ALL ABOUT SKILLS

A CITYWIDE APPROACH TO PREPARING TODAY'S CHILDREN FOR TOMORROW'S OPPORTUNITIES

STRATEGIES THAT WORK
Beyond school, beyond sectors, beyond basics.
Dear Friends,

Boston Beyond launched in 2005 to shepherd a citywide agenda for learning beyond school. Since then, we’ve built a powerful network of more than 300 programs whose collective work has made Boston a national leader in after-school and summer learning. The essential role that youth nonprofits play in our city, our schools, and the lives of Boston families became even more notable during the pandemic.

What is it that unites our powerful network? A commitment to developing children’s skills through nurturing and supportive relationships.

We know young people need skills—we hear it from employers, colleges, schools, civic leaders, parents, and more. But too often, these different sectors converse in separate corners. Boston Beyond has pulled these conversations together, creating a shared vocabulary around skills that allows diverse sectors to recognize their common interests and work together to prepare more young people to thrive, even in times of crisis, and across all dimensions of life.

Our unified agenda has had a demonstrable impact on how we talk about skills in Boston, how we teach them, and what students learn.

We’ve come a long way in fifteen years. We’re proud of our strong results and eager to share what we’ve learned thus far, even as we keep pushing to do better each year. In this report, we share the core strategies that have made our network so successful. We hope the lessons and examples inside will inspire peers across the country, and we invite your feedback as we all continue learning, growing, and expanding opportunity for the next generation.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith
Executive Director
committed, even in a crisis

When the city shut down for COVID, Boston’s youth nonprofits stepped up. Our network of summer and after-school providers filled the void left by closed schools, offering safe places for children to learn, connect, and receive essential supports across every neighborhood.

The initial logistics and funding challenges were daunting, but our partners knew they needed to stay present for kids and families and quickly adapted. Boston Beyond pulled the network together in March to assess needs and offer support, ultimately raising $2M in private funding to help organizations purchase critical equipment, expand hours, and make up for lost revenue. We brought 30 new partners into the fold as well—community-based programs, like Boston Lions Track Club, who were on the frontlines, determined to support young people through a health crisis exacerbated by racial and economic inequality.

Boston Beyond’s partners served nearly 10,000 young people through the summer via a blend of virtual and outdoor programming. In the fall, many of these partners became full-day “learning pods” where children could log onto remote school, interact safely with peers, and access crucial social and emotional learning opportunities. During our weekly Zoom calls, partners exchanged best practices, worked through challenges, and stayed up to speed on a fast-changing landscape.

We’re proud of how Boston’s youth nonprofits rose to the moment, but we’re not surprised. We’ve known for years that Boston’s youth development programs play a pivotal role in nurturing and advancing the life opportunities of our children. In 2020, the whole city saw it too.
With the kids being home all day, we really gave them an avenue to breathe and be around friends. It’s really a mental thing to be cooped in at home; it’s like receiving a punishment for something they didn’t do. Parents were very appreciative.”

TOMORROW PEEPELES
FOUNDER & HEAD COACH, BOSTON LIONS TRACK CLUB

Boston's Youth Orgs Fill the Gap

BOSTON LIONS, STILL RUNNING HARD

Champion sprinter, committed youth advocate, and local entrepreneur Tomorrow Peeples founded Boston Lions Track Club to provide city kids with what she calls “mentoring of the mind” through sports. When the pandemic hit, she didn’t miss a step. She joined the Boston Beyond network early in the summer, leveraging the new partnership to glean best practices for COVID safety, secure indoor space for the fall, and access funding for uniforms, equipment, and more. As a result of these supports, Coach Peeples was able to provide continuous, in-person programming throughout the summer and school year.

Tasha Foster, a Boston Lions parent, says: “Coach motivated us... She kept us going. It kept us not going insane.” Her daughter Ariel, the current team captain, agrees: “This year, I realized that Boston Lions is closer to me than I thought. Before, I thought, it’s a team, they’re going to train you. But now...I know that if I’m down, I will always have something to back me up.”
School was delayed, and instead of waiting, we said, ‘We’ve got the programs, we’ve got the kids, they don’t have anywhere to go. Let’s just start.’ … We reached out to some urban farms that we knew and said, ‘Can we bring our kids?’ We’d been talking about growing this all summer. Kids were trying to grow little trays of microgreens at home on zoom. But to actually get them in a garden? That was big.”

