

School Solutions

SEED FUND



ABOUT EDVESTORS

EdVestors' mission is to increase the number of schools in Boston delivering dramatically improved educational outcomes for all students.

EdVestors is a school improvement organization that combines strategic philanthropy, education expertise and implementation support to help schools create the conditions for school change. We work at the classroom, school and system levels to accelerate improvement in Boston's schools. Since starting in 2002, EdVestors has invested \$21 million in school improvement efforts.

EdVestors works to strengthen school effectiveness so a quality education is available to every student in Boston. To do this, we tap the ingenuity

already present in our city's schools, nonprofits, neighborhoods and institutions so that we can take a problem-solving approach to meeting challenges. We borrow good ideas that are working elsewhere, generate new ideas where needed, and think creatively and strategically when putting good ideas into practice. We invite a wide and diverse network of stakeholders to collaborate and we share what we know and learn about how schools change, paving the way for more schools to make more progress.

COVER PHOTO BY MICHAEL MANNING

DESIGN BY OPUS DESIGN, LLC

EDVESTORS' APPROACH



WHAT WE DO

First, we are a seed funder for solution-seekers' best ideas in Boston's schools. Through our School Solutions Seed Fund, we identify and fund innovative school-based ideas for improvement.

Second, we develop, demonstrate and share best practices for school improvement. Our annual \$100,000 School on the Move Prize highlights examples of dramatic school improvement. Our Improving Schools Initiative demonstrates the power of tactical support for struggling schools.

Third, we work at scale to achieve city-wide student impact, coordinating major public-private partnerships in targeted issues areas, currently in math and arts education. Our largest effort to date, BPS Arts Expansion has resulted in 17,000 more preK through 8th grade students receiving weekly arts instruction in school, bolstering student engagement and school climate. Our newest effort, Zeroing in on Math, takes a similar city-wide approach to increase math proficiency in the middle grades as a critical gateway for post-secondary, career and life success.

“Schools that continue to improve do so because teachers and staff are never satisfied with results. They keep pushing themselves and each other to accelerate student learning.”

LAURA PERILLE, PRESIDENT & CEO



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MANNING

ABOUT THE SCHOOL SOLUTIONS SEED FUND

The School Solutions Seed Fund seeks to identify promising solutions that address current challenges facing classrooms and schools. The Seed Fund provides the opportunity for schools to move quickly to test, plan or pilot an innovative solution or new idea, or make a mid-course correction to work already underway, in response to an identified need or challenge in their school. Each year, EdVestors makes initial Seed Fund investments of \$10,000 to up to ten promising ideas, with a smaller number of projects receiving larger, longer-term expansion investments based on early success and the potential for impact.

The Seed Fund cohort allows EdVestors to hear from frontline educators about common challenges that are slowing progress in schools and to invest in effective approaches to support student learning. Teachers' and leaders' ideas for overcoming challenges bring unparalleled ingenuity and pragmatism to

the conversation. With flexible resources and tactical support from EdVestors, they are empowered to put their plans into action, to learn and reflect, and to share their struggles and successes with a community of like-minded educators.

Investing in on-the-ground solutions is an essential part of EdVestors' approach to strategic philanthropy. The Seed Fund pushes us to think beyond what we already know about how schools change, to be open to new ideas, and to find even more transformative ways to work on behalf of all students. Borrowing lessons from the financial world, some investments are in proven approaches that create systemic improvement and a smaller percentage of Seed Fund investments are in higher-risk, untested approaches that have the potential for great learning.

SEEKING SOLUTIONS IN URBAN EDUCATION

In January 2016, EdVestors launched its second School Solutions Seed Fund cohort with nine grants to support a diverse set of approaches that tackle core issues in urban education. In applying, each school identified its top challenge – the one standing between where they were then and where they wanted to be – and designed a solution that would clear the way to success for their students. As grantees pilot these approaches, EdVestors is watching for models from which other schools can learn.

Three themes emerged among this year’s Seed Fund grantees:

- » Social emotional learning and support
- » Post-secondary preparation and success
- » New approaches to teaching and learning

The schools and nonprofits in the 2016 Seed Fund cohort recognize that what happens outside the classroom is just as valuable as what happens in it. These grant recipients are ensuring that schools are safe and supportive places to learn and that students have the skills to navigate everyday conflicts. They are working to ensure that students are graduating from high school and are ready and equipped for what comes after. Above all, they recognize that teaching and learning needs to be approached flexibly and creatively in order to ensure every student receives a rigorous and engaging education that embraces the diversity of student backgrounds and learning styles.

