FROM DATA TO ACTION

THE SECOND ANNUAL

ACT SKILLS SUMMIT

JUNE 11, 2018

8:30 AM - 3:00 PM

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
GEORGE SHERMAN UNION
775 COMMONWEALTH AVE

Boston After School & Beyond

#ACTSUMMIT

ACHIEVE

CONNECT

THRIVE

FROM DATA TO ACTION

Dear Friend,

Education reformer and philosopher John Dewey said, “The interaction of knowledge and skills with experience is the key to learning.” When an entire community comes together, learning happens in this way.

We gain knowledge and skills through a variety of experiences in different places, at any time of the day or year. Some skills are very specific – writing code or fixing a broken engine, for example. Other skills are broader and provide an all-purpose toolkit to negotiate school, college, and work. They are useful in a vast range of situations and settings, from the neighborhood park to the meeting room, from the family dinner table to the college classroom.

We codify these navigational skills in the Achieve, Connect, Thrive (ACT) Skills Framework. Defining these skills together provides a shared vocabulary to erase traditional barriers between times of day, places of learning, and even stages of life.

Today, we support 230 programs and the Boston Public Schools to erase these barriers, engaging 18,000 young people in skill-building experiences. With a consistent approach to measurement, we are learning what works and what needs to be adjusted. More importantly, we are learning from one another how to create and implement powerful learning experiences in which knowledge and skills interact.

We look forward to expanding our efforts with you so that all young people are prepared to succeed in school, college, career, and life.

Sincerely,

Chris Smith
Executive Director, Boston After School & Beyond

ACHIEVE

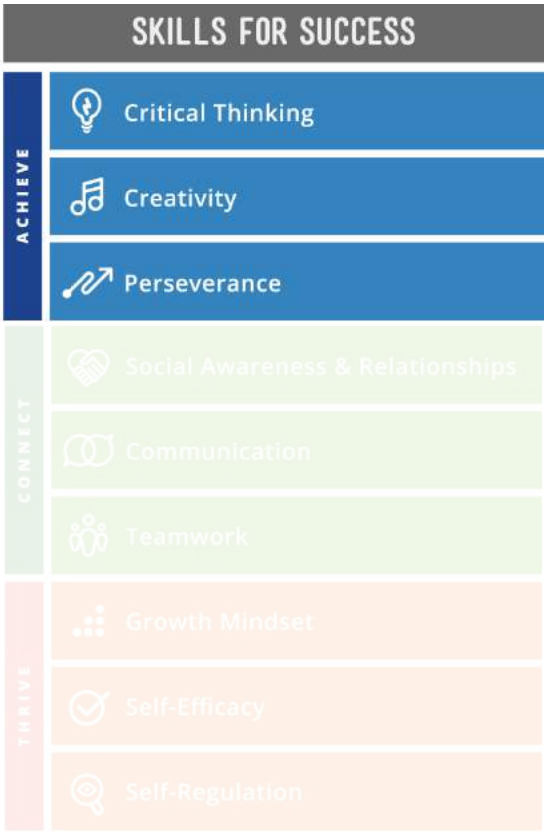
How do you achieve tasks or goals?

These skills help young people process information, assess situations and potential outcomes, and connect actions to future goals. When young people Achieve, they engage in disciplined thinking that is rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence; consider consequences and alternatives; and evaluate information to reach a conclusion. They demonstrate imagination and originality, and stay focused on their goals despite obstacles or distractions.

	DEFINITION	OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS
CRITICAL THINKING	Conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information to reach an answer or conclusion. Involves disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded, and informed by evidence.	• Identifies connections and analyzes relationships between ideas or concepts • Considers perspectives other than their own and identifies their own biases • Explores different solutions when encountering difficulties • Provides evidence/examples to support conclusions
CREATIVITY	Exhibiting originality, imagination, inventiveness, or ingenuity.	• Generates multiple solutions to a problem and looks at situations in different ways • Shows originality when solving problems • Asks questions, demonstrates curiosity
PERSEVERANCE	Focusing on a long-term goal despite challenges, consistently performing required or important tasks and demonstrating initiative in spite of obstacles or distractions.	• Sets goals and identifies steps to achieve goals • Persists in completing a task or goal, even when challenges arise or it takes longer than anticipated • Connects a current task to future goals • Tries again when fails at doing something

ACHIEVE SKILLS IN ACTION

Photo: Boston University, Upward Bound



INTENTIONAL PROGRAM PRACTICES

Brigham and Women's - Project TEACH (Teen Education About Careers in Health) exposes rising 10th graders to the field of public health by employing students in the hospital to gain real life medical experiences, as well as guiding them through academic research on public health issues that affect the communities in which they live. As students grapple with workplace responsibility, program staff prompt participants to reflect on their ideas and methods, and to accept setbacks as necessary tools for learning how to navigate uncomfortable situations in the future. In their academic work, students are encouraged to question their sources of information and work together to use their different points of view while working through an issue or overcoming an obstacle.

