

*School Solutions*



# SEED FUND



PHOTO BY MICHAEL MANNING

Investments 2017



# 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 launching in 2002, EdVestors has raised and invested more than \$24 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 take a problem-solving approach to meeting challenges, and we tap the ingenuity already present in our city's schools, nonprofits, neighborhoods, and institutions. We borrow good ideas that are working elsewhere, generate new ideas where needed, and think creatively and strategically to put 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.

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## 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. We publish annual research and case studies to share stories of improvement and disseminate knowledge throughout the broader field.

**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 students receiving arts instruction during the school day, bolstering student engagement and school climate. Our second strategic initiative launched in 2015, Zeroing in on Math, takes a similar city-wide approach to increase math proficiency in the middle grades as a critical gateway for success in post-secondary and career. In 2016, EdVestors began work to model effective Career and Technical Education pathways for high school students as a strategy for improving Boston's traditional high schools, connecting more students to postsecondary opportunities, and bolstering Boston's workforce.

*“EdVestors was founded on the belief that we are more effective when we work together. Now more than ever, collaboration across schools, school-types, and sectors is a critical vehicle for making progress on behalf of all of our students, and especially the most vulnerable.”*

**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 in response to an identified need 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 grants based on early success and the potential for impact.

The Seed Fund cohort allows EdVestors to hear from frontline educators about common issues 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, Seed Fund innovators 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

The third cohort of School Solutions Seed Fund innovators continues to impress with the dedication, creativity, and diligence they bring to their work as they search for solutions to some of the most pressing issues in urban education. This year's cohort is notable for its collaboration. Whether it is multiple schools, charter and district, piloting a project together to address a common challenge, a school reaching out to a nonprofit or district office to bring vital expertise into school buildings, or teachers working together to find new ways to ensure their students have ample opportunities to be successful. The Seed Fund is also a valuable tool for understanding which urban education issues are on the minds of Boston's educators. This year, the Seed Fund is supporting nine initiatives that fall into three broad themes:

- » Deepening professional learning
- » Educating the whole child
- » Using technology to personalize learning

The schools and nonprofits in the 2017 Seed Fund cohort are piloting initiatives that strengthen teaching and that engage learners in new ways, from three-year-olds not yet enrolled in school to high school seniors about to graduate. Seed Fund grants both support the critical work happening in classrooms between teachers and students and the collaborative work happening among teachers and staff within and across schools. Above all, these educators recognize that teaching and learning must 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.

A commitment to learning together and sharing what works is essential to EdVestors' mission of improving educational outcomes for all students in every school.

### 2016 SEED FUND BY THE NUMBERS

In spring 2016, 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're doing:

#### EXPANSION PROJECTS

5

- ABCD at Dorchester Academy: *Restorative Justice*
- Bates Elementary and Haley K-8 Pilot: *Social Thinking*
- English High: *CTE Pathways*
- Edison K-8 and Murphy K-8: *Math Labs*
- Josiah Quincy Elementary: *Model UN*

\$240,000

INVESTED THROUGH THE 2016 SEED FUND



SEVEN SHCOOLS ARE BUILDING ON PILOTS TO INCREASE IMPACT

2,250 STUDENTS REACHED



## Deepening Professional Learning

### **BOSTON COLLEGIATE CHARTER SCHOOL JEREMIAH BURKE HIGH SCHOOL MATCH COMMUNITY DAY CHARTER SCHOOL**

*D.I.Y. Coaching*

#### **The Challenge**

Education scholars agree that teacher quality is the most important school-based factor driving student achievement. Yet, with crowded schedules, tight budgets, and limited time to visit colleagues' classrooms, how can teachers improve their practice through reflection and learning from their peers?

#### **The Solution**

Eight teachers from Boston Collegiate Charter School, the Jeremiah Burke High School and Match Community Day Charter School – two Commonwealth charter schools and a traditional district school - are working collaboratively to improve their instruction. Using videos and rubrics, they will both evaluate their own teaching and provide structured, constructive feedback to their colleagues with the goal of collectively improving their practice and increasing student engagement and learning. This team of teachers is also in the process of creating a website where they will share their learning and encourage other teachers to take the D.I.Y. coaching pledge.

#### **The Potential**

Instructional coaching has been shown to be one of the most effective forms of professional development for teachers, but the cost is prohibitive for most schools. Videotaping lessons is a potentially scalable and cost-effective strategy for providing teachers both the opportunity for self-reflection as well as valuable feedback from colleagues to improve instruction.

