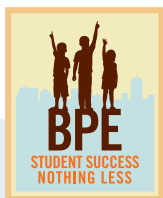
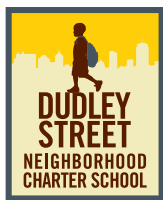




MAKING IT HAPPEN

YEAR **ONE** AT THE DUDLEY STREET
NEIGHBORHOOD CHARTER SCHOOL





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BPE's mission is to drive exceptional outcomes for all students by developing great teachers and great schools. Believing that every child should have the right to a quality public education, BPE (formerly the Boston Plan for Excellence) has devised solutions to the toughest challenges faced by Boston's students, teachers, and school leaders. In 2003, BPE founded Boston Teacher Residency with the Boston Public Schools to prepare diverse groups of talented teachers for Boston's schools. BPE founded the Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School as its first Teaching Academy, a place where students and teachers learn at high levels.

Lead Partner

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) is a nonprofit community-based planning and organizing entity rooted in the Roxbury/North Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston. DSNI works to implement resident-driven plans, partnering with nonprofit organizations, community development corporations, businesses, and religious institutions serving the neighborhood, as well as banks, government agencies, corporations, and foundations.

DEAR FRIENDS,

What a journey this has been! It's been a very full year as we took our vision of an excellent school in the Dudley neighborhood and made it reality. Last summer, we set out with a promising set of ideas and a group of supporters and new staff who shared a deep belief in the capacity of all children to learn. Today, we can look proudly at the accomplishments of the 131 young scholars who took the leap with us—and the many adults who've made this year so successful.

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School was founded with a specific academic goal: to make sure every child reads proficiently by the end of third grade. Early literacy is one of the strongest predictors of long-term success, yet only a third of Boston Public Schools students currently reaches this benchmark. As an in-district charter school, and part of the Boston Public Schools, we set out to serve children of all abilities and backgrounds, using our autonomy to design a school that would bring every child to proficiency and beyond. Our first group of prekindergarten through grade one students presented a full range of skills and needs, and by the end of Year 1, 70% were on grade level with prereading and early reading skills. The rest are on well their way.

Much of our success grew out of partnerships. This year, we built close relationships with families, who've helped us meet their children's needs and make the best possible decisions as a school community. Volunteers from several local organizations were with us every day, serving as Reading Buddies, and enriching students' lives with arts, athletics, and other opportunities. Our founders and committed board members put in many hours, too, treating this school and each of its children as their own. Our staff was relentless. They went far beyond what any leader could have asked, tackling all of the issues inherent in a school start up, while devoting themselves to the success of each student.

The optimism and commitment of all these people is contagious. Thanks to all who have played a role in shaping this very special school. Because of you, we're making it happen.

Clint Lawrence



CHAIR, *Board of Trustees*

Christine Landry



PRINCIPAL

Jesse Solomon



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, *BPE*



A DIFFERENT

DUDLEY
STREET
NEIGHBORHOOD
CHARTER SCHOOL

KIND OF SCHOOL

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School began as a dream shared by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and BPE. Both organizations have been working to improve conditions for Bostonians for nearly 30 years—BPE by improving teaching in the public schools, and DSNI by organizing residents to revitalize the Dudley neighborhood. BPE knew it could have a much greater impact on student learning by designing a school from scratch. DSNI knew that to achieve its vision of a strong,

vibrant urban community, it would need excellent school options for local families.

The directors of the two organizations met as Barr Foundation fellows; ideas sparked, and the dream became a proposal. The partners combined their best thinking, then posed a question to Dudley residents: What do you want in a new school?

This input became the basis of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School, a school with a three-part mission:

- To provide a world-class education for all students, preparing them for long-term academic success and responsible civic engagement.
- To prepare outstanding new teachers who drive excellent student outcomes throughout Boston's public schools.
- To catalyze improvement of all schools in the Dudley area.

The Boston School Committee recommended the Dudley Street School for a Horace Mann in-district charter in 2011 and offered the recently closed Emerson School as its site; the Commonwealth of Massachusetts granted the school its charter soon after.

It was time to get to work.

I really appreciated how BPE worked with the neighborhood in a respectful, engaging way. BPE understands that it isn't going to do it all by itself; it ... can move on its strengths, and yet bring all the necessary folks around the table.”