JANE HIRSCHI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CITYSPROUTS

The network was really helpful in helping us get funding. For the summer, we were able to use those resources to host multiple athletic classes each day outside. That was definitely a huge moment for us—to be able to see kids again! We were also able to use some of the funds for staff capacity. It takes a lot more work to serve kids very well in a hybrid model. You need to make sure that they all have a high level experience and meet them where they’re at individually, especially now.”

ALI FULLER
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LEVEL GROUND MIXED MARTIAL ARTS

We found ourselves struggling to recreate that supportive environment that all of our programs are so well known for. Tapping into the expertise of Boston Beyond really helped us to support and build the confidence of our staff members in how to create a Boys & Girls Clubs atmosphere online. We were all facing these challenges in different ways, but these weekly calls really showed me that, ‘Hey, we’re not alone in this.”

JOSH DAVIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CLUB OPERATIONS, BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF BOSTON
It’s About More Than School

The school day simply isn’t enough to solve large, persistent achievement gaps between children with greater resources and those born into poverty. Too often, though, schools take on all of the blame and burden.

In Boston, we’ve expanded our learning agenda beyond schools because we recognize significant, untapped time after school and in the summer—hours that are ripe for building the skills students need to succeed in school, college, the workplace, and beyond.

We hypothesized that if we took a coordinated, citywide approach to expanding access to learning beyond school, and that if we focused that time on developing skills, we’d see a resulting leap in students’ academic and long-term success. So far our theory is bearing out in strong student gains. A large and growing body of research further bolsters our theory of action.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENRICHMENT GAP

To understand educational inequality, we have to take a broader look at when and where students learn. Children spend just over 20% of their waking hours in school. What happens during the remaining hours explains a substantial portion of the achievement gap between low-income students and their peers.

While middle class children are reading, learning, creating, and problem solving at home and in structured out-of-school programs, children in poverty are far less likely to have access to such enrichment.

The effects of this unequal access to enrichment are cumulative, unjust, and deserving of public action. Over time, children from low-income families face increasing disparities in skills, social capital, and future opportunity.

the Bottom line

To address unequal outcomes, we must expand children’s access to enrichment.
It’s All About Skills

For more than a generation, the best thinkers in education have been working to close the achievement gap between more advantaged and less advantaged students.

Along the way, we’ve learned through study after study that the achievement gap is more complex than a lag in reading scores or algebra success rates. While core academics do matter, one of the strongest predictors of whether a young person will thrive in adulthood is their mastery of a core group of underlying skills.

SKILLS DRIVE SUCCESS

Three decades of research across multiple disciplines—psychology, education, cognitive science, econometrics, and labor market research—has converged around remarkably similar conclusions about the skills that matter most to long-term success. Skills like perseverance, self-regulation, and critical thinking strongly predict positive outcomes across just about every measure that matters—from school attendance, grades, and test scores to graduation rates, success in college, higher wages, more engaged citizenship, and better overall well-being (Durlak et al, 2011; Brunello & Schlotter, 2011).

Skills drive success in every sector and stage of life. They help us focus on the task at hand, set goals, manage our time and emotions, advocate for our needs, work effectively with others, and make healthy decisions. When students have the opportunity to build these essential skills, they are better equipped to succeed in school, the workplace, and all aspects of life.

SKILLS TAKE PRACTICE

The best news about skills is that they aren’t magic or innate. Like reading and math, social and emotional skills can be taught and developed over time (Cantor et al, 2018). Many youth development organizations have a long track record of teaching social and emotional skills, and evidence-based programs produce significant growth in crucial skills as well as traditional academic outcomes (Durlak et al, 2011).

In Boston, we’re building on this expertise to nurture children’s skills all day and all year.
Boston Beyond’s Skill-Driven Approach

Boston Beyond has helped shepherd a transformation in Boston’s education landscape by partnering with dozens of nonprofits, city agencies, and local institutions to provide quality after-school and summer learning in every corner of the city.

Today, we support more than 300 programs that engage more than 20,000 children in skill-rich learning every year, and our approach has gained prominence as a state and national model. In Boston and beyond, our partners are proving that a city, united, has the capacity to help every child flourish.

