

DANCING TO THE TOP

*How Collective Action
Revitalized Arts
Education in
Boston*



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Laura Perille, President & CEO, EdVestors

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DEAR FRIENDS,

We are pleased to share with you this Case Study of the Boston Public Schools Arts Expansion Initiative (BPS-AE). When BPS-AE launched in 2008, we had big ambitions but no expectation that we would achieve the level of impact demonstrated to date: 17,000 additional students accessing education; \$11 million in increased public funding for in-school arts education leveraged by strategic philanthropic investment; and a sustainable system with broad and highly visible support among a wide-range of stakeholders, ranging from youth and families to the Mayor of Boston.

Over the past several years, other cities have expressed interest in applying what BPS-AE and our partners have learned to similar initiatives in their own communities. What follows is an attempt to provide that information. By telling our story and providing a toolkit, we hope to give leaders in other cities some helpful advice and insights to consider when planning enterprises that reflect their unique needs. We have learned so much from the example and expertise of those in other cities, especially the members of our cross-cities learning collaborative in Dallas, Chicago, and Seattle. We welcome the opportunity to share what we have learned as well. The strategy behind complicated, multi-year initiatives is always more clear in the rear view mirror, so we have documented what happened both for others' learning as well as our own.

This Case Study is also intended as a guidepost for Boston's own continued efforts to expand access, equity, and quality of arts learning opportunities in the city's schools. The long-term viability and sustainability of this work depends on the degree to which the larger community—especially families, students, and educators—continues to view arts education as an essential component of a high-quality education. Equally important is a commitment to closing opportunity gaps for all children while opening sequential learning and mastery pathways for the students who find their passion and connection to school through the arts. This is the work ahead in Boston.


We want to thank and recognize the broad range of stakeholders who made BPS-AE more than the sum of its parts over the past seven years. The growth in arts education in the Boston Public Schools has come as a result of a true public-private partnership among the district, schools, private philanthropy, and nonprofit partners. We are grateful to the collaborating funders that invest in BPS Arts Expansion, especially the lead funders who have been there from the Initiative's earliest days: the Barr Foundation, The Boston Foundation, Hunt Alternatives, the Klarman Family Foundation, the Linde Family Foundation, and The Wallace Foundation. Special thanks to the Barr Foundation for their additional support of this Case Study.

Our continued success rests on the extent to which our city, other cities, and, ultimately, the nation embrace the larger goal of ensuring high-quality arts education for all young people everywhere. The future of arts education depends upon nothing less.

Sincerely,



Tommy Chang, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Boston Public Schools



Laura Perille
President & CEO, EdVestors

About Boston Public Schools

As the birthplace of public education in this nation, the Boston Public Schools is committed to transforming the lives of all children through exemplary teaching in a world-class system of innovative, welcoming schools. BPS partners with the community, families, and students to develop in every learner the knowledge, skill, and character to excel in college, career, and life. Boston is one of the 60 largest and most diverse urban school districts in the United States, with more than 56,000 students. Enrolled students come from 139 different countries and speak more than 75 different languages, representing a broad array of racial and ethnic diversity. The student population is composed predominantly of minority racial and cultural groups: 41% Hispanic; 35% Black; 14% White; 9% Asian; and 1% Other/Multiracial.

About EdVestors

EdVestors is a school improvement organization that connects education and philanthropy in Boston. Our goal is to increase the number of schools delivering dramatically improved education outcomes for all students. In partnership with our donors, we act as a seed funder for school improvement; develop & demonstrate best practices across schools; and coordinate major public-private partnerships to achieve city-wide student impact in targeted focus areas—currently middle grades math and K-12 arts education.

Lead Funders

The following collaborating funders have been key in both supporting and shaping BPS Arts Expansion since its earliest days:

Barr Foundation
The Boston Foundation
Hunt Alternatives
Klarman Family Foundation
Linde Family Foundation
The Wallace Foundation

Supporting Funders

Katie and Paul Buttenwieser
Doe Family Foundation
Josephine and Louise Crane Foundation
Jane's Trust
Krupp Family Foundation
Faith and Glenn Parker
Frank Reed and Margaret Jane Peters Memorial Fund
Harold Whitworth Pierce Charitable Trust
The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family Foundation
Rhonda S. Zinner Foundation
Anonymous

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INTRODUCTION

School superintendents aren't usually known for their ability to carry a tune. But for Dr. Carol Johnson, an accomplished musician who became Boston's public school superintendent in 2007, breaking into song was all in a day's work. What was really music to the ears of hundreds of educators, arts organizations, and parents devoted to arts education, however, was Johnson's announcement that this would be one of her top priorities. "Our vision of the BPS graduate," Johnson said, "is not simply a young adult who can demonstrate proficiency on exams, but one who exhibits growth, self-discipline, and reflection through innovative expression and artistry."

Johnson's determination to ensure that students had a strong academic experience that included arts wasn't just rhetoric. It kick-started a citywide movement that brought hundreds of arts educators, community-based organizations, parents, government officials, and philanthropic institutions to the table to hammer out and implement a plan that would concretize Johnson's vision.

In 2009, this effort became known as the [Boston Public Schools Arts Education Expansion Initiative \(BPS-AE\)](#)—a multi-year, public-private partnership aimed at providing equitable access to quality arts learning experiences for the city's 56,000 public school students. At the time, only a quarter of the city's high schools offered any kind of arts instruction to more than 25 percent of their students. Only five percent of elementary school students and six percent of middle school students received the twice-weekly, yearlong arts instruction experts agreed was best practice. Even for once-weekly instruction, a third weren't at this benchmark and access was not equitably distributed.

"I can't think of anything that's comparable to BPS-AE. There is no other public initiative that has been able to leverage private dollars in a public system and also bring nonprofits along. It is multi-layered, well-coordinated, and strategic in where it's trying to go and measuring whether it's getting there. And most of all, it has moved the entire system."

LAURA SHERMAN, *Senior Program Officer, Klarman Family Foundation*



Today, all that has changed:

- » 93 percent of students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth receive weekly, year-long arts instruction—up from 67 percent in 2009.
- » The number of high school students receiving any arts instruction has more than doubled from 2009 to 2015—from 26 to 63 percent, respectively.
- » 51 percent of pre-kindergarten through eighth grade (K-8) students receive the twice-weekly, year-long arts instruction benchmark considered best practice—up from approximately 10 percent in 2009.
- » More than 17,000 additional students now have access to arts learning opportunities during the school year, compared to five years ago.
- » Public funding for arts via the Boston Public Schools budget has increased from \$15M to more than \$26M annually, despite budgetary challenges, demonstrating the clear priority that families, schools, and system leaders now place on the arts.
- » There are nearly 130 more full-time, certified arts specialist positions since 2009, bringing the total number of FTEs to 290 across 125 schools. BPS has an Executive Director for the Arts who has made the Visual and Performing Arts Department the central support and resource for educators and school leaders across the district.
- » More than 60 community-based arts organizations are involved in providing a significant amount of sequential arts education in schools;

71 percent of these said their relationships with the public schools have improved.

- » More visible demand for arts education from families and students has shored up the community support needed to protect arts education from budget cuts and political leadership transitions.

Years of education reform have shown how rare it is to see progress in just one of these areas. BPS-AE's progress in several of them is cause for celebration. As former BPS Interim Superintendent John McDonough notes, "Not only was this initiative successful in raising large amounts of money, it brought in organizations and partners to work in collaboration with public schools. It brought people with vision and energy to lead it. And it increased the capacity of not only individual schools, but of the entire district to provide arts instruction. That's major success."

"BPS-AE has successfully brought together arts teachers, teaching artists from our nonprofit partners, families, school leaders, higher education and cultural partners, and funders. In so doing, it's transformed the way our schools and school system operate and expanded arts learning opportunities for children that open pathways to learning far beyond the arts. With more BPS arts teachers and arts partners working together in our school buildings, we have a vibrant, sustainable approach to arts education that's the model for other cities around the country."

MYRAN PARKER-BRASS, *Executive Director for the Arts, Boston Public Schools Visual and Performing Arts Department*

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

The many partners who worked together on this effort point to a number of key ingredients for its breakthrough success. Having a strong, visionary, and charismatic school superintendent who never wavered in her commitment was certainly critical; yet, so too was the consistent and active engagement of philanthropy, and the open, inclusive, collaborative nature of the planning and implementation process. This resulted in a plan that included expanded arts opportunities for K-12 students; curriculum, instruction, and professional development; quality assessment; partnership coordination; fundraising and public-private investments; communications, outreach, and engagement; and ongoing research and data to assess and measure progress against clear measurable goals.

EDVESTORS WORKS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN BOSTON DELIVERING STRONG EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS.

Another ingredient in the secret sauce was having an independent intermediary with the leadership and capacity to serve as a strong backbone organization for the initiative. That organization was [EdVestors](#). EdVestors works to increase the number of schools in Boston delivering strong educational outcomes for all students. EdVestors identifies and shapes effective improvement initiatives, partners with donors to invest in these initiatives and provides education leaders with hands-on technical assistance and expertise. These efforts have stimulated considerable private philanthropic investments, making EdVestors a powerful force for urban school reform that's leveling the playing field of opportunity and achievement for Boston's students.

August Wilson Monologue Competition

Housed at the Huntington Theatre Company—one of Boston's premier cultural institutions—the August Wilson Monologue Competition caps an intensive arts program that uses the study and performance of August Wilson's plays to improve the reading proficiency of students. More than 300 public school students from nine high schools—most of which had little or no arts programming before BPS-AE funded the program starting in 2009—have participated. Huntington Teaching Artists partner with school teachers to provide the program, which is matched to Common Core standards, and includes in-class study, script analysis, and character development education. The course builds to having students select, memorize, and perform a monologue from one of Wilson's Century Cycle plays.

Regional competitions are held each year, and the top students advance to the national finals at New York City's August Wilson Theatre on Broadway to compete against finalists from other cities. In 2014, Ashley Herbert, a junior at Boston's Kennedy Health Careers Academy, won the national championship—a life-changing experience that Alexandra Truppi, Manager of Curriculum and Instruction, says is common among students who've participated in the program.

CLOSE UP



Learning from Other Cities

As part of BPS-AE's design planning, EdVestors reached out to leaders in other cities engaged in similar initiatives to learn more about their work and how BPS-AE could apply that knowledge in Boston. Today, that group has become a national coalition: Cities for a Creative Future. Founding members are BPS Arts Expansion (Boston, MA), [Ingenuity](#) (Chicago, IL), [Big Thought](#) (Dallas, TX) and [The Creative Advantage](#) (Seattle, WA).

Coalition members use all their cities' assets—public education systems, city agencies, cultural organizations, and private philanthropy—to make sure that all children have sustained and sequential arts learning opportunities. Combined, these initiatives impact more than 670,000 school-age youth and the people who support them.

The group believes that by investing in young people's creative capital today, cities are nurturing the entrepreneurs, inventors, policy makers, and active citizens of tomorrow. While each is unique, all the initiatives employ four common strategies:

- » Public-private partnerships that engage public education systems, municipal governments, cultural organizations, philanthropies, communities, and families.
- » Data-based assessment that identifies gaps in access and equity, establishes measurable public commitments and policies, and tracks progress.
- » Regular communications about progress toward goals and funding to encourage community members to advocate for and take ownership of these efforts.

- » Investing in the people (e.g., families, youth, teachers, teaching artists) engaged in this work at the deepest level and connecting them with others (e.g., elected officials, philanthropists, school leadership) to help move the needle.

The group meets a couple of times each year to talk about the choices and challenges facing them, knowing that they will get good advice from colleagues who know the territory. To make sure that their time together is used well—and not spent sharing war stories—members each bring a “problem of practice” to the meeting. The goal is not to solve the problem, but rather, to have thoughtful conversations about issues or levers to consider while addressing it.

EdVestors, for example, was particularly interested in how Dallas and Chicago had dealt with the kind of mayoral transition that Boston experienced during BPS-AE's second phase. Marinell Rousmaniere, Senior Vice President of EdVestors, was struck by how “enormously helpful the group was. They gave us invaluable information and support because they had already gone through things we were currently facing,” she says. In turn, group members looked to EdVestors for advice about navigating the shift from piloting these kinds of initiatives to scaling and institutionalizing them. Gigi Antoni, executive director of Big Thought, the non-profit leading the highly successful Dallas initiative, noted, “EdVestors brought a lot of knowledge from the cross-sector partnerships that they have about how roles and relationships change during these different phases. We love being their partner, and we've learned a lot.”

