



# Boston Learns Together

## *Learning & Earning*

### Motivation makes a difference.

When it comes to helping teens to achieve in school and beyond, motivation is crucial. Teens make their own choices about how to spend their time and effort both in and outside of school, and they are more likely to engage with opportunities that have clear value, provide income, or advance them toward personal goals. Such “learning and earning” opportunities have the potential to boost outcomes for all teens, including the most disengaged, by providing personally meaningful and tangibly rewarding ways to advance their knowledge and skills.

In a city like Boston, no teen should spend her high school years confined to a desk and chair. Through summer jobs, community-based courses, independent study, and more, teens in Boston and across the country are building real-world skills and becoming more confident learners. We can do even more. Through creative partnerships, we can create opportunities for teens to earn (income, academic credit, or skills credentials) while they learn, resulting in improved graduation rates and more young adults who have the knowledge, skills, and work experience they need to thrive in college and careers.

### Make learning experiences count.

When teens receive credit for a job well done, we are both validating their efforts and investing in their future. Quality “learning and earning” opportunities go beyond the typical teen job or elective class; they are means for students to acquire knowledge and skills that will help them reach the next stage of life.

By aligning out-of-school experiences to common learning goals and making those experiences to “count,” we can create flexible pathways for teens to master standards, develop crucial skills, and attain personal goals.

Learning and earning programs have numerous benefits:

- ↑ engagement with learning
- ↑ academic, workplace, and life skills
- ↑ investment in goals and positive choices
- ↑ social and career support network
- ↑ contributions to the community
- ↑ income and savings
- ↓ drop out rates
- ↓ risky behavior



### There are many ways to learn and earn.

Teens can learn and earn in a variety of settings, at any time of day or year. Boston has three primary models through which schools and community partners provide learning and earning opportunities for youth:

- **Curriculum enhancements:** Schools invite community partners into the classroom to co-teach a lesson or unit that augments and reinforces the curriculum. Teachers might work with community experts to design an off-site extension project as well.
- **Community-based courses:** Students take courses in non-school settings on topics of relevance and interest to them. They might take a website design course with a local tech company, for example, or fulfill an arts requirement with a museum-taught course.

- **Jobs and internships:** Teens earn income and acquire valuable work experience in a carefully designed work experience that includes clear learning objectives, integrated youth development supports, and mentorship from professionals. Boston leads the nation in providing such experiences through its Summer Jobs initiative.

By developing more quality opportunities in each area, we can effectively broaden and personalize the curriculum for Boston youth, matching opportunities to each young person's passions and goals.



## Boston Learns and Earns

- Students from several Boston high schools take a semester-long arts course at the **Institute for Contemporary Art**, fulfilling an arts credit while studying with experts.
- Youth leaders at **Teen Empowerment** and the **Hyde Square Task Force** earn a stipend as they learn how to lead and organize others to make a positive community impact.
- Through the **Private Industry Council's Classroom at the Workplace** program, students who have yet to meet the MCAS graduation requirement spend part of their summer workday in an academic boot camp.

### Select Resources

Bowles, Anne and Betsy Brand. "Learning Around the Clock: Benefits of Expanded Learning Opportunities for Older Youth." American Youth Policy Forum, 2009.

"Expanding Education and Workforce Opportunities Through Digital Badges." Alliance for Excellence Education, 2013.

## Help us connect every Boston teen with opportunities to learn and earn.

Providing excellent learning and earning opportunities for all Boston youth will require careful coordination among many partners. We've identified several steps as top priorities:

- ✓ **Coordinate and advocate:** We can implement more innovative opportunities by first reducing policy barriers and increasing understanding about how non-traditional learning works.
- ✓ **Learn from our neighbors:** Schools in Maine, New Hampshire, and Providence are leading the way in designing mastery-based learning models and in conferring digital "badges" and other credentials for learning.
- ✓ **Develop common assessments:** We will need quality assessments that give youth opportunities to demonstrate mastery of new knowledge and skills, wherever they learned them.
- ✓ **Connect:** We have extensive resources right in the Boston community and can do more to connect schools with institutions that could provide quality experiences for youth and to foster innovative partnerships.

Join us at Boston After School & Beyond as we work to expand opportunities for all of our youth to learn, earn, and achieve at high levels.

**Boston After School & Beyond** connects school, afterschool, and summer learning strategies so that young people have the opportunity to learn and thrive.

In 2013, BASB strengthened partnerships among 100 organizations and 60 schools, reaching thousands of youth with innovative programming. BASB convenes the Partnership Council, a growing coalition of more than 70 organizations with a shared commitment to closing the opportunity gap for Boston children.

"Learn Anytime, Anywhere: Rethinking How Students Earn Credit Beyond School Hours." The After-School Corporation, 2012.

Sum, Andy et al. "The Summer Employment Experiences and the Personal/Social Behaviors of Youth Violence Prevention Employment Program Participants and Those of a Comparison Group." Center for Labor Market Studies, 2013.