What Makes Our Work So Powerful?

Boston Beyond breaks down traditional boundaries around learning, using innovative approaches beyond classrooms and beyond school hours to support student success.

Five strategies underpin Boston Beyond’s citywide learning initiative:

1. **We Expand Opportunity**: We fill untapped after-school and summer hours with engaging learning opportunities that students are eager to attend.

2. **We Work as a Coalition**: We take a coordinated approach, understanding that we can do more for kids by aligning resources and strategies and by learning from one another.

3. **We Focus on Skills**: We unify all sectors around teachable skills that colleges and employers need and help our diverse partners design meaningful, skill-driven learning opportunities.

4. **We Fuel and Spread Innovation**: We help our partners design and incubate fresh approaches to shared challenges and bring the most successful strategies to scale.

5. **We Measure to Improve**: We use research-validated measurement tools to determine what’s working and where more work is needed to achieve better outcomes.

The following pages describe these strategies in more depth, with examples that highlight how we bring these principles to life with our partners and students.
A student is awake for a total of 5,475 hours per year*

**ENRICHMENT SPENDING GAP (1972-2008)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Higher-Income Families</th>
<th>Low-Income Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-1984</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-1995</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$8,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assumes 9 hours of sleep per night and a 6.5 hour school day

Out-of-school time is a source of major inequality as measured by family spending and youth participation in enrichment.

**PARTICIPATION GAP***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Higher-Income Families</th>
<th>Low-Income Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out-of-school time is a source of major inequality as measured by family spending and youth participation in enrichment.

**FILLING THE OPPORTUNITY GAP**

Boston Beyond’s network fills this gap in opportunity with engaging, high-quality programs for students at every developmental stage.
We Expand Opportunity

Boston Beyond expands opportunity beyond the school day and school year by connecting low-income Boston children with engaging learning programs that advance their life outcomes.

Our large network offers diverse, high-quality learning programs during two crucial windows.

**SUMMER:** Our partners engage thousands of students in hands-on learning each summer. Students learn and practice core skills as they work alongside adult mentors in our city’s parks, museums, businesses, colleges, and more.

**AFTER SCHOOL:** We connect and amplify the efforts of more than 150 after-school providers who offer safe, supportive spaces for students to learn, grow, and practice skills in the hours after the school day ends.

**INVESTING IN HOURS THAT COUNT**

We know from research that quality after-school and summer programs can go a long way in building the essential skills children need for success in school, the workplace, and beyond.

In Boston and nationally, high-attending summer learning students outpace their peers by 25% of a school year in reading and math and gain an advantage in social-emotional skills as well (RAND, 2016).

Children who participate in evidence-based after-school programs demonstrate improvement in self-perception, connection to school, positive social behaviors, grades, and academic achievement (Durlak et al, 2010).

**TOWARD A MORE SEAMLESS SYSTEM**

Operating as a network, we’re able to serve more children more seamlessly by weaving disparate opportunities together into a single, responsive system of learning beyond school.

At the core of our network are several dozen nonprofits with a deep understanding of our community and a history of delivering engaging programs for local youth. Boston Beyond unites these organizations under a common agenda along with other partners who share our commitment to improving outcomes for Boston kids. Working together, we’ve been able to coordinate and align everyone’s efforts, pinpoint unmet demand and student needs, seek new investments where needed, and expand offerings more strategically.

Over time, we’ve significantly expanded the number of Boston students engaged in quality learning programs beyond school while building a more integrated and responsive network of opportunity.

Sources (opposite page)

** Duncan & Murnane, 2011.**

*** US Census Bureau, 2011.
Strategy 2

We Work as a Coalition

Many types of institutions can have an impact on student learning. Boston Beyond has built a cross-sector coalition committed to expanding opportunities and improving outcomes for the city’s highest-need children. Working collectively, our partners supply an array of learning opportunities that engage students’ varied interests, expand their horizons, and meet their academic and developmental needs.

STRENGTH IN THE COLLECTIVE

We’ve broken down barriers that typically separate sectors, creating a space for institutions across the city to learn from one another and from best practices in education and youth development. Together, we apply lessons from research and create new evidence of what works.