BOSTON: 2007

Like other urban districts in 2007, Boston's public schools were reeling from decades of budget cuts, with arts education as one of the hardest hit areas. The result: a patchwork set of programs that fell drastically short in reaching most of the city's schoolchildren.

Some schools offered rich arts instruction to students, with full-time arts teachers in multiple disciplines, while others didn't offer anything. Some schools had rich partnerships with nonprofit arts and cultural institutions, while others had none. An official arts

BOSTON HAD A RICH LANDSCAPE OF ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS, MANY OF WHICH HAD A HISTORY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS.

education policy existed, but there was little incentive or support for schools to meet the requirements. The central arts office was structured as a mid-level curricular department with meager

staffing. Arts teachers rarely convened as a group for professional learning, with most teachers working in isolation within their buildings. Data was sketchy, due to the absence of a system that could measure access, quality or equity of distribution, with information on FTEs and partners but no student level access or impact information. Donors' support for in-school and out-of-school arts programming was diffuse and uncoordinated.

"There were a lot of issues then," says Paul Pitts, a music teacher at Boston Latin School. "There was a lack of sequential curriculum for high school kids and a totally uneven window of opportunity for students across the city. Whether you had arts depended on where you grew up. That was just wrong."

Several historical, political, and economic factors had contributed to that scenario. First, state and local budget cuts had led to fewer dollars available for arts education. Second, BPS was using a school-based budgeting system that gave principals and school site councils autonomy in deciding allocation of discretionary funds (roughly 10 percent of budgets) and staff hirings. That meant that schools with principals who valued arts education would most likely provide funding for it, and schools that didn't would see their discretionary funds go elsewhere.

It also left the staffing needed for arts education vulnerable to school-level budgetary and scheduling pressures. Third, high-stakes testing, which prioritized math and literacy over other subjects, had placed new time and performance demands on schools.

But there were some bright spots as well. Boston had a rich landscape of arts and cultural organizations, many of which had a history of public school partnerships. The city was also home to more than 75 public and private institutions of higher education, including nationally respected art and music schools, and it had a well-established philanthropic community that ranked arts and education as a top priority. For example, Swanee Hunt, philanthropist and Founder of Hunt Alternatives, had created a youth arts coalition of 30 in-school and out-of-school programs in the Boston area. This ARTWorks for Kids program hosted an annual showcase five years in a row that raised \$8.1 million from new major donors (\$1,000 or more) for the coalition members. "As generous as the individual donors were, we knew that to sustain youth arts in the community, public funds had to be invested," Swanee recalls. Hunt Alternatives was an early supporter of EdVestors' investments in arts education prior to and



throughout BPS-AE.

These were important poles on which to pitch the tent for a citywide arts education initiative, but the leadership needed to raise it was missing. That piece dropped into place in 2007, with the appointment of Dr. Carol Johnson as Boston's new public school superintendent.

INFLECTION POINT

As former superintendent of public schools in Memphis and Minneapolis, Johnson had an impressive track record of advancing arts education in both cities, and she arrived in Boston determined to do likewise. At one of her first public events, Johnson promised to do everything in her power to ensure that the arts would be an essential part of a high-quality, public school education. “A key part of our agenda to transform schools,” Johnson stated, “is expanding high-quality, equitably distributed arts learning opportunities for our young people.”

Johnson knew it wouldn’t be easy. Faced with reduced budgets, school administrators were grappling with an array of competing priorities about what would stay and what would be cut. At the district level, the central office was struggling, with little capacity to undertake the kind of large-scale endeavor that instituting arts education more broadly in schools would require.

Despite these challenges, there was deep commitment and vision. That energy just needed to be corralled into a more organized effort that would ensure that every Boston public school child had access to arts education.

Enter EdVestors.

Launched in 2002, by local philanthropists, business leaders, and educators, to draw greater strategic private investment into urban public schools, EdVestors had since been gaining a reputation as an effective school change organization. Much of that reputation stemmed from its

DESPITE THESE CHALLENGES, THERE WAS DEEP COMMITMENT AND VISION.

unique mix of strategic philanthropy, education expertise, technical assistance, and partnerships with government, education, philanthropic, business, and nonprofit leaders that was more than the sum of its parts.

By 2007, EdVestors had already directed more than \$4 million to school improvements in Boston and enabled donors interested in public education to connect directly with schools and education leaders in need of support. Annual events such as EdVestors’ Urban Education Showcase and the \$100,000 “Thomas

“I was the Chief Financial Officer for the district when Dr. Johnson was superintendent and BPS-AE was just starting. EdVestors and the BPS-AE leadership team came to people like me to give us background about what they wanted to do and asked us about possible challenges. They were intentional about seeking out people who’d influence the success or failure of this initiative. It’s impressed me to this day.”

JOHN MCDONOUGH, former Interim Superintendent, Boston Public Schools

Payzant School on the Move Prize” for one of the most improving Boston public schools had successfully engaged a community of committed education supporters. EdVestors also had experience on the other side of the desk working with school leaders to vet, refine, and present effective programs to potential donors interested in education issues. And it provided technical assistance to grantees in measuring their outcomes, creating effective strategies and replicating best practices.

By 2008, EdVestors realized that roughly one-quarter of their education funding was supporting alternative arts education delivery models in a growing number of Boston schools. These models blended school-based funding for arts teachers with community-based arts programs provided by nonprofit groups. But they were still experimental, and when best practices bubbled up, they weren’t shared across schools. There was also little infrastructure to help scale up effective programs, monitor their quality, and ensure that students had equal access to them.

STEPPING UP

In 2008, events were conflating to form the perfect storm for change. There was potential to disrupt an entrenched and stagnant system, growing demand from the front lines, a real problem to solve, and donors wanting to invest in its solution. There was new and inspirational leadership committed to arts education. And community-based organizations and BPS had expressed interest in collaborating.

Recognizing that this window of opportunity wouldn't last long, in spring 2008, EdVestors and a group of local funders with a long history of supporting arts programs—including the Barr, Boston, and Linde Family foundations, and Hunt Alternatives—approached the new superintendent with a proposal to undertake a six-month planning process aimed at creating a coherent framework for a district-wide arts education expansion plan.

The group presented its case, which emphasized the critical role of arts in a high-quality learning environment—one that includes a focus on school climate, student engagement, and family choice. Members also pointed to the growing call from teachers and school leaders for more arts instruction. And they described the potential to use arts education as a model for more systemic approaches to school equity and sustainability, as well as to transform the district's central office so that it could support arts education more effectively.

The group's passion and determination won the day. Johnson not only gave the project her blessing, but

“If the leadership values it, it’ll happen. But someone in that leadership position has to be willing to say, ‘I’ll expend political capital on this to make sure that it happens.’”

MARI BRENNAN BARRERA, *Consultant,*
Hunt Alternatives

agreed to co-chair the effort along with Klare Shaw, a long-time leader in Boston's arts and education philanthropic community, and EdVestors' CEO, Laura Perille.

EdVestors offered to serve as the initiative's lead and managing partner. With years of experience working on school reform initiatives, EdVestors knew the value of having an objective intermediary at the helm. It also had considerable knowledge of arts programming in schools; credibility with arts and cultural partners, as well as with schools; and strong partnerships with philanthropic donors and other city leaders—all of which made it well positioned for this leadership position.

North Bennet Street School Piano Tuning Project

CLOSE UP

In 2009, nearly all Boston Public Schools had at least one piano, or several, that hadn't been tuned or repaired. That changed with Arts Expansion funding for a new program that sends Piano Technology students into schools to fix them. The students are from North Bennet Street School (NBSS), a 135-year-old craft and trade school located in Boston's North End. NBSS offers intensive, hands-on training in eight disciplines from master practitioners, and together with BPS' Instrument Repair Technician, the School's Piano Technology students collect tuning requests and perform repairs on the system's entire piano inventory.

The program has steadily gained a reputation for excellence, resulting in ever-increasing demand. To date, more than 200 pianos have been tuned or repaired by students who are meeting a clear need while gaining real-world experience. BPS has also benefited, says Mark Legault, the current repair technician. “We're thrilled about this experience and hope this partnership continues for a long time. The teachers are delighted. It's a win-win situation for everybody.”



PHASE I: FROM BLUEPRINT TO SCAFFOLDING

To get the ball rolling, Superintendent Johnson, Perille, and Shaw quickly pulled together a small committee of smart and savvy public school leaders and local funders already working with EdVestors to jumpstart the planning process. With a planning grant from local funders, this committee began by looking at the state of arts education in Boston's public schools. It didn't take them long to agree that the frequency, depth, sequence, and quality of arts experiences was inadequate, and varied considerably across schools.

The group believed three factors were responsible for this: state-mandated high-stakes testing that emphasized math and literacy over the arts; a decentralized, school-based management system that allowed individual schools to make decisions about flexible fund allocation, including arts education; and the variety of approaches and programs being used to deliver arts education, which made it difficult to assess quality. As a result, schools that valued arts education funded it; those that didn't cut back or eliminated the arts.

DATA-DRIVEN GOALS, OUTCOMES, AND STRATEGY

Suggesting that these issues were major barriers to high-quality school-based arts education was one thing. Having hard data to prove it was another. The committee agreed that to be successful, the initiative's strategies and tactics had to be rooted in evidence-based, rigorously-culled research and practice. "We needed to know what is the state of arts education in Boston?" says Klare Shaw. "And we decided that the

best way to answer that was by doing a really good survey across all the city's public schools that would pull together really accurate data." That survey would identify resources, gaps, and expansion opportunities in Boston's public schools and lay a baseline for tracking future progress and outcomes.

To assure its credibility and reliability, the research would have to be done by an independent, third-party entity with deep experience in education issues. Julia Gittleman, Ph.D., a consultant who had designed and implemented numerous education program evaluation and performance measurement studies, fit the bill.

"Our strategy was an equity strategy. We wanted ALL kids in public schools to have access to arts. That approach created a conversation."

LAURA PERILLE, CEO, EdVestors

Working in collaboration with EdVestors and BPS, Gittleman designed a survey that was sent to 138 school leaders across the entire district. A companion survey was also sent to all nonprofits and cultural organizations partnering with schools to provide arts

instruction. The school survey received a 93 percent response rate—almost unheard of in research circles. Fifty-seven nonprofits responded to the survey of partners, for an 86 percent response rate.

The result: Boston had its first comprehensive inventory of school-based arts instruction—by school, number of students, frequency, and art discipline.

The report’s findings were a wake-up call. Only one quarter of the city’s high schools reported offering any arts instruction to more than 25 percent of their students. Only five percent of elementary school students and six percent of middle school students received the twice-weekly, year-long arts instruction regarded as best practice. In fact, only two thirds of those students had access to even a baseline of once-weekly instruction during the school year. Massachusetts was one of four states without an arts education mandate, and one of 10 that didn’t have a high school arts graduation requirement at the time.

	SY 09
Percentage Weekly Year Long Arts Instruction Grades K-8	67%
Percentage Any Arts Instruction High School Students	26%
Number of Arts Specialist FTEs	156.6
District Total Investment (approx)	\$15M

GOING PUBLIC: THE LAUNCH

Working with researchers, EdVestors synthesized and presented these data in *The Arts Advantage: Expanding Arts Education in the Boston Public Schools*, a report produced by The Boston Foundation, with support from the Barr Foundation, the Linde Family Foundation, and Hunt Alternatives, in collaboration with BPS.

The report was released in February 2009, at a forum held at The Boston Foundation’s offices, where Carol Johnson used the occasion to announce the creation of the then-new BPS Arts Expansion Initiative. Johnson

“A major contributor to BPS-AE’s success was that it set an ambitious, trackable goal from the get-go—100% of all K-8 BPS students enrolled in once weekly, yearlong arts instruction by 2012. They set the bar and then measured against it.”

SARA STACKHOUSE, former Executive Producer, Actors’ Shakespeare Project

told a rapt audience of principals, teachers, nonprofit representatives, civic leaders, and elected officials that the initiative’s focus would be on increasing both the quantity and quality of arts instruction in all public schools.