### **JOURNEY INTO EDUCATION AND TEACHING with BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Paraprofessional-to-Teacher Pathway*

#### **The Challenge**

Large urban districts require a pipeline of teachers to replace those retiring or leaving the profession. How can we replenish a workforce with new educators who bring the skills and mindset needed to be effective teachers and also cultivate diversity reflective of Boston's student population?

#### **The Solution**

Initially launched in Fall River and New Bedford as a federally-funded program of UMass Dartmouth, Journey into Education & Teaching (JET) is now expanding its program to Boston. JET recruits and supports paraprofessionals currently serving in public school classrooms to pursue college degrees and earn the certifications necessary to become classroom teachers. JET connects these individuals with public funds to cover the costs of earning a degree, while creating a supportive cohort of peers and providing professional development to ensure continued progress and success. A pilot cohort is already underway this year with nine paraprofessionals enrolled at UMass Boston. JET will recruit a second, larger cohort this spring.

#### **The Potential**

To replace retiring and departing teachers, urban districts need multiple sources of new teachers, especially those who represent the diversity of students in their classrooms. The JET model matches an existing resource - paraprofessionals who have both experience in classrooms and a desire to lead their own classrooms - with the resources and supports to create a viable pipeline for teacher hiring in the Boston Public Schools.

## Using Technology to Personalize Learning

**BOSTON INTERNATIONAL & NEWCOMERS ACADEMY***Personalized Learning On-the-Go***The Challenge**

Newly-arrived immigrant high school students must often juggle the demands of school, work, and family responsibilities, all while learning English. How can a high school use technology as a tool to support students with a variety of learning styles and demanding out-of-school commitments while maintaining a rigorous and engaging learning environment?

**The Solution**

At Boston International & Newcomers Academy (BINcA), 100% of students are English Language Learners, many arriving in Boston with interrupted education and limited English skills. Envisioned and piloted by one math teacher and now rolling out to the math department, video-recorded mini-lessons of material taught in class are being used by students on their phones either at home or on their commute to and from school. The recorded lessons allow students to pause and review concepts and information as needed, ensuring better understanding of the material and freeing teachers to support deeper student learning during in-class time.

**The Potential**

Technology is changing the way teachers teach, and the use of video to reinforce or to introduce new content is a powerful tool that can be used by all teachers to personalize and more flexibly support learning for each student.

**BOSTON ARTS ACADEMY***Career Pathway in Fashion Technology***The Challenge**

How can high schools engage students more deeply in relevant, real-world content that reinforces and strengthens academic learning? How can urban schools prepare more students for careers in the arts where people of color are underrepresented?

**The Solution**

Boston Arts Academy (BAA), the city's only public high school for the visual and performing arts, is building a career pathway that will engage students interested in the fashion technology industry in sequential and experiential coursework to graduate with credentials that will prepare them for post-secondary education or career options. This winter, forty-four students applied for the twelve available slots in the inaugural cohort. After its full launch in September 2017, BAA expects to sustain the pathway through federal funds designated to support Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

**The Potential**

CTE is experiencing a rebirth as a strategy for reimagining high schools that are more relevant and engaging. As more high schools build CTE pathways alongside the traditional college preparatory curriculum, students will have options to explore different fields that will prepare them for post-secondary education or careers.



Using Technology to Personalize Learning

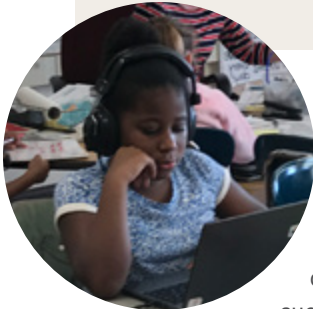
Educating the Whole Child

**PERRY K-8 SCHOOL** *with*  
**BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS EXPERIENCE LAB**

*Blended Learning Blueprint*

**BOSTON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP ACADEMY**  
**JEREMIAH BURKE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**CHARLESTOWN HIGH SCHOOL**

*Young Man with a Plan*



**The Challenge**

As more schools look to integrate technology to personalize and accelerate student learning, how can we build a roadmap for successful implementation that others can follow?

**The Solution**

The Perry K-8 School in South Boston is partnering with the Boston Public Schools’ Office of Innovation Experience Lab to implement blended learning approaches that combine teacher-facilitated classroom instruction with technology-based lessons, as a means to personalize learning to individual student needs and strengths. This approach requires significant shifts for teachers in how they organize their classroom, their time, and how they work with students. The BPS Experience Lab is supporting the Perry School to pilot a blended learning approach in four classrooms while developing a blueprint for other teachers and schools to follow.

