

Boston Learns Together

Creating opportunity through partnership

Boston stands at the forefront of education and youth development in the effort to close the achievement and opportunity gaps. In recent years, opportunities for youth have expanded dramatically. The number of students participating in after-school programs has doubled, with a program serving every school. The number of summer program slots has surpassed 11,000. The number of youth summer jobs exceeds 10,000.

Few—if any—other cities can boast these results. This foundation presents an unprecedented opportunity for the City of Boston, its elected officials, community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher

education, working with youth and their families, to take the next steps in closing the achievement and opportunity gaps.

The Partnership Council—a growing coalition of more than 60 organizations which, collectively, provide tens of thousands of program slots for Boston’s young people—has outlined a set of principles for ensuring that we close the opportunity gap for all children in the city.

We hope the next several months will spark a conversation that recognizes the continuing disparities in opportunity and commits to addressing the causes with proven solutions. The Partnership Council coalition is committed to furthering this goal.

Every young person growing up in the city of Boston deserves opportunities to succeed. Yet for too many young people in our city, these opportunities are missing.

Boston’s young people grow up in a city surrounded by the ocean and natural spaces. They come from a place steeped in history and blessed with a rich cultural life in vibrant communities. Their city is a home to thriving commerce, a worldwide center of higher education and research, and an incubator for ideas and technologies that are changing all aspects of our lives.

Yet too many of Boston’s young people have no opportunity to access the learning experiences their city has to offer. This opportunity gap is at the heart of the persistent achievement gap that decides the direction of too many lives.

In order to bring equity of opportunity to all of Boston’s young people, we must expand our ideas about what learning means—including when, where, how and with whom it happens.

■ *Learning defies the boundaries of time and space.* It does not stop when the bell rings at the end of the school day or when summer vacation begins. Great schools are essential to learning, but learning does not only happen at school, and schools should not be left to shoulder responsibility for learning alone.

■ *Learning depends on personal engagement and motivation.* Young people need opportunities to ignite a passion for knowledge and discovery through hands-on approaches and real world experiences. Learning must feel meaningful and relevant in young people’s lives.

■ *Learning equips young people with skills that apply to all aspects of their lives.* Opportunities to develop and practice skills equip young people for success in the classroom and beyond. Young people need skills such as critical thinking, relationship-building and drive to become successful as future graduates, as members of the workforce, and as engaged citizens of their city. We must recognize the importance of social-emotional and physical health and supportive relationships in developing these skills.

**We will only address the opportunity gap when we make learning everyone's business.
Boston learns together....**

■ *Together across boundaries of institutions.*

We will not achieve equity of opportunity for our young people by working alone, however strong our practice or noble our intentions. True partnership goes beyond agreements. We need to work together, abandoning territorial boundaries, sharing information, and being willing to try something new. Stronger collaborations will enable us to master the transition points from home to school, school to school, neighborhood to neighborhood, and childhood into adulthood.

■ *Together so that all young people have access to a common core of knowledge, skills, and experiences.* Schools, communities, business, government and higher education share a responsibility—and have a role to play—in developing young people to their full potential.

■ *Together toward shared outcomes of high quality with relevant indicators of progress over time.* An aligned, clear, and longitudinal approach to measurement will leverage our strengths in meeting the needs of our young people.

Equity of opportunity is a step we can take together in order to equip young people with the skills necessary to thrive in the face of poverty and uncertainty. When Boston learns together, this is within reach. Only then will we truly be able to call ourselves a learning city.

We, the undersigned, commit to engage with one another in order to make measurable progress in achieving these goals. In doing so, we will:

- Bring our resources to bear in achieving the goals described in these principles.
- Share responsibility for addressing opportunity gaps.
- Share accountability with schools for results.
- Work with the leadership of the city in order to put these principles into practice across Boston.

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List in formation