According to Steve Seidel, Director of the Arts in Education Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, this sequencing wasn’t an accident. “Waiting until they had the results of this research before launching the larger initiative was smart and strategic. The group wanted the data to inform the plan, rather than jumping in and doing things before there was a clear idea about what needed to be done for what purpose.”

Armed with these data, which showed clear inconsistencies and inequities across the system’s provision of arts instruction, Johnson said BPS-AE would have three major goals:

- » **Expanding direct arts instruction for students** during the school day.
- » **Building the capacity of the district’s central office** to support expanded arts education programs and curricula.
- » **Organizing stronger and more efficient partnerships** among schools and community-based arts and cultural groups to ensure that students received the highest quality arts instruction possible.

Johnson also announced the formation of a high-level Arts Advisory Board to inform and connect the initiative to the city more broadly, as well as a new Arts Expansion Fund. This Fund would give grants to schools (either alone or collaborating with nonprofit arts partners) with promising arts programs or ideas, especially those with little or no arts education at the time. Already, \$1.1 million of the Fund's three-year, \$2.5 million fundraising goal had been raised, and the planning committee had made the first pilot grants.

This combination of hard numbers, influential players, solid financial resources, and a set of funded model programs sent a powerful message to the community that BPS-AE would be a force for demonstrable change. It also allowed BPS-AE to lay down an ambitious gauntlet: ensuring that 100 percent of all K-8 BPS students were accessing once weekly, year-long arts instruction and having all high school students exposed to any arts instruction. The ambitious but achievable goal was key in keeping participants' eyes on the prize, as well as in holding their feet to the fire—an accountability that had been absent in many previous ventures.

START-UP: STRUCTURE

Capitalizing on the momentum generated by the forum, EdVestors hit the ground running. The first step was to create a multi-tiered architecture for BPS-AE that would be led by the prestigious Arts Advisory Board mentioned at the launch. Chaired by Superintendent Johnson, this committee was composed of 25 civic leaders from arts, philanthropy, higher education,



and government, with the stature and influence to help fortify BPS-AE's credibility, reach, and impact.

In addition to the Advisory Board, EdVestors established an Arts Working Committee that would meet quarterly to help devise strategy and serve as a planning sounding board. Co-chaired by Klare Shaw and EdVestors CEO Laura Perille, this committee included the original planning team, several local foundation program officers and BPS staff. One of the major tasks of this committee was deciding what would be most important to bring to the attention of the Advisory Board so "it wouldn't just be EdVestors having to make these decisions. It also helped to avoid pitfalls by having these conversations—testing the waters—with all the committees before they went public with information," says a member.

Arts Executive Leadership Team

Arts Advisory Board

Composed of civic leaders from arts, philanthropy, business, and the City of Boston. Provides high level, cross-sector leadership.

Arts Coordination Team

Composed of BPS Arts staff and EdVestors staff. Meets regularly to ensure progress on BPS Arts Expansion goals on a day-to-day basis.

Arts Working Committee

Composed of program officers from local foundations, EdVestors, and BPS staff.



Recognizing that there would be circumstances that required rapid response decision making, Superintendent Johnson, Perille, and Shaw were appointed as an Executive Leadership Team. Rounding out the leadership structure was an Arts Coordination Team that would meet monthly to track BPS-AE's progress in meeting its goals, address day-to-day challenges, and move agenda items forward more efficiently.

As it did with the initial planning group, EdVestors would manage and serve as lead partner for this new infrastructure, as well as oversee research and data collection, strategy development and implementation, evaluation, fundraising, and grantmaking. EdVestors also worked hard to make sure that all committees were meaningfully and fully engaged, and energized by their participation. Meetings, for example, were designed with a clear purpose and allowed for substantive information sharing and discussion. EdVestors also came to every meeting with one or two specific questions or issues that it would pose to committee members for their advice and expertise.

According to Arts Advisory Board Member Michael Tooke, founder of Boston Leaders for Education, a group of local business CEOs advocating for school reform, "These board meetings were excellent because they were well organized and featured high-level presentations that highlighted progress, future direction, and key developments." Laura Sherman, Senior Program Officer for the Klarman Family Foundation

agrees: "Any time EdVestors brought people together it was done purposefully. They made it easy for people to want to bring their expertise to the table, and they designed flawlessly-run meetings that generated enthusiasm and engagement. And they structured meetings so that there was reciprocity in terms of information sharing. They shared their progress with us but then said, 'We've had this success but how do we think about what else might be needed?'"

"EdVestors' facilitation of the grants process was done with incredible thoroughness and expertise. They helped teachers to apply for a grant through information workshops and input their staff was always willing to provide. EdVestors also evaluated each school/arts partner's effectiveness by requiring reports that showed data about how many students were receiving arts education as a result of the grants. Members of the EdVestors team frequently came to our school productions, and it was evident to me that they stayed very involved in, and well-apprised of, the progress of each program."

EMILY CULVER, *Theatre Specialist,*
Boston Public Schools



Incentive-Based Grantmaking

The goal of expanding access to direct arts instruction for students would be advanced by the funding BPS-AE was providing to schools and arts partners through its local Arts Expansion Fund. The planning committee had made a first round of pilot grants, totaling \$115,000, to 10 elementary schools, four middle schools, and four high schools for an assortment of dance, theatre, and music programs to demonstrate possibilities.

Each year, the fund sends requests for proposals to schools and nonprofits and forms a review committee that includes EdVestors' senior staff, arts education professionals, and local funders. "Getting those funders involved in the grant review process," says one foundation official, "was a level of engagement that EdVestors was smart to create. They used people's knowledge and gave them a role, which helped create more enthusiasm and buy-in for the initiative."

The grants were proving to be a strong incentive for drawing in more schools and nonprofits to the initiative's work. But getting a grant from the Fund wasn't a cakewalk. Applicants had to stipulate clear goals and outcomes, demonstrate how these aligned with the initiative's efforts, and describe how they would create or strengthen partnerships with a wide variety of arts education players. To help with this process, EdVestors held workshops for applicants, giving teachers and nonprofits the chance to ask questions and get personalized feedback and assistance. EdVestors' staff also coached potential applicants through phone and email.

This rigorous process enhanced the potential for "on-the-ground" arts programs to have visible impact in schools and communities. Grantmaking was also a key lever for "moving the needle at the system level," Ruth Mercado-Zizzo, EdVestors' BPS Arts Expansion Director, observes, "because they embodied the desired outcomes as those the initiative wanted to see across all schools

and showed that this could be done with adequate system support." And, notes Sara Stackhouse, former Executive Producer of Actors' Shakespeare Project, the grants strengthened partnerships because, "EdVestors didn't just talk about partnerships; they made them happen because organizations that didn't do this weren't likely to get funding."

Peggy Kemp, Headmaster of Fenway Pilot High School, says these grants gave a lot of schools that didn't have money in their budgets the chance to introduce arts into their curricula. "It also pushed us to think more about how we could better identify teaching artists and connect with other arts organizations in Boston."

And the grants led to results. When Kemp received funding in 2008, Fenway had no arts instruction. In 2008, it received its first Expansion Fund grant, allowing it to introduce one arts period weekly, for 18 weeks, for all sophomores. Today, the school is able to offer a variety of arts disciplines to all sophomores for a full year and twice a week, along with a graduation credit, partially funded from the school's budget. "Before, it was an experience," Kemp says. "Now it's a course that will be graded."

Grant recipients weren't the only ones who benefited from the Arts Expansion Fund. The local foundation partners found it added value to their philanthropic practice. "My foundation wasn't an expert on arts education, so we looked to EdVestors to help us make wise investments and do it in a coordinated and strategic way. They had a very intensive and thoughtful due diligence process. They involved funders and others to review proposals and talk them through, which helped us all learn more about the issue and the landscape," says Laura Sherman of the Klarman Family Foundation.

START-UP: FUNDING

Only one more thing was needed: Some funding to jumpstart the planning process into full gear.

BPS-AE had already raised more than \$1 million toward its three-year \$2.5 million fundraising goal. Having this solid financial base from local donors, organizers believed, would be crucial to attracting additional support down the road.

And it was. When EdVestors' CEO Laura Perille and Klare Shaw hit the road to fundraise, people listened, Shaw says, "because we had the one-two punch: data and money to do the work."

One of those people was Daniel Windham from The Wallace Foundation, one of the country's biggest private foundations supporting the arts. Wallace had been investing in the planning or implementation phases of similar efforts in a handful of other cities such as Dallas and Seattle, both of which were also seeing marked progress in advancing arts education. On a visit to New York City, Windham met with Shaw who presented him with a report on BPS-AE's baseline survey and grant results and said, "The Wallace Foundation really needs to get in on this."

The Foundation agreed. In October 2009, former Mayor Thomas Menino and Dr. Johnson announced a \$750,000 grant to EdVestors, in partnership with BPS, from The Wallace Foundation to develop a formal citywide plan aimed at fortifying arts education at the system level. Menino underscored that funds would be earmarked for improving professional development, partnership coordination, leadership and staffing, communications, and data collection that would advance arts education.

What contributed to this rapid progress? Laura Perille points to three factors: 1) the ability to bring money to the table right up front; 2) it had to be new money, i.e., it couldn't be funding that was being taken away from existing grantees; and 3) BPS-AE's clear and measurable goal from the outset.

CITYWIDE PLANNING

While BPS-AE's general goals were set by the 2009 report, there were still some blanks to fill. That, EdVestors decided, was the job of a larger group of com-

"I've seen a lot of these kinds of initiatives over the years, and there's usually one or more of these Achilles heels: someone has an unspoken agenda that's driving things and no one is challenging it; it's ill constructed and lacks the capacity to meet a goal; funders are dictating the process; and a key partner committed to playing a leadership role didn't step up. None of those were present in this initiative."

MARINELL ROUSMANIERE,
Senior Vice President for Strategic
Initiatives, EdVestors

munity stakeholders, specifically, teachers, nonprofit partners, and school administrators. In addition to "making it real," this participatory process would send a clear message that whatever plan emerged, it was the *community's* plan—not that of EdVestors, BPS, or funders. "We saw this as an opportunity to get more specificity around what we should do," says Perille. "But it was also the chance to build community ownership of the final plan, through a constituent-driven process."

This 18-month process kicked off with an "all-comers" event at the Boston Symphony Orchestra, where art teachers, teaching artists, principals, and arts organizations were invited to weigh in on what they saw as priorities for advancing school-based arts education. Attendees were also encouraged to sign up for working groups that would dig into the issues most important to the group: curriculum, instruction, and professional development; partnership coordination; high school strategies; and quality arts education.

ART TEACHERS, TEACHING ARTISTS, PRINCIPALS, AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS WERE INVITED TO WEIGH IN ON WHAT THEY SAW AS PRIORITIES FOR ADVANCING SCHOOL-BASED ARTS EDUCATION.

Marinell Rousmaniere, EdVestors' Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives (then the BPS Arts Expansion Director) facilitated these gatherings. The meetings were carefully designed to elicit information through an approach that wasn't dictatorial or, the other extreme, completely open-ended. As Rousmaniere recounts, "We didn't go in saying, 'What do you think we should do?' as would happen in a big, fluid scenario planning exercise. This was a guided, iterative process where we went in saying things like, 'Here's what they're doing in other cities; what would work here?' or 'Here's what our survey results showed; based on these, how can we best address the gaps the research surfaced?'"

According to current BPS Arts Expansion Director Ruth Mercado-Zizzo, then working at an arts partner organization and a member of the Partnership Coordination Working Group, "EdVestors presented clear questions to the working groups that they could give concrete input on. It wasn't just, 'Hey, let's all just throw anything out there as an idea!' EdVestors tried to make sure that the process was meaningful and authentic. Participants' feedback was taken seriously, rather than treated as just 'input.' Many of the group's

"From the very beginning, we had the feeling that we were all working on this together. There was always opportunity for feedback and conversation. This made it feel like a real partnership—and it's continued like that all the way through. This initiative has been really respectful of what we can offer and offer well. There are so many other conversations about BPS that don't have that attitude."