We foster an open, collaborative stance in all network interactions. Our partners, in turn, bring their best ideas and resources to one another, understanding that when we elevate one another’s efforts, we all become more effective. The mutual accountability and support of the network generates higher quality programs, better results for students, and more visibility (and resources) for everyone. The result is a virtuous cycle of growth and improvement for all—most importantly, kids.

IT’S ALL ABOUT CAPACITY

When organizations join Boston Beyond, they gain access to a rich area of capacity-building resources. Boston Beyond facilitates cross-sector conversations and provides targeted support to network members, a crucial function for building and sustaining a network of this size. Our menu of network supports include:

- **ORIENTATION & ONBOARDING**: New programs get up to speed and put essential structures in place based on their objectives.

- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**: Customized offerings driven by data.

- **BEST PRACTICES**: In-person sharing and online distribution of case studies, videos, and other resources that capture what works.

- **DATA DEBRIEFS**: Regular reviews of program quality data and student outcomes to guide next steps.

- **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COACHING**: Targeted support to individual programs from Boston Beyond’s experienced team.

- **CERTIFIED OBSERVER TRAINING**: Program staff identify effective practices and assess their peers in action.

I’m so grateful to Boston Beyond and all of our partner organizations that contribute to this community effort, enabling our youth to remain active and engaged, learning all year round.”

BRENDA CASSELLIUS
SUPERINTENDENT, BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Boston Beyond harnesses the capacity of many institutions who share our commitment to increasing student opportunity and improving outcomes. These diverse partners apply unique resources and expertise to our shared agenda. All play a crucial role in helping young people achieve, connect, and thrive.

**SCHOOLS**
Serve as hub of full-day, year-round programming in collaboration with community partners.

**PARKS & CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS**
Become sites of active, hands-on learning where students see skills come to life in new ways.

**BUSINESSES**
Host workplace field trips, supply professional mentors, and provide jobs and internships.

**COMMUNITY CENTERS**
Offer youth-focus programs in every neighborhood to meet the needs of specific youth populations.

**YOUTH-SERVING NONPROFITS**
Provide much of the direct-service capacity, operating engaging, developmentally sound youth programs across the city.

**LOCAL & NATIONAL FUNDERS**
Fuel new and expanded learning opportunities for students and capacity-building for the network.

**CITY AGENCIES**
Supply essential guidance, coordinating functions, and resources that allow programs to thrive and expand.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**
Provide college preparation and exposure programs and on-campus learning that inspires college aspirations.

**OUR CITYWIDE COALITION**

**ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY**
BOSTON BEYOND’S REACH

Our network includes more than 300 programs that engage 20,000+ children across the city.

Students Served
(by one or more programs)

10  25  50   100   250     500      750       1,000
The City Is Our Classroom

In every corner of the city, Boston Beyond’s partners provide engaging, skills-rich learning opportunities during the after-school hours and summer months.

With offerings ranging from outdoor leadership to college immersion to hands-on science, children and their families can choose the program that matches their interests and needs. At every site, students develop important cross-cutting skills as they build meaningful relationships with peers and adult mentors.

1. **Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center**: This Chinatown staple uses a pipeline system to cultivate Asian-identifying youth leaders.

2. **Boston University**: BU's Upward Bound Math and Science provides aspiring STEM leaders with an immersive residential college experience, complete with hands-on projects and lab research.

3. **Harvard Medical School MedScience**: Flagship youth programs train the next generation of medical professionals through hands-on workshops and exposure to diverse healthcare careers.

4. **Sociedad Latina**: This community nonprofit has empowered generations of Latino youth. Its STEAM Team program for middle schoolers focuses on elevating achievement in science and math.

5. **Franklin Park Zoo**: Students explore research and career opportunities in the life sciences while getting to know the animals and learning alongside zookeepers.

6. **Freedom House**: Located in the heart of Boston’s Grove Hall neighborhood, this historic organization guides students to and through college.

7. **Sportsmen’s Tennis & Enrichment Center**: Nestled in the Blue Hill Corridor, Sportsmen’s builds leaders on the court, in the classroom, and in the community.

8. **UMass Boston**: UMass provides on-campus and community-based college readiness programs to middle and high schoolers with a focus on English learners and first-generation college-goers.

9. **Tierney Learning Center**: In partnership with the Edgerley Family Boys & Girls Club, this program provides structured after-school programs for elementary and middle school students.

