



Boston Learns Together

Strategic Partnerships

Partnerships matter.

Community partners play an important role in enhancing student learning. Through after-school programs, offerings that extend the formal school day, and enriching summer experiences, partners reinforce and supplement the knowledge and skills students acquire in the classroom. Partners help students develop foundational skills for long-term success through a variety of engaging activities—for example, modeling teamwork and peer relationships in sports programs, improving attendance and learning habits through one-on-one mentorship, and boosting language and literacy skills through the arts.

Boston is home to an array of community organizations, colleges, and cultural institutions that are committed to closing achievement and opportunity gaps between low-income youth and their peers. Currently, every school in Boston has at least one community partner; most have several. While we can be proud of existing partnerships, there is more we can do to optimize matches between schools and potential partners and to strengthen those partnerships so they result in better outcomes for students.



Effective partners align their goals.

Schools and partner organizations often operate in isolation, even when they serve the same young people, losing out on opportunities to reinforce learning, help students transfer new skills across settings, and share timely information about student' strengths and learning needs.

Schools and community partners can maximize resources and increase their impact when they:

- **unite** their efforts around common goals
- **share responsibility** for student outcomes
- **communicate** regularly about progress

Effective partners share information.

When schools and their partners agree to common measures of success and track and share data to monitor their progress, they can better understand how their efforts contribute to better student outcomes. Sharing information about young people served and program outcomes helps partners to:

- **align curriculum**, interventions, and other offerings to shared goals
- **identify practices** that work and those that don't
- **deploy resources**, including staff, to meet the needs of individuals
- **learn** from each other

When schools and community partners use common measures to communicate regularly about their progress, they make their work more efficient and effective, achieving a greater impact with the students they share.



Help us build Boston's partnership capacity.

There is more work we can do to understand how effective partnerships operate and to create strong learning communities among Boston's schools and youth-serving organizations.

At Boston After School & Beyond, we are working with others to accomplish five priorities that will contribute to stronger, more strategic school-community partnerships citywide:

- ✓ **Align partnerships around whole-school priorities**, helping partners communicate about and contribute to better outcomes for the whole school community.
- ✓ **Develop and advance holistic measures** of youth success that include the social-emotional skills linked to college and career success.
- ✓ **Build partnership capacity** with strategic investments in staffing, technology enhancements, and transportation.
- ✓ **Ensure program quality**, using common assessment tools that include program-level measures and student-level academic and social-emotional indicators.
- ✓ **Identify and replicate best practices**, highlighting partnership models that consistently achieve better outcomes for the children they serve.

Join with us as we convene schools and community partners to break new ground in serving Boston's youth population.

Boston After School & Beyond connects school, after-school, 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.

Effective Partners in Action

Boston is home to many innovative schools and youth-serving organizations. Here are just a few examples of how school-community partners collaborate to help students succeed.

- **Citizen Schools** helps middle schools extend the school day, providing academic support and apprenticeships with a variety of professionals, from architects to software engineers.
- **City Year** collaborates with several Boston schools, including the **Dever-McCormack K-8 School**, to prevent chronic absenteeism by pairing high-risk students with mentors who track their attendance and provide individualized support.
- A number of local partners, including **America SCORES**, the **Boys & Girls Clubs**, **Project REACH**, **Tenacity**, and **VietAID**, invite independent observers to rate the quality of their programming and provide feedback for improvement.
- **Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School** schedules late buses so all students can participate in its expanded day.
- The **Mather** and **Trotter Elementary Schools** jointly convene their community partners every month to share best practices.

Select Resources

"After-school Data: What Cities Need to Know." The Wallace Foundation, 2012.

Kingsley, Chris. "Building Management Information Systems to Coordinate Citywide Afterschool Programs: A Toolkit for Cities." National League of Cities, 2012.