Latino STEM Alliance uses Lego Robotics to introduce young people to STEM topics through fun, hands-on activities. Students discover the key role creativity plays in activities they may not have even considered to be creative. As they embark on the engineering design process, students work on their designs and prototypes in small teams, where close relationships foster creative risk taking. After all, young people are more likely to volunteer a novel idea if they know they won't be laughed at or criticized. Staff are careful to keep creative power in students' hands. "You don't want to create for them because that takes away the opportunity for them to learn and strive."

Boston University, Upward Bound works with students from 9th grade through graduation and beyond, exposing them to the world of higher education. The program pairs high expectations with high levels of support, building students' belief in their own strengths and skills. Students come to recognize the perseverance they demonstrate in other aspects of their lives and are encouraged as they apply it to their studies and future goals. The program recognizes that students need positive encouragement in order to persevere through difficult times. Program practices reflect the belief that it is better to focus on weighing the outcomes of possible future paths forwards than to punish young people for past wrong turns.

CONNECT

How do you connect to others?

These skills help young people make contributions to their community, and develop healthy, supportive relationships with peers and adults, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. When young people Connect, they work constructively and cooperatively with others, empathizing with and taking the perspective of peers, advocating for their views respectfully, understanding social and ethical norms for behavior, and sharing ideas clearly and compellingly.

	DEFINITION	OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS
SOCIAL AWARENESS & RELATIONSHIPS	Empathizing with and taking the perspective of others, understanding social and ethical norms for behavior, and cultivating positive, supportive connections with friends, classmates, and adults.	• Shows respect and consideration for others, including those who may differ by gender, age, race, or peer group • Forms friendships with peers • Shares interests and initiates interactions with adults • Disagrees with or questions peers and adults in a respectful manner
COMMUNICATION	Making clear and compelling oral presentations, sharing ideas, clarifying information as needed, and adapting communication styles to meet audience needs.	• Communicates ideas or information to others effectively by presenting information in logical sequence with main points clearly articulated • Asks and/or answers questions • Listens actively and can summarize key points
TEAMWORK	Working constructively and cooperatively with others in pursuit of a common cause or objective.	• Works well in pairs/groups on shared tasks • Contributes ideas and information when in a group • Recognizes when to compromise and when to advocate for themselves • Articulates their point of view and also listens to different opinions during cooperative tasks and disagreements

CONNECT SKILLS IN ACTION

Photo: Playworks New England

INTENTIONAL PROGRAM PRACTICES

PLAYWORKS

Playworks runs recess, student leadership, and staff training programs that focus on harnessing the power of play. Playworks emphasizes the importance of creating safe spaces to play, allowing young people freedom to try new things, approach new people, and benefit from the numerous ways playing together can build relationship skills. Playworks uses norms and routines that help students meet new friends and model effective conflict resolution. They practice cooperation to form healthy relationships and stay aware of what is happening on a playground. Games and group management techniques help students learn about themselves and see others from a different perspective, often without students even realizing they are connecting with others in a new way.

Mass Audubon

At Mass Audubon's summer camps, each morning opens with an opening circle of announcements, songs, and jokes. Young people practice speaking in front of a large group and, just as importantly, practice listening and being kind. Staff make an effort to laugh at everyone's jokes, no matter what. In doing so, staff model for students what it means to listen actively. Students spend much of the school day being quiet, so the program's circle gives them an opportunity to have voice of their own.

CRI

Community Rowing gives young people ages 12-18 the chance to learn to row on the Charles River. Positive peer encouragement and cheering is a key expectation of each participant, and activities are designed to ensure all participants stay involved and engaged throughout. Group challenges encourage young people not only to pull together to chase a goal, but to be strategic, identifying their team's different strengths, allocating tasks accordingly, and pushing one another when things get tough.

THRIVE

How do you help yourself thrive?

These skills help young people recognize and manage their emotions, anticipate the impact of their behaviors on others, and take ownership over their actions. When young people Thrive, they believe that their abilities can grow with effort; have confidence in their ability to accomplish an outcome or goal; and are able to manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviors as appropriate to different situations. This first requires an awareness of self – the recognition of their emotions, thoughts, motivations, strengths, and weaknesses.