**The Potential**

The Perry School and the BPS Experience Lab are documenting the successes and stumbling blocks that emerge from implementation of the blended learning approach. This work will help other schools seeking new ways to reach all students through the use of technology and new approaches to teaching.

**The Challenge**

Disparities in access, opportunity, and achievement persist for Black and Latino males in Boston. Graduation rates for these young men continue to lag significantly in a city where 78% of male students are Black or Latino. How can schools engage young men of color to ensure their personal, social, and academic success?

**The Solution**

Implemented initially as an afterschool program for thirty-five students, the Boston Coalition is piloting its mentoring approach, Young Man with a Plan, in three Boston high schools during the school day. Seventy-five young men meet weekly with school-based mentors to examine the institutional and historical barriers to the social-emotional, academic, and post-secondary success of young men of color and engage in structured conversations around race, culture, identity, and current events. In addition, the young men will receive academic support and college and career guidance from school-based mentors.

**The Potential**

An asset-based approach to supporting Black and Latino males that builds on the strengths and values they bring to their schools and communities is a vital component in any urban school or district educating a diverse student body.





**BRIDGE BOSTON CHARTER SCHOOL***Portfolio Approach to Student Learning***The Challenge**

While standardized tests are a required accountability measure, few educators would argue that current tests capture the full breadth and depth of student learning in the classroom. How can schools implement a project-based approach to learning and assessment that values the whole learning process and allows students to demonstrate both progress and mastery?

**The Solution**

Bridge Boston Charter School, a preK through 5th grade Commonwealth charter school, was designed to serve the city's most vulnerable children. Bridge Boston is piloting a student-work portfolio approach to build student ownership in learning, to focus on the quality of work completed, and to supplement existing assessment measures. A portfolio is a collection of student work that documents and demonstrates mastery of skills and content in various subject areas, as well as the process and effort put into specific projects. Bridge Boston is partnering with Francis Parker Essential School in Devens, Massachusetts – a school with a long-established portfolio-based approach – to conduct cross-school visits so that Bridge Boston educators can learn directly from Parker educators.

**The Potential**

Bridge Boston is piloting two portfolio projects in each classroom this spring with the goal of increasing the number of projects in subsequent years. Bridge Boston's approach can serve as a model for other schools interested in deepening student learning and providing teachers with a better understanding of student progress and mastery.

**CODMAN ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL  
and HURLEY K-8 SCHOOL with CODMAN  
SQUARE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER and  
SOUTH END COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER**
*The Younger Siblings Project***The Challenge**

Many young children arrive at school without basic readiness skills as well as undiagnosed special learning or language needs. The current process for identifying, evaluating, and delivering appropriate supports for students once they've enrolled in school can take months. How can schools work with families to increase readiness and identify needs before enrolling their children in school?

**The Solution**

Codman Academy Charter School and the Hurley K-8 School are partnering with two local health centers, where families already receive care for their children, to provide parenting education around school readiness and conduct early needs screening. Codman Academy and the Hurley, like many schools, give enrollment preference to siblings of current students. This program will focus on those families that already have a relationship with the school and have a three-year-old child at home. The goal is to ensure more students arrive at school in either preK or kindergarten ready to learn.

**The Potential**

Early education and early childhood health are closely intertwined. This type of partnership with local health centers can be a model for other schools to reach parents and their young children before they enroll in school to set them on a road to success.

## Educating the Whole Child

### COLLEGE BOUND MIDDLE SCHOOL with THINK:KIDS

*Social Skills in the Middle Grades*



#### The Challenge

By middle school, many students are already experiencing significant educational or personal challenges that put them at risk of dropping out. How can schools

change their approach, learn to support the most vulnerable students, and keep them on-track and engaged in their education?

#### The Solution

College Bound Middle School (CBMS), in partnership with the Boston Public Schools, serves sixty high-risk and off-track middle-grades youth including those who have been court-involved, previously expelled from another Boston school, or are significantly over-age. The Collaborative Problem Solving approach from Think:Kids at Massachusetts General Hospital - an evidence-based approach for helping children with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges - focuses on building the skills students need to problem solve, build relationships, and self-regulate. All CBMS staff are being trained in this new approach and are receiving coaching to ensure consistent implementation across all settings throughout the day.