MONICA GARZA, Director of Education,
Institute for Contemporary Art/Boston



recommendations were incorporated into the final plan, which is where the authenticity came in."

Meetings weren't without some road bumps. Teachers, for example, weren't accustomed to participating in these kinds of collaborative planning efforts, nor did they have a lot of time to commit to them. Arts organizations, though, were used to engaging in coalition work and eager to participate—an experience differential that led to some tension. But, says Rousmaniere, "We worked through it because we knew we had to have both teachers and nonprofits at the table in planning this. Otherwise, it would fail."

To help smooth the road, EdVestors provided teachers with a small stipend and worked around their schedules, which helped them feel supported and valued. EdVestors' facilitators also took pains to ensure that all voices were heard, respected, and considered seriously. Numerous participants, in fact, point to Rousmaniere's (and later, Mercado-Zizzo's) skilled facilitation as the most important reason "we all were able to come together and make these meetings productive and engaging." In fact, teachers were saying it was the best professional development experience they'd ever had.

As an independent host, EdVestors had no pre-conceived agenda, which helped ensure no particular

EDVESTORS' FACILITATORS TOOK PAINS TO ENSURE THAT ALL VOICES WERE HEARD, RESPECTED, AND CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY.

Beethoven/Ohrenberger Schools' Sequential Arts Pathways

Two schools that merged in 2009—Beethoven (K-2) and Ohrenberger (3-8)—to become a pathway school received Arts Expansion funding starting in 2011 to develop a sequential arts program. The school collaborates with arts partner Making Music Matters! (MMM!) to build upon instruction provided by the schools' music teachers by offering instrumental music lessons to third, fourth, and fifth graders. Instructors are professional music educators who teach in highly regarded music schools and conservatories such as Brookline Music School, Suzuki School of Boston, and Rivers Conservatory.

The Berklee College of Music—one of the nation's most prestigious music schools—Faculty Outreach Program adds a continuum of instrumental instruction for students in Grades 6 through 8 at the Ohrenberger School. Grade 5 MMM! students are encouraged to enroll in the Berklee instrumental program for Grades 6, 7, and 8 and to join the Ohrenberger School Ensemble (22 of the 38 band's members are current or past MMM! students). The Berklee program provides an opportunity for students to build further proficiency of their chosen MMM! instrument or to choose a different instrument to learn. This pathway of sequential instrumental music instruction offers increased ensemble and solo performance experience and readies students to join music ensembles at other BPS Schools when they leave the Beethoven/Ohrenberger.

philosophy or organizational approach dominated, which “has happened in the past,” one nonprofit participant says. “It’s usually been a few of the bigger arts organizations bringing everyone together, which is nice, but they often ended up just being more about telling us what they wanted to do, rather than asking us what we thought.”

EdVestors also held six student focus groups and another set for 40 principals to get their ideas and recommendations for the plan. Combined, more than 100 people representing dozens of schools and organizations participated and saw their recommendations incorporated into the final plan. Recommendations included: direct arts education expansion at all grade levels; curriculum, instruction, and professional development; quality assessment; partnership coordination; fundraising; public engagement; and research to measure progress against the stated goals.

Because the plan was “built on a solid foundation of local leadership, ownership, and investment,” it would make it hard to ignore, says Perille. “It would also help the initiative to withstand city leadership changes or external factors that might threaten its ability to succeed.”

MAKING INROADS

During this period, BPS-AE was already seeing results. By 2010-2011, an additional 9,000 elementary, middle, and high school students were experiencing arts during the school day. Four out of five pre-K-8 students were getting arts instruction at least once a week for the whole year (up from 67 percent in 2008-09). In high schools, the number of students having arts instruction during the school day went from 26 percent in 2008-09 to 47 percent. Half of all schools now offered weekly arts instruction to 100 percent of their students, and every high school was providing at least some arts.

The initiative was also making significant inroads toward its fundraising and grantmaking goals. By 2012, EdVestors had raised \$2.4 million for the Arts Expansion Fund, just shy of the initial three-year 2.5 million target, and had made more than \$2 million in Arts Expansion grants for programs aligned with BPS-AE's goals.

“I don’t know how you do a collaboration without it being aligned with a clear goal,” Perille says. “For example, when an organization that does field trips for kids came to us for support, we said, ‘We love field trips, but that’s not what we’re doing. We’re trying to change behavior and the systems around that behavior.’ We could say that because we were all clear about the end goal.”

	SY 09	SY 11
Percentage Weekly Year Long Arts Instruction Grades K-8	67%	81%
Percentage Any Arts Instruction High School Students	26%	47%
Number of Arts Specialist FTEs	156.6	166.7
District Total Investment (approx)	\$15M	\$17M

“BPS-AE worked on multiple fronts. We had support from local nonprofits that grew over time as they saw consistent funding, a plan and the resources to implement it. We had support from the superintendent. We had an external national funder who was validating the local work and funders. If we had done any one of these by itself, it would have failed.”

KLARE SHAW, Director of Programs,
Liberty Mutual Foundation



PHASE II: MOVING THE NEEDLE

By 2011—just two years since its launch—BPS-AE had achieved some impressive accomplishments. It had designed and actualized a high-level leadership structure; built a new funding mechanism; provided grants to arts organizations that gave direct arts instruction to thousands of students; and engaged dozens of stakeholders in building a long-term arts education plan for the district.

But partners agreed: more needed to be done, and now was the time to do it. BPS-AE's momentum, visibility, and engagement levels were at an all-time high. And the larger system was shifting: BPS had increased its arts education investment every year since the initiative began—from \$15M in SY2009 to \$17M in SY2011.

It was time for Phase II—moving the planning from paper to reality. Over three-years (2012-2015), Phase II would:

Continue to expand direct arts education by adding \$3 million to the Art Expansion Fund through 2015; testing new models of in- and out-of-school arts instruction for high school students to help them meet a one-credit arts requirement recently enacted as part of new state Common Core standards; and moving the needle beyond once-weekly instruction for K-8 and any for high schools.

Build up district-level, central office capacity to support a more systematized and sustainable arts education system across schools through a curriculum mapping and materials adoption process aligned with state Common Core standards; convenings, trainings, and other professional development opportunities for arts educators; and an innovative,

peer-driven, quality review process. All of these activities would be implemented by BPS's Arts Department, positioning it as an authoritative body with the power and influence needed to ensure that schools and arts educators had essential resources and support.

Strengthen collaboration between schools and community-based arts and cultural groups by creating a new District Arts Partnership Coordinator position in the central office; designating an arts liaison for each school who would be the point person for partnership efforts; and constructing a database for schools and nonprofit arts partners to share information more efficiently.

BIG GOALS, BIG FUNDING

Big visions require big funding, and that funding came in February 2012 with a \$4 million grant from The Wallace Foundation. This grant, which EdVestors would manage, complemented the more than \$4 million that had been contributed by local funders to date, and substantial annual investment by BPS, now at \$18M annually.

The Wallace Foundation grant focused on building a long-term, district-level system for stronger arts curricula, evaluation, partnerships, and standards in Boston—not on supporting individual arts programs. The latter would be the charge of local funders who had supported these kinds of programs and knew them well.

BIG VISIONS REQUIRE BIG FUNDING, AND THAT FUNDING CAME IN FEBRUARY 2012 WITH A \$4 MILLION GRANT FROM THE WALLACE FOUNDATION.

“Arts learning opportunities have been diminishing over the last three generations of school children. The Wallace Foundation is looking forward to working with its partners in Boston who are testing new approaches to reverse this trend, and to learning with them about how to best strengthen arts learning in school districts.”

WILL MILLER, *President, The Wallace Foundation, February 2012*

This dual financing approach dovetailed nicely with BPS-AE’s planning sequencing. Phase I had focused on getting traction for direct arts education backed by local investments and long-term planning. Now, Phase II, which added system-level change to the agenda, had earmarked funds to build the infrastructure for that change.

While excited by the opportunity that the Wallace grant offered, EdVestors took deliberate steps to reassure its partners and the public that BPS-AE would continue to be a locally-driven and managed process. As Perille notes, “We said, ‘This isn’t about getting a big grant from a big foundation. It’s an opportunity to do what we need to do. We’re building Boston’s plan.’”

THE STEPS TO SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

Strengthening Central Office Capacity

One of the most important foci of Phase II was ramping up the BPS Arts Department’s central office capacity through more robust leadership and staffing. According to John McDonough, former Interim Superintendent, systemic changes would be highly unlikely without a strategy of embedding a small and skilled group of people in the system who could help schools

understand how to schedule and staff their schools in ways that support arts instruction.

The lack of such a group had taken a toll in recent years. BPS’ arts department suffered from minimal staffing, including no high-level leader or position for the arts, and scant ability to provide substantive support to school leaders, teachers, or external partners.

All that changed in June 2011, when Myran Parker-Brass took the reins as Executive Director for the Arts in BPS. Recruited for the position, which was originally conceived by EdVestors during the implementation planning process, Parker-Brass was a music educator and administrator with more than 30 years of arts education experience, including serving as the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s education director for 20 years.

The challenges facing Parker-Brass weren’t for the faint of heart. “When I came,” she says, “the office was very small, about two and a half people, which meant not a lot of capacity to meet teachers’ needs on the ground. There were over 160 teachers who needed support, and we just didn’t have the capacity to provide it. A lot of teachers didn’t even have the actual physical space to teach their arts classes in, so they were doing it the hallways and closets!”

Not one to let grass grow under her feet, Parker-Brass quickly hired two more staff members (which eventually grew to five) who would “do nothing but support teachers—all the things they weren’t getting.” Parker-Brass also connected the growing cadre of arts teachers with each other and with other educators

to build relationships. “A lot of these educators were lone wolves in their schools. Or there were pockets of teachers who were connected to district work, but not all of them. So we started going out and meeting all of the teachers in the district and asking them what they needed to support their work and what problems they saw that were consistent across schools. And then we brought them together to talk about these issues and to see if, together, we could find solutions.”

PARKER-BRASS ALSO CONNECTED THE GROWING CADRE OF ARTS TEACHERS WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH OTHER EDUCATORS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.

As the network grew, Parker-Brass saw the opportunity to form more action-oriented working groups of teachers with particular interests or aspirations. Educators who agreed to be part of a group received a small stipend for their time, which they spent exploring best practices in arts curriculum, instruction, and professional development. Groups met monthly, and Parker-Brass and her staff made it a point to attend every meeting, each of which ended with a clear action plan.

This process, Parker-Brass says, helped arts educators to feel valued, supported, and important. Most important, it “allowed the work BPS-AE was doing to become *their* work. As soon as they felt like they owned it, the barriers melted away because they built a space that was theirs.”

They had also become champions for Parker-Brass’ vision, which didn’t go unnoticed. Soon, Parker-Brass and her team were seeing increased school budget line items for arts instruction and had a permanent seat at the table in discussions about district-level school system decisions and policies.

Collecting and Analyzing Data

Meanwhile, EdVestors and BPS continued to track student access and school progress each year against the baseline data it had collected. This was important, says Steve Seidel, because “it gave EdVestors hard numbers for showing investors and the public how much progress BPS-AE was making, which helped to build support for it. And it pushed schools to pay attention to collecting that data because they could see real-time progress in meeting BPS-AE’s goal of 100 percent of all pre-K-8 BPS students receiving at least once weekly arts instruction.”

That attention to rigor continues with Parker-Brass who wants to see it become a “given” in schools’ data collection process. “Once we can use data to show what good arts education looks like and the educational outcomes it can lead to, we can embed it more systematically.”

As an example, she points to Orchard Gardens (K-8). “Five years ago, they were one of the worst-performing schools in the state. In six years, they had five principals and lots of teacher turnover. But then Carol Johnson appointed an arts champion as principal. He built out arts as core content, but did it in a way



Boston Arts Academy

CLOSE UP

The city’s first and only public high school for the visual and performing arts, Boston Arts Academy (BAA) is charged with being a laboratory and a beacon for artistic and academic innovation. Since 1998, it has been providing a rigorous arts and academic education to its students, now numbering 440. Beyond the students the school serves directly, BAA also contributes to the broader BPS Arts Expansion effort to address access and equity in arts education. BAA has offered professional development to BPS teachers and school leaders through programs run by the Center for Arts in Education, including Summer Institutes, grants for arts teachers, and more recently through their STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) Summit Series. The Series helps educators explore, test, and create STEAM curriculum in order to engage their students through arts and technology. Additionally, the Alumni Creative Corps program is made up of BAA graduates who receive intensive professional development and are placed as culturally competent teaching artists or assistant teachers in K-12 classrooms across Boston Public Schools, serving over 1,000 students.

so that all teachers were working together with arts educators to use arts across the curriculum. Today, Orchard Gardens is one of the top schools in the city. While we know anecdotally that arts helped to move this school to that level, if we had the data to prove it, we could push it out more effectively as a model across the entire district.”