JOHN BARROS • Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

In March 2012, nearly 300 families entered their children in the school lottery, with 132 selected for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and grade 1. In April, the Board of Trustees hired Principal Christine Landry from the successful Aspire Schools network in California, and in May, she hired eight teachers with additional certifications in teaching students with disabilities and English language learners (including four graduates of Boston Teacher Residency), and nine additional staff (two of whom were also BTR graduates).

In August, Principal Landry gathered the whole staff for the first time, leading an intensive three-week institute at BPE to plan everything from lessons to lunch procedures. The weeks leading up to the first day were packed with activity. Delayed building renovations and supply orders meant that staff and volunteers had to get creative and put in elbow grease to get the school ready for the first day. The new staff reached out to every single family personally, ensuring everyone felt welcome on the first day.

A JOYFUL OPENING

September 5, 2012 was rainy and filled with smiles. Children and families arrived by bus, car, and foot for the opening ceremony. For some parents, it was a return to the building that had been their own elementary school. Principal Landry and leaders from BPE, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, and the Boston Public Schools welcomed the hopeful young scholars and families who put their trust in this new school. After breakfast, families visited classrooms, met the faculty, and learned more about the exciting year ahead.

SPRING



T TO THE STARTING LINE





EARLY DISCOVERIES

The first few months of school were filled with many expected tasks and a few surprises.

There was, of course, the usual work of a new school: figuring out new policies, new relationships, a new schedule, and new ways of working. Our most important work was getting to know our students. Many children (including some first graders) had never attended school before, and some had experienced failure in prior schools. The Dudley Street School inherited limited academic records and incomplete information about special needs, but staff recognized quickly that some students would need more and different kinds of support to be successful.

We took on each new discovery as a team, problem-solving together with families, until we had the right support in place for every child.



When we say every child will read at grade level, we really mean every child.

The staff, partners, and community members met start-up challenges with grace, resolution, and a sense of humor. Everyone held tight to the belief that, working together, we could fulfill our promise of educating every child at a high level. Everyone stepped up: committing time, expertise, and tireless effort to make sure our mission would be realized.

That commitment means we need all hands on deck. It also means we have to structure ourselves differently, gain new skills, and find different resources in some cases. We want to be the kind of school that is constantly thinking and improving.”

JESSE SOLOMON • BPE

EVERYONE STEPS UP





COMMITTED STAFF

The Dudley Street School staff dove in headfirst, investing many hours in connecting with families and working as a team to develop a plan for each child's success. They stepped into leadership roles, served as liaisons for community partners, shaped school policies, and coordinated events and extended-day offerings. In other words, they worked nonstop—all while attending to their students in classrooms.

Together, the faculty invested in implementing a new reading assessment

system that offers detailed information on the reading progress of each child. By midyear, the assessments were already paying off, helping each teacher to plan instruction, group students strategically for guided reading, make decisions to share students across classrooms when it made sense, and utilize teacher residents and volunteers to reinforce crucial skills. As staff became more skilled at using data to match students with the right instruction, we saw our students grow in leaps and bounds.

To build a school means everything you can imagine, and then everything you can't ...

We had come together for so many reasons, but the one thing we had in common is that we wanted to be a part of a school community that was different and, dare I say, a little revolutionary.” **AIRA JACKSON-SAMS** • Founding Grade 1 Teacher

I love my Thursday mornings when I show up at the school, greeted by a big smile from my Reading Buddy. She has moved four levels this year [more than a full grade level], which is amazing progress. She is now a proud, confident first grader who is aware of her progress and is eager to continue. I am so pleased to be able to support her efforts, which have led to so much success in just eight months.” **VOLUNTEER**



INSPIRED VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers played an important role in our first year, too, leading after-school activities, helping out in the classroom, and supporting individual students to become stronger readers with one-on-one attention through the school's Reading Buddies program. Dozens of dedicated volunteers gave their time this year, making invaluable contributions to our school.



INVESTED FAMILIES

Perhaps the greatest success of the Dudley Street School's first year was the deep engagement of our families. Before school even began, families attended welcome events and met with staff. Some had been involved since the school was in its planning stages. Staff invested a great deal of time in building on these early, positive relationships with families and in working together to understand their children's needs in the classroom.

Engagement remained high all year. The Family Council drew an average of 40 family members to monthly meetings, and attendance at family conference nights was 98%. Family members played important roles in fundraising, event planning, reviewing policies, and shaping every aspect of the school culture this year. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings visited the school often, committed to helping their young scholars succeed and proud to be a part of the school community.



PERSISTENT PARTNERS

BPE, the school's Board of Trustees, and its community partners—led by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative—played critical support roles, helping to solve resource challenges, establish school policies, and procure funding and skilled partners to fill gaps in our expanded learning program and student support team.