#### The Potential

The Think:Kids approach has successfully supported children with significant behavioral challenges across a variety of settings. This approach could be a powerful tool for schools serving off-track youth to help students build the skills they need to be successful in and beyond school.

### EDUCATION REVIEW PANEL

Jennifer Aponte, *Teacher, Mildred Ave K-8 School*

Sarah Burke, *Teacher, Phineas Bates Elementary School*

Melanie Calzetti-Spahr, *Fellow, Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative*

Roy Chan, *Co-Lead of Experience Lab, Boston Public Schools Office of Innovation*

Jeffrey Cipriani, *Teacher, Orchard Gardens K-8 School*

Connee Counts, *(former) Associate Professor, Lesley University; Trustee, Urban College of Boston*

Michele Davis, *Principal, Warren Prescott K-8 School*

Brian Fuller, *Student, Harvard University Graduate School of Education & former teacher*

Cynthia Greenleaf, *(former) Director of Partnerships, Chicago Public Schools*

Diana Lam, *(former) Head of School, Conservatory Lab Charter School*

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Kayla Luther, *Experienced Associate, Rodman CPAs*

Beth Merle, *Vice President Strategy & Product Development, Optum*

Adrian Mims, *National Director, The Calculus Project*

Alyssa Napier, *Course Developer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Kelly Nowlin, *Board Member, Surdna Foundation & independent consultant*

Stanley Onuoha, *Financial Analyst, Bank of America*

Desmond Pope, *Senior Consultant, Liberty Mutual Insurance*

Megan Briggs Reilly, *Program Officer, Clowes Fund*

Gene Roundtree, *Headmaster, Muriel S. Snowden International High School*

Katherine Schmitt, *Vice President, J.P. Morgan Private Bank*

David Simon, *Simon Brothers Family Foundation; EdVestors Governing Board*

Aimee Sprung, *Civic Engagement Manager, Microsoft New England Research & Development Center*

Artis Street, *Instructional Coach, Jeremiah E. Burke High School*

Julie Wright, *Teacher, Charlestown High School*

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PHOTO BY ELLIOT HANEY

## 2016 PRESENTATION OF THE PHILIP H. GORDON LEGACY AWARD

Pictured left to right: Tommy Chang, Superintendent, Boston Public Schools; Michael O'Neill, Chair, Boston School Committee; Melissa Sanjeh, Headmaster, Dorchester Academy; Rahn Dorsey, Chief of Education, City of Boston; Marsha Girault-Macias, Clinical Coordinator, Dorchester Academy; Wendell Knox, Board Chair, EdVestors; Laura Perille, President & CEO, EdVestors.

# Philip H. Gordon Legacy Award

Since 2014, EdVestors has presented the Philip H. Gordon Legacy Award to a school or initiative that exemplifies EdVestors' co-founder's values of Equity, Innovation, and Impact.

The first recipient of the Gordon Legacy Award was Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA) in Roxbury, an alternative school for over-age and under-credited students. The Award allowed BDEA to share their nationally-recognized competency-based approach to teaching and learning with two schools in Boston through a summer institute paired with regular on-site coaching for teachers and school leaders throughout the school year. Since receiving the Award, teachers and school leaders in several other Boston schools have begun using a competency-based approach within their classrooms and schools, honoring the knowledge and skills students bring and empowering them to take ownership of their learning path.

The second recipient of the Gordon Legacy Award in 2015 was the Patrick J. Kennedy Elementary School in East Boston. The PJ Kennedy serves a large immigrant population, receiving children throughout the school year who are new to the country and with little or no English. With their initial Seed Fund grant and subsequent Gordon Legacy Award, the PJ Kennedy established a year-round Acceleration Clinic for its kindergarteners and first graders with the lowest levels of English proficiency. Over time, the Acceleration

Clinic has developed into an "incubation zone" within the school where different literacy approaches are tested with small groups of students, and the best ideas are shared with classroom teachers to support strong whole-classroom instruction.

At the 2016 Showcase, the Gordon Legacy Award was presented to ABCD at Dorchester Academy to support its implementation of the Restorative Justice approach. ABCD, a well-respected Boston anti-poverty organization, had been designated the prior fall as the operating partner for the turnaround efforts at Dorchester Academy. While already using a competency-based approach to academics, the Seed Fund grant and Gordon Legacy Award allowed school leadership to replace the traditional discipline model with the Restorative Justice approach which focuses on respect, community, inclusion, and support.

## 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 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](http://www.edvestors.org) to make a gift.