Coordinating Partners

Historically, arts education partnerships between schools and nonprofits have been somewhat ad hoc and based on relationships between school and arts partner staff. During the planning process, in fact, principals consistently identified working with external partners and teaching artists as a major challenge to delivering high quality arts instruction. Given the rich array of nonprofits in Boston, initiative participants saw that barrier as surmountable, but only with careful coordination and strategic deployment of partners’ assets.

To start, EdVestors created a new [database](#) of information about each partner organization and its offerings to schools. BPS-AE also began working with schools to establish a stipended “arts liaison” position that would serve as the point person for all partnership activities. Today, more than one-third of schools have these positions, which have been important connectors for schools, partners, and the BPS Arts Department.

EdVestors and BPS also created a new position in the BPS central office—Arts Partnership Manager—who would help schools build stronger partnerships with external arts organizations. Over time new “content specialist” positions were added to provide arts teachers with discipline-specific tools, professional development, and support partnerships, as well.

Public Engagement

Having increased the supply of arts education opportunities, BPS-AE’s partners began focusing on the demand side of the equation. “We knew that the long-term viability and sustainability of this work depended upon the degree to which the larger community—especially parents, students, and others—saw arts education as an essential piece of a high-quality education,” Laura Perille states. Steve Seidel agrees: “If the community is organized and keeps saying ‘this

“While we had standards saying that arts education needed to be delivered in the system and in partnership with other organizations, I don’t think the second part of that would’ve happened if BPS-AE hadn’t been as robust as it was. It made it more difficult for school actors to simply give lip service that external arts organizations ‘were important.’”

DAVID LAPIN, *Executive Director,*
Community Music Center

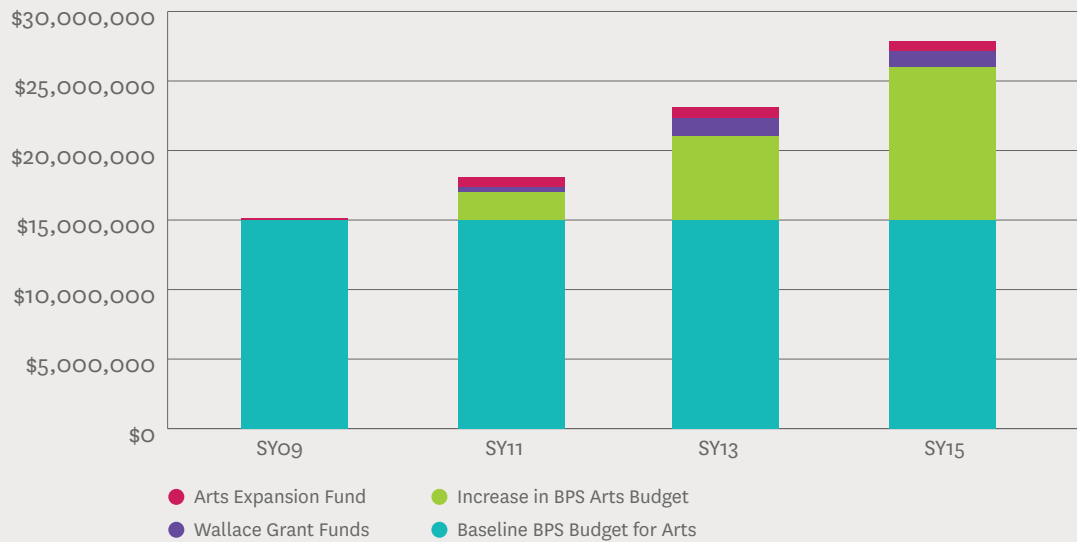
is important’ to school and city leaders, they’ll pay attention and support it. Then, over time, when it becomes more embedded in the system, everyone will start seeing its benefits, and won’t want it to go away. And then it will be that much more difficult to eliminate, especially when there are changes in leadership.”

But did parents really value arts education? To find out, EdVestors surveyed 497 public school parents and asked them. Conducted in partnership with MassINC Polling Group, the [survey](#) found strong support for arts education among BPS parents, the majority of whom believed that arts education keeps their children engaged in school and improves their academic performance. In addition, parents viewed schools that offer the arts as more desirable—something that would likely influence their decisions when making school choices under a new city school assignment plan.

PARENTS VIEWED SCHOOLS THAT OFFER THE ARTS AS MORE DESIRABLE—SOMETHING THAT WOULD LIKELY INFLUENCE THEIR DECISIONS WHEN MAKING SCHOOL CHOICES.

Young people would also be an important part of the demand equation. In spring 2013, EdVestors and Wolf-

BPS-AE Public and Private Funding



Brown, a consulting firm, designed and administrated the city's first-ever student survey on arts education to more than 1,200 public school youth. The resulting report, *Students Speak: The Arts Advantage from the Youth Perspective*,

BY 2014, BPS-AE HAD PUNCHED THROUGH SOME DAUNTING BARRIERS TO MOVE A SYSTEM THAT WAS ONCE SEEN AS IMPENETRABLE.

documented that nearly half of middle schoolers and 60 percent of high school students wanted more arts education in school in contemporary and culturally-specific

forms. Presented at the BPS Citywide Arts Festival opening, the report was the first to feature Boston students' views on arts education and the impact it has on their school experience.

EdVestors also worked closely with MassCreative, a state arts advocacy coalition, in mobilizing arts educators to make their voices heard through "Create the Vote," which engaged mayoral and gubernatorial candidates in discussions about arts and culture. The group then summarized their responses and positions on these issues and publicized these through forums, social media, email blasts, and press releases.

THE SYSTEM TURNS

By 2014, BPS-AE had punched through some daunting barriers to move a system that was once seen as impenetrable by combining an external intermediary, internal district commitment, and support from local and national funding sources. In less than six years,

"The needle has moved quite a bit. That's why I've been banging the drum about this model. BPS, in fact, should be looking at this arts model that's been created and apply it to other subject areas."

MONICA GARZA, Director of Education,
Institute for Contemporary Art/Boston

BPS' arts department went from one that was practically non-existent to one that was now on its way to having the capacity to support high-quality instruction in every public school and for every student. Nearly 130 certified arts teaching positions had been added to BPS schools through individual school-based budget decisions. BPS had brought expert teachers and community-based arts instructors together, many for the first time, to create discipline-specific curriculum maps; create a new district- and school-level quality peer review process; and build a network of mutual support and learning.

These system-level shifts complemented the long roster of other accomplishments BPS-AE had amassed: 17,000 more young people received arts learning during the school year than in 2008; nine out of 10 students in grades pre-kindergarten through eighth were receiving weekly, year-long arts instruction (up from 67 percent in 2009); access to arts learning in high school had more than doubled; and public funding for arts—through individual school budgets and BPS' central office—had increased from \$15M to more than \$26M annually.

	SY 09	SY 11	SY 15
Percentage Weekly Year Long Arts Instruction Grades K-8	67%	81%	93%
Percentage Any Arts Instruction High School Students	26%	47%	67%
Number of Arts Specialist FTEs	156.6	166.7	280
District Total Investment (approx)	\$15M	\$17M	\$26M



What About Quality?

One of the earliest, most common critiques of BPS-AE was its seeming focus on “dosage” because its end goal measured how many people participated in arts education programs, rather than the quality of this experience.

“It’s a legitimate question,” says EdVestors Senior Vice President Marinell Rousmaniere, and one that EdVestors grappled with, as well. “We knew that one hour a week wasn’t nearly enough for high-quality arts learning,” Rousmaniere says, “but when half the city’s kids have nothing at all, you have to start somewhere. So we started with the goal of students having at least once a week, sequential instruction for a year for the youngest students and any arts for high school. We made huge progress toward the goals because we understood that you have to pull up the floor first.” Klare Shaw agrees: “I think we were judging correctly that if we pushed too hard on quality at the beginning, we wouldn’t get as far. We were coming from a place where there was almost none so anything was better.”

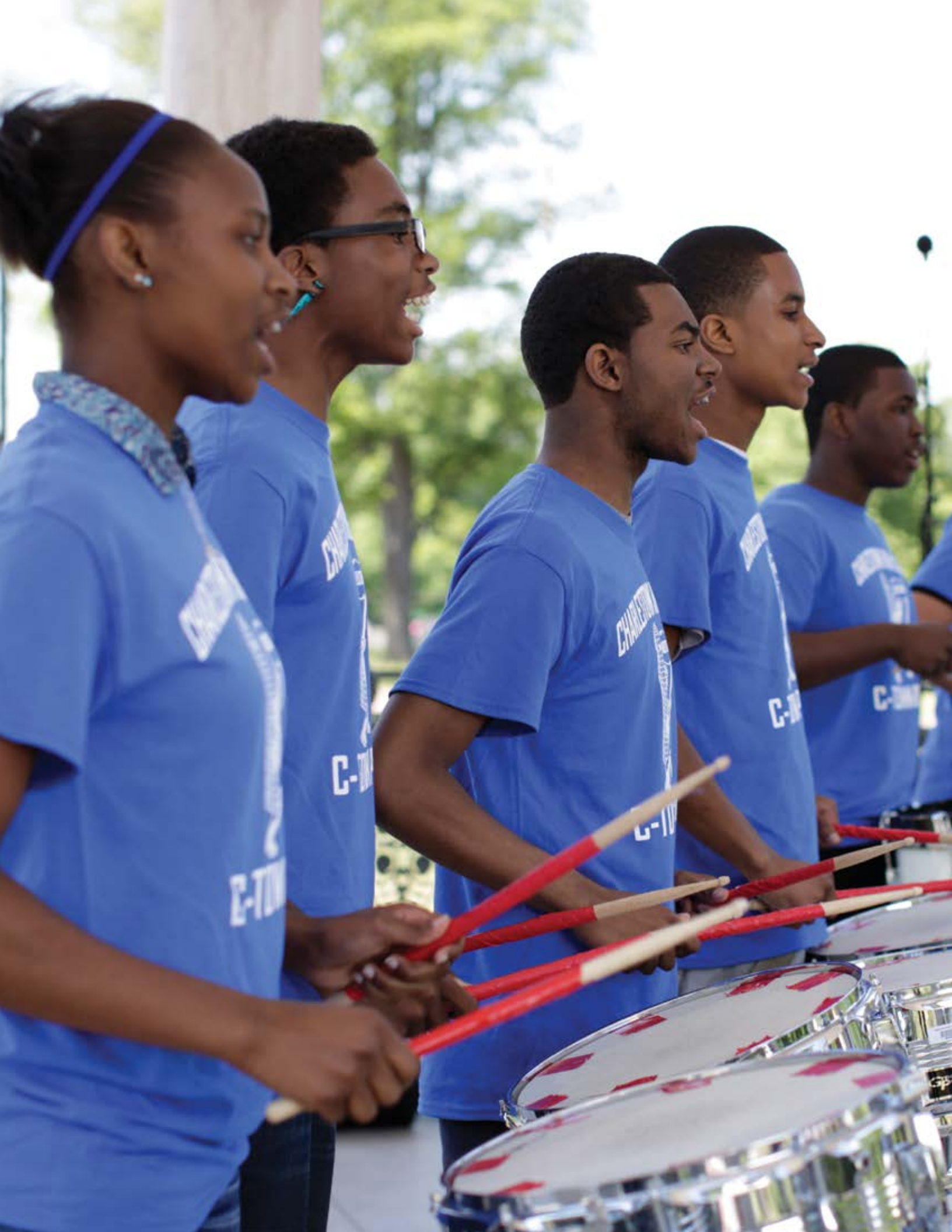
That didn’t mean that quality was off the table. Throughout the planning process, a [Quality Work Group](#) of arts teachers, partners, and researchers provided their ideas about what quality arts education looks like, how it’s practiced, and how it should be evaluated. Recognizing that quality is still largely a subjective exercise, with uneven implementation of standards, the group decided to create its own quality assessment framework.