BPE and the board also helped the school staff navigate the largely undefined territory of in-district charter school status, clarifying state and district requirements and where the school had autonomy to make its own decisions.

AMBITIOUS STUDENTS

It was the first time in school for many of our four-, five-, and six-year-old scholars. By mid-year, students were excitedly tracking their progress as readers, competing for homeroom attendance awards, and taking pride in the rewards and public recognition given to those who demonstrated "CARES" qualities: Cooperation, Assertiveness, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control.

Dudley Street students are enthusiastic and dedicated learners, and they deserve much of the credit for creating such a positive school culture. We are perhaps most pleased by how our scholars have taken on our values as their own, thoughtfully and generously recognizing peers who work hard and show the qualities of successful students and caring community members.



I don't like that every time we're doing something fun we have to stop to have lunch. We don't want to eat now. We want to keep writing our stories!" **GRADE 2 STUDENT**



THE LITTLE SCHOOL THAT COULD

431
applicants
46
open seats

The tremendous efforts of all our stakeholders are paying off. Families and community partners are more invested than ever. In April 2013, all but one family indicated that their children would return for another school year; for its second year, the school had 431 applicants for 46 open seats.

Our after-school program has come together, and the school's "instructional guidance system" is

becoming real as teachers share common language and approaches to literacy and mathematics instruction. We're developing a strong data culture as well. BPE data analysts launched an attendance campaign that resulted in a 5% increase in average daily attendance; analysts provide frequent reports and public displays of data that help us recognize growth and target our support to the individual needs of students.

Our first set of evaluators from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education dubbed the Dudley Street School "the little school that could." Among other things, they were impressed by strong classroom learning environments, deep student engagement, high cognitive demand activities across classrooms (rare for any school, never mind such a new school), and impressive teacher capacity.



REACHING OUR GOAL

Our proudest accomplishments were in reading. From October to June, the portion of preK students passing a pre-reading test increased from 21% to 91%; the percentage of kindergarten and first graders reading at or above grade level increased from 29 to 54; 74% of students made at least one year of growth.

With this kind of momentum, and plans in place for students who need a boost, we are on track to meeting our goal of 100% reading proficiency by the end of third grade.

74%
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at least
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level
growth



JUST THE

BEGINNING

With the first year under our belts, **OUR OPTIMISM** continues to grow. Staff spent part of the summer tightening our operational systems and daily routines, so that we can keep our focus on instruction in **YEAR TWO**. This coming year, we'll look more deeply at how we **TEACH MATH** school-wide. BPE elementary mathematics experts and a consultant from Lesley University are working with staff to create **A BREAK-THE-MOLD APPROACH** to teaching mathematics in the early years, one that addresses the needs of individuals and gets all of our young students talking about numerical principles and **SOLVING PROBLEMS CREATIVELY**. It's new, exciting territory.

We're ready to turn more attention to how we **DEVELOP TEACHERS** too, continuing to refine our model as a BPE **TEACHING ACADEMY** that prepares excellent new teachers for Boston and serves as a lab site for teachers of all levels to learn together. Over the next several years, BPE will create a **PREK-12 PATHWAY** of Teaching Academies in the **DUDLEY NEIGHBORHOOD**, all excellent schools in which students and teachers learn at high levels.

After this busy first year, we have a **STRONG FOUNDATION** and **TERRIFIC MOMENTUM** with student learning. This coming year, we'll continue to work hard, holding tight to our promise of being a school that prepares **EVERY CHILD** for success.

THANK YOU

Staff, partners, families, board members, and volunteers have supported the Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School in myriad ways this year. We would not be where we are without all of your contributions.

Special thanks as well to the funders who took a leap of faith and joined us in launching an excellent, break-the-mold school in the Dudley neighborhood.

SUPPORT OUR SCHOLARS

We have an exciting road ahead, and you can be a part of fulfilling our promise to Boston's children.

MAKE A DONATION

You can make a secure donation online at: bpe.org/give

Or mail a check to:

Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School Fund

c/o BPE Giving

27-43 Wormwood Street, Suite 110

Boston, MA 02210

give@bpe.org

OTHER WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Do you or your organization have expertise or resources that can strengthen our school? We welcome volunteer and in-kind support.

LEARN MORE

Visit our website for more information: dudleystreetschool.org

WE'RE MAKING IT HAPPEN.

DUDLEYSTREET SCHOOL.ORG

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