	DEFINITION	OBSERVABLE BEHAVIORS
GROWTH MINDSET	Believing that talent and intelligence can be developed and improved through continued learning, practice, and effort.	• Understands that mastery comes through effort • Embraces feedback and constructive criticism • Seeks to learn from experiences and setbacks
SELF-EFFICACY	Believing in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task; is often task or situation dependent.	• Shows confidence in their own abilities • Knows they are in control of their motivation and behavior and, by extension, their success • Is open to risks and challenges
SELF-REGULATION	Managing one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations.	• Reflects, plans, and thinks ahead • Considers the impact and consequences of their behaviors before acting or reacting • Gains control or adjusts behavior as needed • Manages stress and delays gratification • Works well independently, focuses on tasks

THRIVE SKILLS IN ACTION

Photo: The Steppingstone Foundation

INTENTIONAL PROGRAM PRACTICES

steppingstone FOUNDATION

The Steppingstone Foundation's College Success Academy is for rising 5th - 7th grade students who plan to go to college. Students gain the skills to apply to a variety of Boston public high schools while receiving high quality academic and social supports over the summer. Students learn explicitly what a growth mindset is and that their brain is a muscle that can exercise and work. During engineering activities, students build prototypes and improve upon them to help them see just how far they can grow. Students are encouraged to ask for help without feeling discouraged. Steppingstone makes it clear to students that mistakes are normal, and when they can work through challenges, it feels really good!

REHEARSAL FOR LIFE
Urban Improv

Urban Improv Youth Unscripted is an after-school teen program that brings together students from different high schools, and gives them a space to explore their identity, examine social justice issues, and share lessons with the community. The program is deliberately challenging, with the goal to give students the opportunity to realize they can do much more than they sometimes suppose themselves capable of. Students have a voice in how the program is run, advocate for their own views and needs, and the programs' responsiveness models the impact speaking up can have. Effort, rather than ability, is praised and students are given numerous opportunities to demonstrate strong effort in a safe environment where they are comfortable sharing and taking risks.

Children's Defense Fund
Freedom Schools®

Children's Defense Fund Freedom Schools promote literacy and engagement through the belief that "I can and must make a difference in myself, my family, my community, my country, and my world with hope, education and action." Self-regulation is cultivated through a CARE approach: staff provide Consistency, look for Age Appropriate behavior, use Restorative practices to help students get back on track quickly, and always seek to Empathize. Students have two opportunities to make a different choice before an adult intervenes, encouraging them to make adjustments. A key to this approach is helping staff recognize what age appropriate behavior looks like in order to provide an equitable experience for all students.

COLLEGE CAREER AND LIFE READINESS

Connection to Post-Secondary Success

In fall 2017, the Boston Opportunity Agenda, in collaboration with the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, and other stakeholders, launched a new citywide definition for college, career and life readiness. There is considerable overlap between the ACT Skills Framework and the CCLR definition, and together, they reinforce the notion that skills are observable, measurable, improvable, and transferable across settings.

Set a Vision

- Able to set goals
- Confident
- Curious
- Hopeful
- Sense of agency

ACHIEVE

Choose a Course

- Assess and reflect
- Read the landscape
- Plan and persist
- Practice self-regulation
- Take initiative

THRIVE

Change Course

- Able to navigate situations, analyze, and adapt
- Comfortable with ambiguity and change
- Give and take feedback
- Resilient

CONNECT
THRIVE

Build Competence

- Ability to learn
- Ability to self-assess
- Academic foundation
- Financial, media, technology literacy
- Technical skills

ACHIEVE
THRIVE

Work with Others

- Ability to find and ask for help
- Collaboration skills
- Communication skills
- Empathy
- Service and responsibility to others

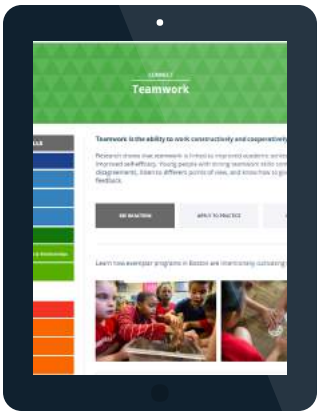
CONNECT

EXPLORE NEW RESOURCES

27 New ACT case studies, highlighting proven strategies from exemplary Boston programs and stratifying resources based on developmental level: elementary school, middle school, and high school

9 Compelling video clips linked to the ACT Skills Framework, showcasing what each skill looks like in practice

(anticipated completion: August 2018)



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every hour counts
expanding learning so every student can thrive

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