As part of this process, educators culled existing research about quality arts instruction, as well as information about approaches being used in other communities. They also devised a general framework predicated on the belief that the best way to drive improvement was through shared practices, mutual observation, and ongoing reflective discussions. That framework eventually became the core of Boston’s first arts education quality review process. This process gave teachers and community arts educators the chance to participate in structured,

peer-to-peer observations aimed at strengthening one another’s practice. They would also take part in ongoing brainstorming about improving arts learning across the district.

The focus on quality didn’t stop there. In 2012, Myran Parker-Brass and her BPS Arts Department created a curriculum map that would apply national arts education standards to Boston’s unique community and educational needs. After a year of information gathering, a small group of BPS arts specialists in each discipline—dance, music, theatre, and visual arts/media—gathered to codify the standards. These were eventually organized into a user-friendly online tool that teachers could use to cross-check their work against city, state, and national outcomes and standards. The website with the maps also included a curriculum “bank” of resources that teachers could download and use for lesson planning, as well as sequential learning goals that showed how arts education can reinforce other core academic areas. And they were designed to be regularly updated when there were changes in state and national standards, as well as in city-based, educational policies and events.

While the quest for the optimal quality review process is far from over, participants agree that BPS-AE’s willingness to tackle the complex issue of what constitutes quality arts education is “pretty rare,” Monica Garza, Director of Education, Institute for Contemporary Art/Boston, observes. “Unlike many educational initiatives, which tend to care more about outputs, BPS-AE clearly sees the kinds of programs that are provided—and how they’re provided—as equally important. It’s student-centered, not just about the numbers.”



PHASE III: SOLIDIFYING PROGRESS

In January 2014, newly-elected Mayor Marty Walsh kicked off his tenure with a round of public forums that included one on arts and culture—an opportunity to drive home the point that arts education in Boston is here to stay. And, there’s an ever-growing constituency committed to making sure that it does.

To prepare for the meeting, EdVestors synthesized data from its parent and student polls showing both groups’ strong support for arts education. EdVestors also produced publications, summarizing the initiative’s progress that could be distributed at the forum and thereafter.

Timed to be released in conjunction with the forum, these materials were part of a larger communications strategy EdVestors had developed. The core of that strategy was having stakeholders—parents, students, teachers—carry the message that arts education mattered to them. As Perille recounts, “What made this so powerful is that people didn’t just go into the meeting saying ‘We need more money for this.’ Instead, they said ‘We’ve come so far—look at these data! Look at what we’ve accomplished!’ That not only framed the conversation more positively, it sent a powerful message to all of BPS-AE’s partners—schools, funders, teachers, and arts partners—that this effort wasn’t going away.”

Phase III of BPS-AE builds on progress made in prior phases to firmly braid arts education into Boston Public Schools’ DNA. On June 16, 2014, Mayor Marty Walsh joined EdVestors and BPS at a Citywide Arts Festival featuring student performers, to officially launch this third chapter in BPS-AE’s progression.

“The arts matter to schools and our students,” said Walsh. “We are leading the way in Boston by increasing access to arts education and will continue to do so under my administration and with the continued leadership of the Boston School Committee. We are proud to partner with the schools, foundations, non-profit arts organizations, and teaching artists to make this work possible.”

And there was funding to back up this commitment. At the event, Walsh announced that the Barr, Boston, Klarman Family, and Linde Family foundations had contributed more than half of the funding needed to reach a new \$2.5M dollar goal for the Arts Expansion Fund. All of this, said Walsh, will be instrumental in helping to “solidify the progress made to date so that Boston continues to provide high quality arts education during the school day, as part of our core work of educating children.”

“We need to get broader ownership of this work so it’s embedded in the BPS system. Essentially, our goal is to manage ourselves out of a job.”

RUTH MERCADO-ZIZZO, BPS Arts
Expansion Director, EdVestors

Phase III Goals (2015-2018)

Goal 1: Expand Direct Arts Instruction. Reset and measure goals to deepen access and quality of arts instruction, with continued and expanded transparent use of data.

- » Maintain and expand access to weekly, year-long instruction for elementary and middle school students.
- » Ensure that all high school students receive arts instruction to meet the Massachusetts Core graduation requirement of one course in the arts, via increased high school offerings and credit-bearing, out-of-school time opportunities that meet the standard.
- » Develop a “School Arts Index Tool” for all schools to measure and drive school offerings beyond benchmark/baseline of weekly, year-long instruction and capture depth, sequential opportunities, and other indicators of arts learning offered by schools.

Goal 2: Build District & School Capacity. Maintain and extend central office arts leadership to advocate for and support arts education across all schools.

- » Focus on the development of sequential learning opportunities in the arts.

- » Measure quality of arts learning.
- » Deepen professional development opportunities for BPS arts specialists, arts partners, and teaching artists.
- » Utilize School Arts Plans to strengthen the quality, dosage, and sequence of arts education in a school, and connect it to work at other schools and in partner organizations.
- » Ensure relevance of the arts in other district priorities.

Goal 3: Strengthen Partnerships. Ensure long-term sustainability of in-school arts education in Boston by continuing efforts to build broad ownership.

- » Support the engagement of stakeholders and partners in the City’s cultural planning process to highlight arts education in the resulting plan.
- » Deploy strategic philanthropy aligned with citywide goals.
- » Communicate and build constituencies for long-term support.



SUSTAINABILITY: THE OPPORTUNITY

Yes, BPS-AE has been extremely successful. And yes, it's made a huge difference in school-based arts education access and equity in Boston. But will it last? It's an important question and one that many schools have, given the ongoing challenges in securing sufficient funding for sequential and accessible arts education.

The good news: BPS-AE has fundamentally changed the landscape of arts education in Boston. Today, despite tight budgets, Boston's school arts funding has increased from \$15M to more than \$26M annually, demonstrating the clear priority that families, school, and system leaders now place on the arts. There are nearly 130 more full-time arts specialist positions since 2009, bringing the total number of FTEs to 290 across 125 schools. And there's an infrastructure in the district's central office to support these educators and administrators.

"These are all critical components of ensuring sustainability," says former Interim School Superintendent John McDonough. McDonough knows how hard it is to move a large bureaucracy forward intentionally and positively, which, he says, is critical to sustainability. "Not only was EdVestors successful in bringing in significant amounts of money to move this issue, they brought in partners and worked with schools to increase the capacity of the district itself to provide good arts education. Now, schools think about this when they do their budgets, and the administrators ask about where the arts fit into those budgets. That's

the kind of institutional leverage you need in order to embed this into a system."

Laura Perille, EdVestors' CEO, agrees: "We were

very strategic in pinpointing levers we could use to help to ensure financial stability, and one of those was the school budgeting process. We took the time to learn about this, and the people making decisions about discretionary funding that supports arts education, and where that was going. We did this because we knew that once something gets into the schools' budgets, it's very hard to remove it." McDonough seconds that, noting that "once you've institutionalized these

CLOSE UP

Fenway Pilot High School

Before 2008, Fenway Pilot High School had no arts instruction and little money in its budget to provide it. That year, however, the school received Arts Expansion funding, allowing it to introduce one arts period weekly for 18 weeks for all sophomores. Headmaster Peggy Kemp says the grant process also pushed the school to think more about how it could better identify teaching artists and connect with other arts organizations in Boston, which led to them securing six partners as instructors.

Today, the school is able to offer a variety of arts disciplines to all sophomores for a full year and twice a week, along with a graduation credit, partially funded from the school's budget. "Before, it was an experience," Headmaster Peggy Kemp says. "Now it's a course that will be graded."

Kemp stresses that the effort wouldn't have been as successful without faculty buy-in, which came when faculty saw how organized, responsive and prepared the teaching partners were. Fenway also had a faculty coordinator to oversee scheduling for teachers and students that ensured continuity. But, most important, she says is getting buy-in from students who are enjoying the program. "When students like it, faculty will support it."

ONCE YOU'VE INSTITUTIONALIZED THESE PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS, AND SCHOOLS HAVE LEARNED THE VALUE OF THEM, IT'S DIFFICULT TO TAKE THEM AWAY. IT BECOMES PART OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE AND VALUE STRUCTURE.

ing private philanthropic commitments that can help to attract more public funding. And there is more constituent demand for, and community ownership of, arts education, thanks to BPS-AE's outreach and engagement efforts.

But is this enough?

While high-level commitment and funding are necessary to realizing the ambitious agenda BPS-AE has laid out for its next phase, they're not sufficient. History shows how years-long progress can be wiped out overnight because of leadership changes or budget crises. Preventing this will take the larger combination of financial resources, political will, strong district leadership, central office capacity, and the active participation of Boston's residents in demanding high-quality arts instruction for all students at all grade levels.

practices in schools, and schools have learned the value of them, it's difficult to take them away. It becomes part of the institutional culture and value structure."

There are other sustainability markers, including

Luckily, there are several opportunities to capitalize on this momentum:

- » Investments in arts education have continued to steadily rise, not only among private donors but in BPS' annual budgets, now at \$26M annually.
- » A citywide arts and cultural planning process was launched in 2015 by Mayor Walsh, offering arts education supporters the chance to champion this issue as a priority in the final plan.
- » Schools are now collecting data that can help to show how arts education leads to stronger student outcomes, which can be used in advocacy campaigns.
- » High schools are being redesigned, giving arts education proponents an opportunity to weigh in on the importance of high-quality arts instruction to students' successful academic and professional outcomes.
- » A rapidly growing brigade of parents, young people, and community leaders are using their consumer power to demand better arts education at all grade levels, through public advocacy, organizing, and strategic communications.
- » The public schools now have an arts education infrastructure with the capacity to provide first-class professional development, quality review, curriculum standards and templates, and a space for school- and community-based arts educators to learn from and support one another.

BPS-AE HAS BUILT THE ROAD; NOW IT'S TIME FOR THE COMMUNITY TO DRIVE THE CAR FORWARD.

By taking advantage of these opportunities to further integrate the arts into the life of Boston Public Schools and in continuing to fortify progress made to date, Phase III will reinforce quality arts education as an essential component of every student's education.



How You Can Keep the Work Moving Forward

The future of arts education rests in the hands of everyone who cares about this issue. BPS-AE has built the road; now it's time for the community to drive the car forward. Students, teachers, principals, civic and business leaders, nonprofits, service agencies, and philanthropists—all must be involved in creating a dedicated and strong alliance to ensure that arts education is marbled into the DNA of every Boston public school—not just some.

The first step is to get informed. Learn about the current state of arts education at the local, state, and national levels. Read the reports on the EdVestors' and BPS-AE's websites about the progress that's been made on expanding arts education in Boston. See where the initiative has achieved results and what still needs to be done.

Then:

- » Share what you've learned with as many people as you can. Talk about the importance of arts education with friends, family, and co-workers.
- » Follow @BPSiCreate on Twitter to receive updates; use #bpsarts and join the conversation.
- » Use social media, letters-to-the-editor, op-eds, and other media to get the word out about why arts education matters.
- » Connect with reporters and bloggers writing about education and encourage them to do stories on arts education programs; offer to be a contact on these issues.
- » Monitor what's going on in schools to ensure that what's being offered is high quality and that all students have access to arts courses and programs.
- » Attend school committee and policy meetings and advocate for arts education with legislators and other officials.
- » Reach out to arts organizations in your community and encourage them to participate as partners in providing these experiences.
- » Make a financial contribution to a school, community partner, or city-wide effort dedicated to arts education.

If you're a(n)...

Educator: Participate in BPS-AE's professional development opportunities and convenings; advocate for continual, sequential arts education programs at all grade levels; press for adequate funding in school budgets.

Student: Share your arts education experiences with friends and family in person and through social media and other platforms; advocate for these programs at school meetings; tag them #bpsarts.

Civic and Business Leader: Take a stand on the importance of arts education in speaking engagements, media appearances, policy meetings, and other public events; convene and build networks of influential people that can drive change in complex systems.