This whole-student and every-student approach is essential to EdVestors’ mission of improving educational outcomes for all students in every school.

2015 SEED FUND BY THE NUMBERS

In spring 2015, the School Solutions Seed Fund made five expansion grants to projects that demonstrated early success in the pilot phase with initial \$10,000 investments. Here’s what they’ve accomplished so far this year:

EDUCATION FOCUS ISSUES

5

- PJ Kennedy Elementary: *English Language Learners*
- Edison K-8: *Personalized Learning*
- New Mission High: *Young Men of Color*
- KIPP Elementary: *Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM)*
- Charlestown High: *Teacher Reflection and Professional Learning*

\$245,000

INVESTED THROUGH THE 2015 SEED FUND



FIVE SCHOOLS RECEIVED EXPANSION GRANTS TO DEEPEN AND INCREASE THE IMPACT OF PILOTS

1,180 STUDENTS REACHED



230%

INCREASE IN TEACHERS REACHED THROUGH EXPANSION GRANTS

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SUPPORT

ABCD AT DORCHESTER ACADEMY

Restorative Practices

The Challenge

Schools are seeking to shift away from punitive discipline policies that exclude students from critical learning experiences and replace them with approaches that build students’ skills to resolve conflicts themselves.

The Solution

Dorchester Academy enrolls approximately 150 high school students, including many who are considered at high risk for dropping out. As a school with a history of under-performance, Dorchester Academy was recently named a Turn-around School by the state and is partnering with Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) to run the school. As one of its key strategies, the Dorchester Academy team is training faculty, staff and students in partnership with Suffolk University in a Restorative Practices (also known as Restorative Justice) approach to address a rate of school suspensions that was three times the district average. This approach builds community on a daily basis and teaches skills to resolve both small and large conflicts among students.

The Potential

At a time when traditional disciplinary practices often disproportionately impact students of color, identifying alternative approaches that build relationships between adults and students, and among students themselves, is vital for thriving learning communities.

BATES ELEMENTARY AND HALEY K-8 SCHOOLS WITH MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL’S ASPIRE

Social Thinking Approach

The Challenge

All students benefit when they have the social emotional skills and strategies to fully participate in the classroom both as learners and members of a social community.

The Solution

The Bates and Haley Schools educate students in a full-inclusion setting, where students with special needs – many of whom have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) - learn alongside their general education peers. Experts from Massachusetts General Hospital’s Aspire program are training Bates and Haley faculty and staff in the Social Thinking approach, which teaches students how to consider the impact of their choices from another student’s perspective. The schools will roll out the Social Thinking approach across all grades over time.

The Potential

Effective approaches to social emotional learning improve academic performance and increase positive attitudes and behavior. The Bates and Haley schools are piloting this approach with the goal, if successful, for the Boston Public Schools to expand this model to additional schools. Among educators and policymakers, there is a renewed interest in different models of social emotional learning for all students.

KIPP ACADEMY BOSTON*Positive Behavioral Approach and Real-Time Coaching***The Challenge**

Shifting to a positive approach to discipline, where the focus is on rewarding students for making appropriate choices rather than punishment for misbehavior, strengthens teacher-student relationships and increases students' responsibility for their own behavior.

The Solution

KIPP Academy Boston Middle School, a 280-student school in Roxbury, is implementing a positive approach to behavior management where students receive clear instructions on expectations and reinforcement for pro-social or on-task behavior. KIPP is rolling out the No-Nonsense Nurturer (NNN) approach to all teachers through a real-time coaching model where teachers receive feedback during lessons on how to strengthen their practice. Coaching has been shown to be the most effective way to change teacher practice, and real-time coaching allows teachers to make modifications and see results immediately.

The Potential

The real-time coaching model may have multiple applications for changing teacher practice beyond the positive behavioral approach.



“Schools need to be places of calm, safety, and support — from adults and peers — for children who have been exposed to trauma.”