10. **Boston Scores**: Boston Scores combines the power of sports and literacy to foster self-expression, creativity, and teamwork among its poet-athletes.

11. **Courageous Sailing**: One of the nation’s top community sailing organizations, Courageous offers a unique and groundbreaking youth development program from the Charlestown Navy Yard.

12. **West End House**: A historic Boston institution, the West End clubhouse hosts students for extracurricular programming and serves as a focal point for the neighborhood.

13. **Thomas M. Menino YMCA**: Innovative summer activities focus on sustaining academic progress in STEM, artistic expression, and college and career readiness.

14. **Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center**: Students experience adventure and challenge while conquering a high-ropes course, removing invasive species, and exploring the island’s natural beauty.

15. **Camp Harbor View**: Long Island serves as a summer playground for middle schoolers, while the South End Leadership Academy equips high schoolers for college and career success.

16. **Mass Audubon**: Boston Nature Center hosts hundreds of students from kindergarten through high school for a memorable summer of nature exploration and immersion.

Boston Beyond coordinates this growing citywide network. We track participation, align demand with capacity, and invest in our partners’ growth so every student can find the opportunities they need to thrive.
Strategy 3

We Unify Around Skills

Every member of Boston Beyond’s network commits to cultivating the skills young people need to thrive. With our partners, we’ve carefully selected a set of essential skills that employers seek, colleges require, and research links to success in all spheres of adult life. We work with program providers to embed these skills into engaging activities that ignite students’ interests and prepare them for their next steps in school and beyond.

THE SKILLS THAT MATTER

Our Achieve, Connect, Thrive Skills Framework provides a common vocabulary about skills for schools, youth nonprofits, and other partners, detailing three sets of skills and beliefs that every adult needs and that can be learned in a range of settings. We developed the framework ten years ago, drawing on the best studies available, and we’ve refined it in response to emerging research and our own experience.

All of our partners commit to teaching these skills, tracking students’ progress as they move toward mastery, reporting on outcomes, and participating in our professional learning community.

FOCUS WITH FLEXIBILITY

The Achieve, Connect, Thrive Framework creates a common thread for all of our partners, while allowing the flexibility to design curricula tailored to specific contexts and students. Students can see skills in action in an array of meaningful real-world settings, from the soccer field to the science lab. As students move across settings, they encounter a web of adults who are all using the same language, reinforcing the same skills, and inviting students to take ownership of their own progress.

Students come away from these experiences more motivated, prepared, and empowered to pursue ambitious goals in their classrooms and in their future pursuits.
PUTTING SKILLS INTO PRACTICE

Boston Beyond provides peer learning opportunities, technical assistance, and online tools and exemplars that help programs integrate skill development into their curricula. While the skills take on different dimensions in different settings, students find consistent language and practices that reinforce learning across experiences.

SAMPLE SKILL: PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is the ability to continue with a task despite challenges.

Students exercise perseverance when they work to achieve goals despite obstacles, try again after failing, stick with tasks that take longer than expected, and continue to show up in the face of adversity.

Practices for cultivating perseverance:

- Create a culture of hard work and not giving up.
- Track and share progress with students.
- Use perseverance language daily.
- Let students know it’s normal to struggle and make mistakes.
- Reward effort over achievement.
- Match youth with similarly skilled pacing partners.
- Frame feedback positively and teach positive self-talk.
- Design long-term, challenging projects.
- Create rituals that foster strong attendance/showing up.


PERSEVERANCE IN ACTION

Thompson Island Outward Bound’s summer program culminates with the Alpine Tower, a formidable 50+ foot high ropes climbing element. Over the preceding weeks, staff carefully build students’ understanding of both technical skills and how to face challenges so they’re ready to conquer the tower together.

For more examples of skills in action, visit http://insight.bostonbeyond.org
OUR SIGNATURE INNOVATION: SUMMER LEARNING

Boston Beyond’s partners incubated and rigorously evaluated a bold new approach to summer learning that harnesses our city’s natural, cultural, and neighborhood resources as engaging, real-world learning sites. We’re now bringing this successful innovation to scale and have achieved major milestones in citywide and statewide growth.
Strategy 4

We Fuel — and Spread — Innovation

If we want to help every child develop the skills they need to thrive, we need to think bigger and more creatively about how learning happens and how we build an infrastructure to support student success. To that end, Boston Beyond incubates innovative learning models and program practices with our network of committed partners. Together, we test these new approaches, carefully assess their impacts, and bring the most effective practices to scale.