Philanthropist: Make arts education a funding priority and provide investments that can help to build the arts education capacity of schools, and the systems in which they operate; leverage funding through convenings, networking, use of data, advocacy, and communications with other funders and community leaders.

Legislator or Government Official: Meet regularly with educators and community residents to learn about what's going on in schools around arts education; press for and enact policies that integrate high-quality arts education into core curricula; stipulate ongoing and sufficient funding for these programs at all levels; ensure that ongoing data is collected on access to quality arts education for students.

Journalist: Pitch and write stories on innovative and effective arts education programs in Boston.

Researcher: Build upon existing data and research to strengthen the case for arts education; translate results into reader-friendly materials that can be distributed to policymakers, the media, donors, community residents, and leaders.

Nonprofit: Reach out to schools to see if there are opportunities to serve as partners in providing in- or out-of-school arts programs, and seek to align your work with the goals of schools and the district.



Community-Based Arts Education for High School Credit

When BPS-AE began, only 26 percent of BPS high school students had access to any arts learning opportunities during the school day because most schools were simply unable to provide them. Creative solutions were needed, and EdVestors helped to provide them through its High School Strategies Work Group. The group was charged with designing a pilot project through which high school students could gain the one arts credit that they need for graduation by participating in after-school, community-based arts courses. Serving as the project's hub, EdVestors worked with the group and schools to identify, select, and recruit community arts organizations with high-quality programming and brought them together as a team. It also developed clear roles and responsibilities for district office leaders, school staff/teachers, and community arts partners.

Rolled out in the spring 2013 semester, the pilot engaged four partner organizations and four high schools to offer credit-bearing arts education programs aligned with BPS learning standards and curriculum frameworks to 24 students. In 2013-14, the pilot was expanded to eight partner organizations and 11 high schools that enrolled 58 students. Today, this program enrolls almost 100 students from nine schools working with 16 partner organizations.

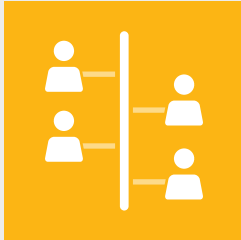
An independent review of this pilot by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy found that, overall, community-based arts education for high school credit benefited students, nonprofit arts organizations, and high schools. Specifically, it deepened students' arts education experience, offered learning opportunities not available to students through existing arts electives, and was seen as just as important as students' in-school work.

According to participants' feedback, these structured partnerships have been some of the most fruitful that schools and organizations have ever experienced, and they are allowing more students to fulfill the arts learning benchmark for high school graduation suggested by state guidelines.

Other key lessons that the evaluation surfaced were:

- » Communication between schools and community partners alone is insufficient to sustain community learning options. Systematic protocols and structures have to be established to clarify partners' roles.
- » A high-level district administrator, who can centralize and standardize these experiences, as well as a designated school-community coordinator in each school, are essential.
- » An intermediary can be a critical link between the school district and community organizations by holding convenings, shepherding collaborations, and offering networking opportunities.
- » All parties must be clear about their roles in the partnership, which requires removing barriers to information sharing between schools and community providers, defining school personnel's oversight role, and encouraging cross-cutting professional development, attended by both in-school and community educators.

BPS-AE Components



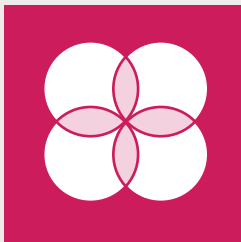
Multi-Layered Leadership:

- Four teams composed of various stakeholders with EdVestors as the leading partner-intermediary, or "backbone," playing a role at every level:
 - Arts Advisory Board
 - Executive Leadership Team
 - Arts Working Committee
 - Arts Coordination Team



Shared Ownership Among Diverse Partners:

- Partners all have equal stake in the initiative and share equal responsibility for activities and outcomes:
 - Boston Public Schools
 - Philanthropic institutions
 - City government
 - Nonprofit arts organizations
 - Community



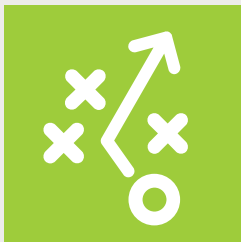
Strategic Philanthropy:

- Local Donors – Support local arts programs and organizations through a special collaborative fund managed by the intermediary, EdVestors
- National Donors – Support system and infrastructure strengthening/evaluation
- Boston Public School System – Support school leaders and arts teachers through robust visual and performing arts department



Data-Driven Agenda, Goals and Outcomes:

- Scan of political, historic and economic context
- Inventory of current state of arts education—by school, number of students, frequency and art discipline
- Data analysis to identify resources, gaps and opportunities, and lay baseline for tracking progress and outcomes
- Stipulation of a small set of clear, measurable, and feasible goals
- Ongoing evaluation of progress using well-defined benchmarks that align with outcomes



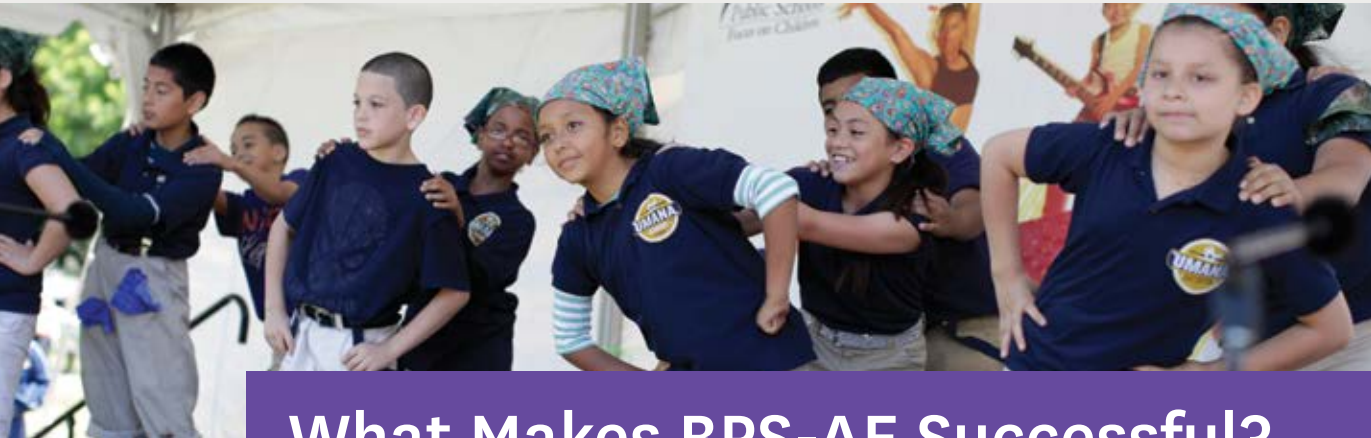
Multiple Strategies:

- Demonstration grants
- Research and evaluation
- Quality and curriculum mapping working groups
- Advocacy
- Strategic communications
- Collaborative learning with other cities
- Tools, training and support for educators and nonprofit partners



Community Engagement:

- Educators, artists, nonprofit representatives and school administrators involved in leadership, planning and working committees/groups
- Focus groups and polls of students, teachers and parents
- Public forums and events



What Makes BPS-AE Successful?

Clear and measurable goals that were a compass point for all BPS-AE's activities: 100 percent of all Boston public elementary and middle school children receive at least once weekly arts instruction, and all high school students having exposure to an arts experience during the school year.

Rigorous data collection to assess the "state of arts education" before developing strategies and to serve as a baseline for tracking progress over time.

Close collaboration with the Boston Public School system—with individual schools and multiple players in the district's central office.

Incentive-based grantmaking to lift up promising school-based arts education programs and demonstrate their alignment with BPS-AE's goals and outcome measures.

A superintendent who was deeply committed to integrating high-quality arts instruction as an essential part of a well-rounded education for all students and who made reaching this goal a priority.

A multi-tiered leadership structure through which specially appointed committees were charged with specific responsibilities and activities.

An advisory board of influential civic, philanthropic, business, and nonprofit leaders able to attract support for BPS-AE because of their stature, networks, and visibility.

A combination of local and national funding and clear designations as to how each would be used: local for support of specific arts programs and national for system-level change that leveraged additional public funds.

An objective and highly regarded intermediary with deep education experience, strategic leadership, and highly skilled staff **to be the initiative's lead partner.**

An iterative, participatory, and skillfully facilitated planning process that authentically engaged the people most directly involved in arts education—teachers, community arts organizations, and school leaders—in designing a thoughtful plan focused on sustainable change, rather than short-term fixes.

Strategic communications that attracted press attention to BPS-AE's progress and activities, helping to convey that "something big was happening."

Ongoing monitoring, documentation, and dissemination of information regarding progress and activities to keep existing participants engaged, attract new partners, encourage public buy-in and ownership, and contribute to a larger learning community that included leaders of similar initiatives in other cities.



We Want to Do This: *What Questions Should We Think About?*

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK

Stipulating Goals and Outcomes

- » What are two or three overarching and clear goals that could be codified from data collection and analysis?
- » How will these goals be measured? What indicators will you use to assess progress toward reaching them? Will there be a reporting system?

Structure/Leadership

- » What leadership structure would be the most effective for your initiative? Multi-tiered? Collaborative? Hierarchical?
- » If a committee structure were used, what would be the responsibilities of each?
- » Who has decision-making authority?
- » Will there be an intermediary (or small group of organizations/individuals) serving as the “backbone” for the project? What criteria will you use to decide who will serve in this capacity?
- » Who are the key partners in the initiative and what is their role and responsibility, e.g., philanthropy, government, arts/nonprofit organizations, etc.?

Pre-Planning

- » Will you conduct an environmental scan to determine whether this is a good time to launch an arts education initiative in your community? Are there economic, political, and cultural factors that are important to consider? How will those affect the planning and implementation of your initiative?
- » What key players need to be involved in planning the initiative? How would they be involved and what would be their roles and responsibilities?
- » What information do you need to collect and how will it be organized?

Data Collection/Analysis for Planning and Assessment

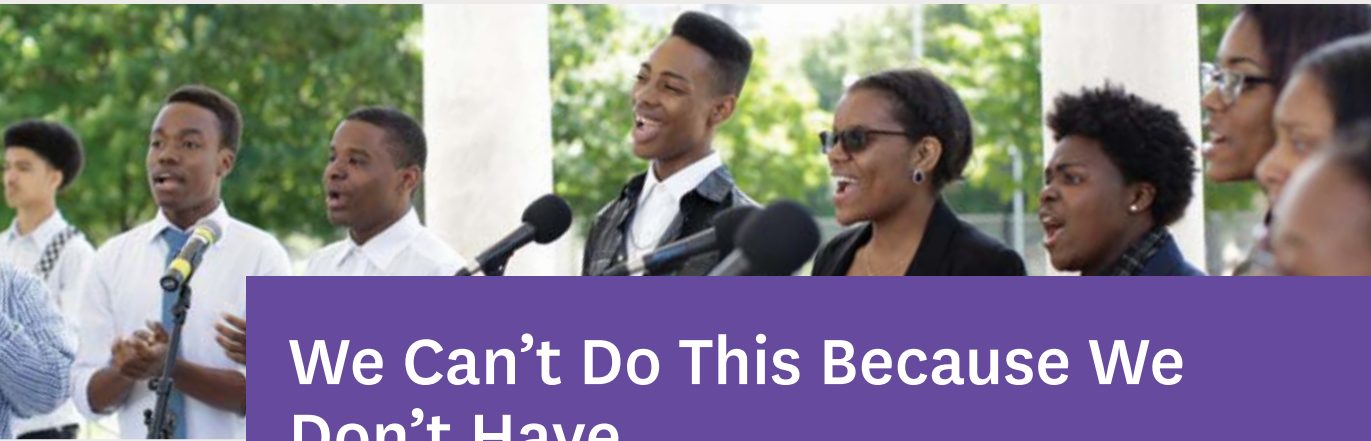
- » What is the current state of school-based arts education in your community? Are there data to show this? If not, will you collect it and how?
- » Where are there gaps and opportunities for arts education expansion in your community? What does the research show?

Planning

- » Which strategies will be the most effective in meeting the gaps and capitalizing on the opportunities that you've identified and why?
- » What will your final plan include? How will it address all of the factors that you've identified as important?
- » How will the larger community (e.g., teachers, non-profits, business/civic leaders, etc.) be involved in the planning process? What would be the roles of each constituency?
- » How will the planning process be funded? Will donors be involved in the planning?