MATTAHUNT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WITH THE HOME FOR LITTLE WANDERERS*Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms***The Challenge**

Training teachers to incorporate trauma-sensitive practices in their classrooms ensures that students who have experienced trauma see school as a safe, calm and supportive environment for learning.

The Solution

The Mattahunt Elementary School, a 600-student school located in Mattapan, is partnering with the Home for Little Wanderers to train and coach teachers to implement trauma-sensitive classrooms in 1st and 2nd grade classrooms. Trauma interferes with a student's learning and can lead to disruptions that impact others in the classroom. This work is an expansion of an existing successful partnership in the school's early childhood classrooms (K1 and K2).

The Potential

Given the large numbers of students in Boston who experience trauma, more schools are looking for ways to ensure that all classrooms are supportive and nurturing places of learning.

GENTEEN LACET JEAN-MICHEL
PRINCIPAL, MATTAHUNT ELEMENTARY

POST-SECONDARY PREPARATION AND SUCCESS

THE ENGLISH HIGH SCHOOL

Career Pathways

The Challenge

Creating rich career and technical training for students is an important addition to traditional high school programs for students seeking real-world experiences that help build the problem-solving, communications, and work skills needed to be successful after high school.

The Solution

The English High School, a college-prep and comprehensive high school, recently launched four industry-credentialed career pathway programs: Business, Finance & Entrepreneurship; Programming & Web Development; Design & Visual Communications; and Health Assisting & Wellness. The definition of post-secondary success has broadened to include 2-year and 4-year colleges and also strong vocational training programs that graduate students with rigorous industry-recognized credentials and prepare students for the workforce or post-secondary education. Currently 35% of English High students are enrolled in a career-aligned Pathway.

The Potential

Offering rigorous, hands-on, industry-credentialed options within traditional high schools increases the potential avenues for success for many more students in Boston.

MADISON PARK TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Teacher Collaboration

The Challenge

Developing opportunities for academic and vocational teachers to collaborate, co-plan, and co-teach is vital for building an aligned, rigorous educational experience for students at Madison Park.

The Solution

A key component of successful vocational schools is the effective collaboration of teachers from the academic and vocational disciplines. As Madison Park rethinks its programming and approach under new leadership and the resources of a Turnaround School, teachers working together will be the cornerstone. Pairs of Madison Park teachers, representing the academic and vocational disciplines, are co-planning lessons and co-teaching classes, and then leading professional development for the broader faculty around the challenges, opportunities, and how-to's of aligning their work.

The Potential

The promise of career-aligned learning opportunities can only be fulfilled with a strong, rigorous academic foundation for students. Madison Park, as the city's main vocational technical high school, has the potential to strengthen both academic and vocational learning experiences through increased teacher collaboration.



“Teachers working together creates the foundation that sets students up for success.”

SHAWN SHACKELFORD
HEADMASTER, MADISON PARK

**MARGARITA MUÑIZ ACADEMY
WITH BOSTON HIGHER EDUCATION
RESOURCE CENTER**

Latino Post-Secondary Success

The Challenge

Preparing first-generation students for post-secondary completion is critical, as a high school diploma is no longer enough to ensure life success.

The Solution

The Margarita Muñiz Academy (MMA), Boston's only dual-language high school, is preparing to graduate its first class of seniors in spring 2016. As a school where 91% of students identify as Latino and 47% are English language learners, the MMA leadership is designing a program that addresses the unique needs of Latino students, most of whom will be the first in their families to go to college. MMA leadership reached out to Boston Higher Education Resource Center (HERC) to develop a fully bilingual, culturally-sensitive college readiness model to build students' preparedness and independence as they look beyond high school.

The Potential

Working together, the Muñiz Academy and Boston HERC are developing and piloting an approach to support Latino post-secondary success which will be applicable to the growing population of Latino, English learners, and first-generation college students in Boston's schools.



“Boston Public Schools is increasingly Latino and increasingly immigrant. It is critical to assemble a network — in and around BPS — dedicated to helping students discover and realize their greatness.”

SAMUEL ACEVEDO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HIGHER
EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER

NEW APPROACHES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

**MURPHY K-8 SCHOOL
AND BPS MATH DEPARTMENT
WITH BOSTON UNIVERSITY**

Math Labs

The Challenge

Providing teachers an opportunity to strengthen their math instruction by working with their peers to plan and observe one another offers a promising model for schools to combat the crisis of math education in Boston, where only one-third of students are proficient by 8th grade.