BOLD THINKING, RIGOROUS REVIEW

As network convener, Boston Beyond secures grants and mobilizes partners to explore promising solutions to shared challenges. Over time, this investment in innovation has allowed all of our partners to strengthen their repertoire. It’s also led to major scalable breakthroughs, like our hands-on, skill-rich approach to summer learning, which has now replaced summer school for the city and become a model for statewide expansion.

INNOVATIONS IN THE PIPELINE

Boston Beyond has an ambitious mission, and we’re constantly looking for ways we can push further, engage more students, get even better outcomes, and truly prepare every student for the future they deserve.

We currently facilitate three cutting-edge initiatives with partners who share our vision of excellence for every child.

- **SKILL BADGES**
  We’re developing digital credentials that students can carry with them across institutions, communicating their successful mastery of crucial skills and validating important learning that occurs beyond school.

- **BOSTEM**
  In partnership with the United Way, a coalition of middle schools, nonprofits, colleges, and businesses are bringing exciting hands-on STEM programs to every Boston middle schooler, seeking to motivate STEM ambitions and build foundational skills during these pivotal years.

- **SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVE**
  Funded by the Wallace Foundation, Boston public elementary schools and their after-school partners are developing common approaches to social and emotional learning to build capacity and consistency throughout the day.
Strategy 5

We Measure to Improve

The Boston Beyond network has adopted a common set of measures to drive growth in student skills and program quality. This suite of validated tools helps us track students’ progress, assess program effectiveness, and identify successful practices across the network. We hold regular data debriefs with our partners, using the data to drive improvements in individual programs and the network as a whole.

MORE ACTIONABLE MEASURES

Our measures are more practical than traditional assessments and more comprehensive and rigorous than many of our partners could manage on their own. They cover a range of program factors and learning outcomes (including crucial social-emotional skills) and even incorporate the perspectives of students and staff.

We use these data to inform everything from curriculum refinements to strategic conversations about network growth. Our suite of measurement tools includes:

- **STUDENT PARTICIPATION**: We track student enrollment and attendance to understand who we’re serving and what opportunities are most effective at engaging different populations.

- **PROGRAM OBSERVATIONS**: We train program staff to assess their peer organizations using a research-based tool to identify and capture a range of quality factors, like student engagement and the learning climate.

- **YOUTH SURVEYS**: Students reflect on their program experiences and self-report on their skill development, using youth-friendly holistic surveys developed by the National Institute on Out-of-School Time and The PEAR Institute.

- **STAFF SURVEYS**: Educators and program staff use a companion survey to assess individual students’ skill development and the quality of their relationships with peers and adults.

DATA DRIVE ACTION

Measures are only as good as the change they inspire. We convene our partners at key junctures throughout the year to review trends we’re seeing across programs and to dig into their programs’ specific strengths and weaknesses. We then use these data to plan adjustments and innovations at the program and citywide levels.

Data help us think about:

- **WHO WE SERVE**: Who are we reaching and to what extent? Which programs attract which students?

- **WHAT STUDENTS ARE LEARNING**: Are students doing better on some skills than others? How can we build in more opportunities to teach essential skills?

- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**: Where do we all have room to learn and grow? Which program practices can we continue to improve?

- **BEST PRACTICES**: Which programs are showing strong results in areas where others struggle? How can we capture and share what they know?

- **WHERE TO KEEP INNOVATING**: Which student learning needs still elude us? Where is there room for more creative thinking?
DATA DRIVE CONVERSATION

Each year, we provide our partners with comprehensive data comparing their performance against research-informed benchmarks and peer programs. Network members use these data to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement. They then create an action plan, drawing on an array of best practices and tools we’ve developed as a network and coaching from our staff.

STEP 1

Review the comprehensive PRISM data report, noticing broad areas of strength and challenge.

STEP 2

Dig deeper to understand specific factors underlying each rating—and how your program compares to other local programs and the network benchmark.

STEP 3

Explore rubrics, case studies, and other tools in our online Insight Center to identify specific high-quality practices your program can implement.
Together, We Do More for Our Kids

When schools and other youth providers team up as a network, they can coordinate to reach more children, solve common challenges, and learn from one another’s successes. The result is a powerful feedback loop of continuous improvement and expanding opportunity.

