



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **BOSTON EDUCATION LEADERS SHOWCASE SUMMER LEARNING SUCCESSSES AMID PANDEMIC**

**BOSTON, Thursday, October 14, 2021** -- Boston After School & Beyond was today joined by more than 250 community leaders, including Boston Public Schools Superintendent, Brenda Cassellius, to assess the challenges and successes of 2021 summer learning outcomes at hundreds of programs and to identify improvements for next summer.

The Boston Beyond event, *"From Data to Action,"* showcased the experiences of 14,243 students in 212 community and school-based programs. With more than 80 percent of programs operating in-person in 2021, up from just 27 percent in 2020, students were strongly engaged in programs. The average student attendance rate was 86 percent, matching the pre-pandemic high of 2018. All race-ethnic groups and neighborhoods exceeded the critical 80 percent attendance threshold, which research shows is a driver of positive academic and social and emotional results.

"Boston's summer programs leveraged trusting relationships and high-interest activities to engage students in their learning at historically high rates," said Superintendent Cassellius. "We will double down on this strategy next year to invest in school-community partnerships that address academic, social, and emotional learning simultaneously, while providing our students with the opportunity to fully experience the city as a classroom."

Programs encountered students with more social and emotional needs this summer, needs likely stemming from stifled interaction as a result of pandemic. According to a self-assessment completed by more than 300 students, 20 percent suggested having challenges in assertiveness, action orientation, optimism, and relationships with adults. The same self-assessment revealed that students cited empathy, emotional control, and perseverance as among their greatest strengths.

Programs met the needs of students with consistently high marks in program performance, based on the observations of trained staff and student surveys. Programs scored highest in categories *"providing a strong social and emotional learning environment"* and in *"staff positively guiding student behavior"*, and the lowest category was *"nature of activity"*. Young people, through survey responses, indicated that programs offered more opportunities for choice and autonomy than in previous summers, a result attributed to adults listening to youth's ideas for activities.

Youth indicated having more opportunity for leadership and autonomy in 2020, but less than in previous summers.

“It's no surprise that students came into the summer with more challenges than in previous years given the stress of the pandemic, but the data shows that they were eager to show up and gained critical skills as a result of well-prepared programs ready to work with them,” said Chris Smith, executive director of Boston After School & Beyond. "Now, our goal is to come back even stronger next summer and expand on this success."

Boston Beyond also unveiled a new report on the skills necessary for school, college, and career success. The report, *All About Skills: A Citywide Approach to Preparing Today's Children to Tomorrow's Opportunities*, highlights how Boston Beyond's partners equip Boston with the vital skills they need to succeed and thrive in and out of school. It features programs such as the Boston Lions Track Club and Level Ground MMA, which use sports to build skills like teamwork and perseverance.

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