The Solution

The Math Lab model, led by Boston University’s Dr. Lynsey Gibbons, brings teachers together to learn research-based approaches to math instruction, co-teach a lesson with their colleagues, debrief with teacher colleagues both during and after the lesson, and then bring the lesson back to their own classrooms. Teachers at the Murphy School in grades 4 through 8 are participating in the Math Lab approach, completing two cycles of this robust professional development this spring.

The Potential

Creating a cohort of teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and relationships to support and challenge one another’s classroom instruction within a school building, the Math Lab model has the potential to change how teachers are coached and supported. This model may have implications for EdVestors’ own Zeroing in on Math work.

**JOSIAH QUINCY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
WITH UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF GREATER BOSTON**

Critical Thinking for English Learners

The Challenge

Identifying new models for building language and critical thinking skills through rigorous, authentic and engaging instruction for English language learners is crucial for meeting the needs of Boston’s diverse student population.

The Solution

The Josiah Quincy Elementary School, where 56% of students are English language learners (ELLs), is partnering with the United Nations Association of Greater Boston (UNAGB) to bring the Model UN approach from an after-school program into 5th grade classrooms. Curriculum is being designed to ensure the approach meets the learning needs of ELLs, while employing the typical Model UN approach of students researching and developing arguments from the perspectives of different countries on a current event topic.

The Potential

This combination of social studies content, classroom simulation and 21st century skills — researching, writing and speaking — is a novel and promising approach to engage all students in rigorous, cognitively-demanding coursework.

**STUDENT PARTICIPATING IN
MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

“I am now more interested in other cultures and willing to cooperate with different groups of people.”



We deeply appreciate our generous supporters, volunteers, and nonprofit partners.

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2015 PRESENTATION OF THE PHILIP H. GORDON LEGACY AWARD

Pictured are: Karen Byars, former Teacher Leader, P. J. Kennedy; Jeremy Walters, Interventionist, P. J. Kennedy; Walter Henderson, Principal, P. J. Kennedy; Wendell Knox, Board Chair, EdVestors; Sandy Gordon, longtime supporter of EdVestors; Laura Perille, President & CEO, EdVestors; John McDonough, Former Interim Superintendent, Boston Public Schools.

Philip H. Gordon Legacy Award

2015 AWARD WINNER: PATRICK J. KENNEDY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

At last year's Showcase, the second annual Philip H. Gordon Legacy Award was given to the Patrick J. Kennedy Elementary School for its approach to providing a strong start to newly arriving English language learners.

The Patrick J. Kennedy School (PJK) is a traditional district school serving 300 students in grades preK through 5th grade in the East Boston neighborhood. Three-quarters of PJK students are English language learners, many of whom arrive at the school – in September and throughout the year – with little or no English language skills. Last spring, with the help of a Seed Fund grant, the PJK piloted an Acceleration Clinic with 1st graders, meeting with small groups of students two to three times per week, often before or after school, to accelerate their language acquisition and allow them to participate more fully during the school-day.

The \$50,000 Gordon Legacy Award allowed the PJK to expand the Acceleration Clinic to kindergarten where many of the challenges that teachers saw in

first grade were already developing. Typically 30 students receive support during each six-week cycle, after which students are assessed and either re-enrolled in the Acceleration Clinic to continue building their skills or “graduate” from the program.

In addition to strengthening students' academic foundation, the PJK faculty have also experimented with non-academic interventions such as building students' working memory, a critical skill for learning and applying language. School leaders describe the Acceleration Clinic as the “incubation zone” of the school where good ideas are tested with small groups of students and the successful ideas are shared with classroom teachers to support strong whole-classroom instruction.

ABOUT THE PHILIP H. GORDON LEGACY AWARD

EdVestors is proud to salute our late co-founder, Philip H. Gordon, for his many contributions to the field of urban education and philanthropy through the Philip H. Gordon Legacy Award. The annual \$50,000 Award recognizes an important school improvement effort that will help level the playing field in education so that every student has the chance to succeed.

Visit www.edvestors.org to make a gift.