At Boston Beyond, we take our convening role seriously. We invest significant resources in building the capacity of individual programs and the network as a whole. Our partners, meanwhile, see tremendous value in the support they find from one another and our dedicated staff. Working together, we are able to reach more kids more effectively.

“Before, we were on our own doing our own little thing. Being part of this network helps us work better with the Boston Public Schools, it brings visibility to our organization, and also provides a lot of training for our staff. We can connect with all different kinds of partners and look at what we’re doing well and things we need to work on. Because of the data, people can see that we’re really making a difference. All of those pieces have made summer learning much more serious, while at the same time keeping the fun.”

ALEX OLIVER DÁVILA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SOCIEDAD LATINA

“For nonprofit organizations to be able to engage so closely with the Boston Public Schools, to get to know these children and what their struggles are, and to have conversations before the school year ends so we’re prepared for them—and then adding in the support from Boston Beyond in terms of training and other resources—it’s a win-win for all of us.”

TONI WILEY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & BOARD CHAIR, SPORTSMEN’S TENNIS

“Having the additional time after school and during the summer allows kids to keep those skills sharp and reach grade-level goals... Without good partnerships, these programs aren’t possible. We wouldn’t have success and I don’t think families would send their kids because it would just feel just like another regular school day. Having partners who can provide more supports and additional enrichment activities—it really makes a difference in being able to run quality programs that kids and families want to be a part of.”

JASON GALLAGHER
PRINCIPAL, HARVARD-KENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
The Boston Beyond trainings are tailored to a lot of the needs we have. Having like-minded partners to whom we can say, ‘Hey, what are you doing?’ is really helpful. Growth mindset is one skill we really focused on as a result of training. When you give someone a tool to help them deliver growth mindset feedback—for example, you can say someone’s smart, or you can say, ‘Hey, the way you navigated that was great!’—you’re able to be much more specific and reach a whole different level of understanding.”

TRACY STANLEY
SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER, MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL CENTER FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT

Boston Beyond staff were extremely helpful in developing a team to drive this program. We really wanted to provide kids with new opportunities, things that they would not be exposed to otherwise. They came to the Kenny with a stack of partnerships that we could consider. They also helped with goal setting. At the beginning of the year, we sit down and go through program structure and critically think about where we want to be at the end of the year, with really clear actions so that at the end of the year our program is even better.”

EMMA PATTON
AFTER-SCHOOL DIRECTOR & THIRD GRADE TEACHER, KENNY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Being in the room with seven other principals telling everyone about your after school program was such a huge deal for us. Normally, principals are too busy to go looking for new partners, but all of a sudden there was this recommendation at their fingertips, and all of these doors opened. This year, we’ve been able to partner with three more schools... Just having that already built relationship was super valuable. As a small organization, we appreciate Boston Beyond’s support so much.”

KATE MOREAU
SENIOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ONE BEAD
Our Next Frontier

At Boston Beyond, we’re creating a world where every child, no matter their zip code or financial status, can participate in meaningful, skill-rich programs that put them on the path to successful adulthood. In times of crisis as well as in typical years, our ultimate goal is to create a more effective and more responsive system of learning opportunities that supports children across sectors and stages of development.

It’s a big mission, and we’re proud of how far we’ve come. At the same time, we continue to stretch to reach more students, get better outcomes, and solve new and emerging questions, particularly in regard to skills. Right now, we’re asking:

- How can we make after-school and summer learning and employment experiences available to all young people in Boston and beyond?
- How do we make learning and skill development everyone’s business?
- How do we build out a full system of opportunities through which young people can develop skills in a variety of settings from elementary school through college?
- How can we create pathways from education and youth development to college and career opportunities?

LET’S LEARN— AND INVEST— TOGETHER

The youth development sector is a vital resource for our city and our children, one that deserves robust support. At Boston Beyond, we believe we can all do better by our children if we work, innovate, and grow this important sector together. We’re eager to learn with you. If you’re ready to join our network, invest in our partners, exchange ideas, or adapt Boston’s strategies to your community, we want to hear from you.

Learn more and get in touch: www.bostonbeyond.org

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