Implementation

- » Who will lead the effort as it's rolled out? Who has decision-making authority during this phase?
- » How will stakeholders be kept informed and engaged in the process?
- » How will educators, partners, teachers, students, and parents be involved?
- » How will the effort be evaluated as it moves forward?
- » What's the exit strategy, if appropriate?



We Can't Do This Because We Don't Have...

Undertaking a citywide, cross-sector initiative like BPS-AE isn't for the faint hearted. It's hard work, and there are often daunting barriers to overcome. The biggest are:

The money. These kinds of initiatives can be costly, so it's important to develop a resource development plan early on, preferably one that targets a mix of private and public investors. BPS-AE emerged from a group of local private foundations' collaborative funding for arts education so there was an existing funding base. Also look at the existing public investment in arts education, which, when quantified, can be substantial. How can those funds be best used and how can relatively small amounts of private funds leverage those public resources?

But what if organizations don't have a group of angel funders? Laura Perille, CEO of EdVestors, suggests that groups start by developing the strongest, most persuasive case statement they possibly can—especially one that includes data showing gaps and opportunities—and taking this to a funder (or set of funders) able to make a large kickoff investment. Having this kind of anchor funder is extremely helpful in getting other investors' attention. BPS-AE, for example, received early and modest support from Boston's largest private foundation (Barr Foundation) that was "willing to play with the messiness of the system involved." That led to a domino effect with other financial supporters, Perille says.

The leadership. High-level leadership that's committed to making sure that these kinds of initiatives are successful is critical. While BPS-AE was fortunate to have a superintendent who publicly declared arts education a top priority, this wasn't always the case. When BPS-AE began, Boston was in the midst of an economic recession that was forcing school leaders' attention on budget cutting, rather than on championing specific disciplines or programs. Instead of sitting back and waiting for things to change, EdVestors and its partners decided to

tap other leadership pools for their help in moving the initiative forward: the teachers, nonprofits, students, donors, and civic leaders who were all eager to see arts education better integrated into schools. A group of powerful influential people—the Arts Advisory Board—was also created, which helped to position the initiative as a powerful and important voice in education debates, so that by the time a new mayor and new superintendent came on board, all cylinders were ready to fire.

The organizer(s). EdVestors, as well as the leaders of similar initiatives in other cities, agree that it is extremely important that these kinds of complex, multi-layered initiatives have a strong "backbone" organization or some other kind of entity that can serve as the lead organizer, manager, and decision maker for all activities. And it doesn't have to be one organization or even an organization at all, says EdVestors Senior Vice President Marinell Rousmaniere, "It can be a couple of individual leaders or a small group of organizations that serve this function."

What makes an effective lead partner(s)? According to Perille:

- » A deep understanding of the policy, administrative, management, and financial context in which they operate.
- » The ability to think and take action that is highly strategic.
- » Strong credibility across sectors.
- » The capacity to serve as a neutral and objective broker with no pre-conceived agendas.
- » Commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for students.
- » Relentless focus on using data-based goals and indicators to assess progress and results.

BPS Arts Education Survey

COMPARING SY15-SY09

	SY15	SY 14	SY 13	SY 12	SY11	SY10	SY 09
Number of Schools	127 Schools	124 Schools	125 Schools	121 Schools	130 Schools	130 Schools	138 schools
Number of Students	57,218 students in survey	55,058 students in survey	57,416 students in survey	57,188 students in survey	55,960 students in survey	54,842 students in survey	54,976 students in survey

% Students Receiving ANY art education

All Students in PreK-12	84.5%	82%	81%	79.5%	73%	65%	60%
Students attending Elem. Schools	96%	93%	93%	92%	80%	79%	80%
Students attending K-8 Schools	99%	96%	98%	98%	94%	91%	90%
Students attending Middle Schools	82%	89%	93%	81%	77%	57%	55%
Students attending High Schools	63%	57%	56%	54%	47%	35%	26%
Students attending Special Schools	100%	100%	100%	87%	95%	100%	N/A

% Students Receiving WEEKLY, YEAR-LONG art education (including alternative schedule #s)

All Students in grades PreK-8	*93%	*87%	86%	89%	81%	74%	67%
Students attending Elem. Schools	*94%	*85%	87%	88%	76%	75%	73%
Students attending K-8 Schools	*98%	*92%	91%	95%	93%	90%	90%
Students attending Middle Schools	*70%	*79 %	68%	68%	64%	42%	41%
Students attending Special Schools	92%	93%	90%	86%	92%	87%	N/A

*Percentage includes students who receive the equivalent of weekly year-long arts (30 hours or more) using alternative scheduling (4/1/15)

Timeline of Phases



PHASE I

2008-2011

- » Release of Arts Advantage Report in February 2009 followed by first ever inventory and research work
- » Set strategy and goals for the Initiative
- » Raise \$2.5M through Arts Expansion Fund for the Initiative, primarily to support direct arts instruction
- » Develop long-term, sustainable arts education plan for District with \$750K planning grant from The Wallace Foundation

PHASE II

2012-2015

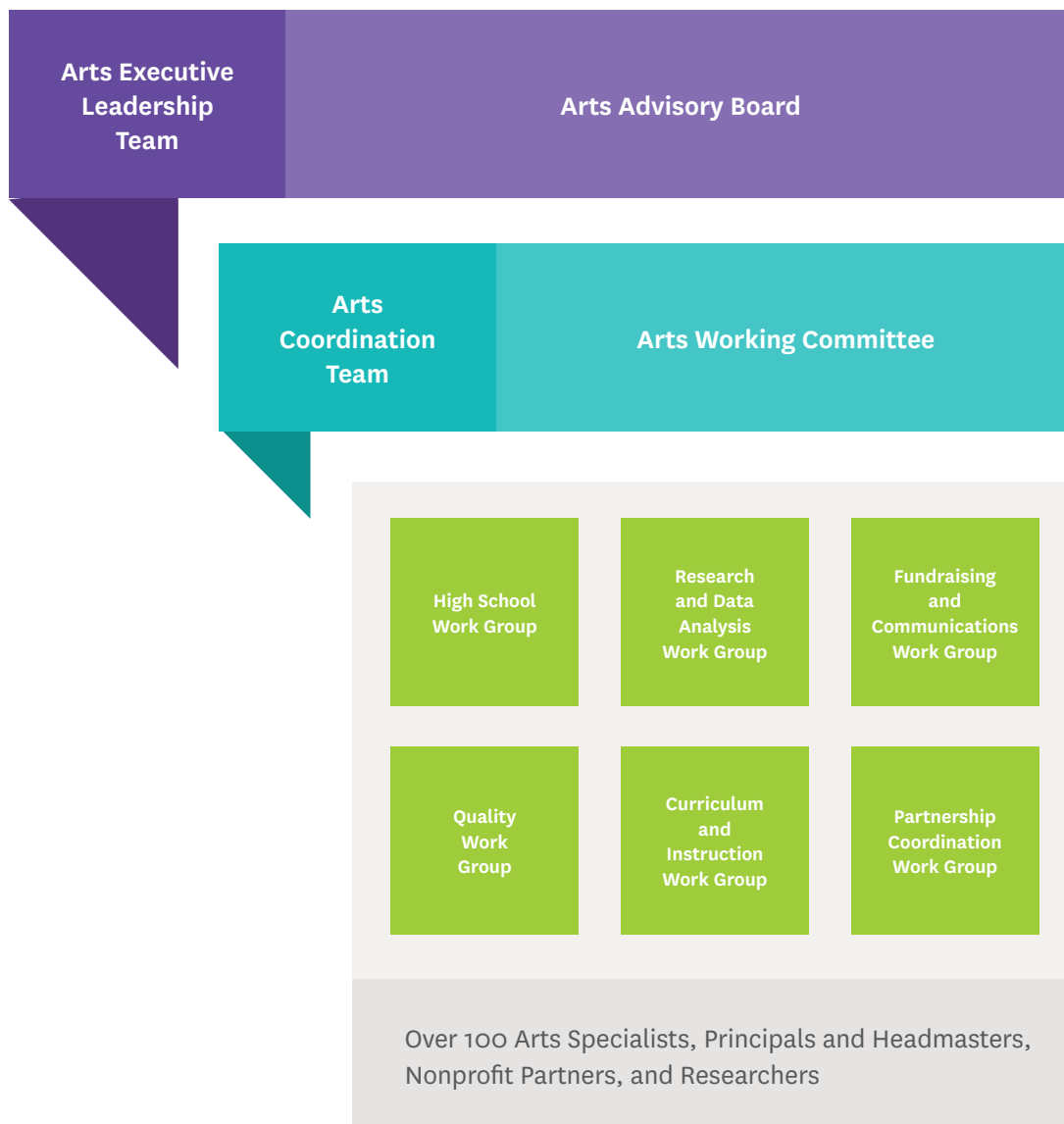
- » \$4M implementation grant from The Wallace Foundation to execute long-term arts plan awarded February 2012
- » Raise additional \$3M through the Arts Expansion Fund to support direct arts instruction locally
- » Focus on increasing weekly, year-long arts instruction for K-8, any increase in HS arts, including creative models
- » Manage through significant civic transitions to keep arts education on the agenda

PHASE III

2015-2018

- » Set out additional \$2.5M goal for Arts Expansion Fund, commitments from lead donors for over half
- » Raise the bar with HS requirements, pathways, dosage and frequency of arts instruction, types of arts instruction
- » Focus on sustaining the systems built, especially in the district structure, via Wallace implementation grant

BPS-AE Planning Structures: Phase II



BPS High-Quality Arts Framework

CORE VALUES IN ARTS EDUCATION FOR BOSTON STUDENTS

- » Arts are an essential part of a full education for all students of all abilities, not just for a gifted or selected few.
- » Children experience and learn arts that reflect and respect the cultures from which they and their peers come.
- » Partnerships across schools, out-of-school opportunities, and cultural providers support the goals of equity and excellence across the city.

Evidence of Systemic Support for Arts Learning

Strong district support of the arts includes:

- » Implementation of the BPS Arts Policy
- » Citywide Arts Learning Standards with developmental expectations, explicit curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
- » Professional development opportunities for arts teachers and teaching artists
- » Sequential arts learning pathways (pre-K–12) in every neighborhood
- » Sufficient time for students to engage in meaningful artistic work

Strong school-level support for arts learning includes:

- » Highly qualified school leadership and arts teachers
- » Authentic materials, spaces, and ways of sharing student work
- » Student choice in courses and activities
- » Common planning time for arts specialists, classroom teachers, and external teaching artists to collaborate
- » Clear procedures that support cultural partners working in school or after school

Evidence of High-Quality Teaching and Learning in the Arts

In Boston K-12 arts classrooms, as teachers, teaching artists, and students work together, they exhibit:

- » Students' engagement in their work
- » Authentic and engaging work in the art form
- » Opportunities to express personal ideas and choices creatively
- » Clear and high expectations and levels of challenge
- » Peer-to-peer collaboration with mutual respect
- » Safe and supportive classroom climate and routines
- » Guidance and assessment practices that help students develop skills as well as unique visions and voices
- » Inclusion and support for all students to produce excellent work through differentiated instruction and universal design for access
- » Culturally proficient arts learning reflective of the Boston's ethnic and linguistic demographics

High-Quality Arts Integration

- » Clear focus on learning that is of high value in both arts and a second discipline
- » Mutual enrichment of both disciplines leading to high levels of student engagement in both
- » Processes, materials, and assignments that are authentic to both disciplines
- » Explicit strategies for applying the learning to both disciplines

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ABOUT BPS ARTS EXPANSION

Boston Public Schools Arts Expansion is a multi-year effort to expand arts education across the district. Launched in 2009, BPS Arts Expansion is focused on a coherent, sustainable approach to quality arts education for all Boston Public School (BPS) students. A true public-private partnership, BPS Arts Expansion has brought together local foundations, the school district, arts organizations, higher education institutions, and the Mayor's Office. This collaboration of local leaders along with students, families, and school staff, led by the BPS Visual and Performing Arts Department and EdVestors, believes in the power of art to develop creative, engaged learners.

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