs and projects	n.d., 1972-1974	
1			M.E.S.S. job descriptions	n.d., 1974	
1			Model High School Unit Board Meeting Minutes and Agenda	1971	

1			R.E.A.D. High School Meeting Agenda	1971	
1			Reports on Parents Meetings	1971-1972	
1			Model High Staff Meeting Agendas	1971, 1974	
1			M.E.S.S. School Committee Meeting Minutes	1973-1974	
1			Program Goals/Projected Budget 1974-1974	c. 1974	
1			Community School's Steering Committee. Interim Report	1974	
1			Joint Committee Meeting proposals	1974	
1			Letter from High School Unit Board Parliamentarian to Unit Board Members	1974	
1			Memos about Model High School operations	1974	
1			Principal's Report to the Unit Board of the Model High School	1974	
1			Program Recommendations for School Year 1974-75	1974	
1			School Committee Meeting agenda	1974	
1			Personnel Committee memos	1974-1975	
1			Letters to and from MA Commissioner of Education regarding the Experimental School System of MA	1975	
1			Lower School Unit Board Agenda, Letter, Report	1975	
1			Lower School Unit Board Summer Bulletin	1975	
1		Publications	"What's Going On?" publication	1972	
1		Students	Letter from Model High Student Organizers	n.d.	
1			Model High School/Experimental School System Student/Parent List	n.d.	
1			Student assignments	n.d.	
1			Student evaluations of Model High	1972	
1			Memo to Student Organizers	1973	
1			Agreement between MESS and student	1974	Restricted
1			Student statement of Goals Upon Graduation	1975	

1	Project J.E.S.I. (Jobs and Education for Self-Improvement)		Description and Program Proposal	1971-1972	Restricted
1	Racial Ethnic Parent Council (REPC)		Brochure, fliers, programs, report, mtg. agenda, minutes, William Monroe Trotter School 1977-78 Annual Report w/REPC approval form	n.d., 1978	
1	Reports		A Community Development Approach to Vocational and Leadership Training Using a Career Development Center. Interim Report. By Melvin King, New Urban League of Greater Boston	September 1971	
1			Continuation Proposal prepared for the Educational Development Commission and Massachusetts State Board of Education by the Massachusetts Experimental School System	March 6, 1972	
1			An Evaluation of the FY72 Community Development Approach to Vocational and Leadership Training of the Boston New Urban League. Final Report. By Dr. Francis X. Archambault, Jr.	1973	
1			A Report to The Massachusetts State Board of Education on An Evaluation of the Massachusetts Experimental School System	April 24, 1973	
1			FY 1973 Evaluation: Model High School Career Development Project. A Report to the Division of Occupational Education, State Department of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts. By James A. Hamilton, Ph. D.	c. 1973	
1			A Community Development Approach to Vocational and Leadership Training Using a Career Development Center. Final Report. By Carroll R. McCloud, New Urban League of Greater Boston. 2 folders.	January 1974	