High Quality Pre-K in Community-Based Early Education Programs

Boston K1DS is a three-year demonstration project to expand Boston Public Schools’ nationally recognized pre-K program to 14 community-based preschool classrooms. Boston K1DS programs receive four resources:

- **Instructional materials and support** to integrate the district’s literacy and math curricula (Opening the World of Learning and Building Blocks) and assessments into the classroom
- **Professional development with BPS early childhood teachers**
- **One-on-one classroom coaching**, specializing in early childhood education and math, to translate new knowledge into practice in the classroom
- **Funding to increase the salary of community-based teachers** to Boston’s Living Wage Standard*

This mix of technical assistance, professional development, and increased compensation, improves community-based early education programs ability to: (1) retain highly qualified staff; (2) implement an evidence-based literacy- and math-rich curriculum; and (3) maintain full-day/year-round services that working parents depend on.

**Participating Programs**

Boston K1DS programs were selected through a competitive RFP process that sought applications from programs located in East Boston and the Circle of Promise, a five-mile area in the heart of Boston that includes some of city’s most distressed neighborhoods. Boston K1DS programs are:

A. Nazareth Child Care Center – Catholic Charities
B. East Boston YMCA
C. Yawkey Konbit-Kreyol Center – Catholic Charities
D. Ellis Memorial Early Education Center**
E. Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester**
F. N.I.C.E Inc.
G. Ruggles/Gilday Center – Associated Early Care and Education**
H. Paige Academy
I. Escuelita Boriken – Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion**
J. Wesley Child Care Center

Programs are required to be licensed by the MA Department of Early Education and Care and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (or in the NAEYC accreditation process). Classroom teachers must have a minimum of a BA in early childhood; programs must operate on a full-day, year-round basis (260 days per year and up to 10 hours a day); and at least 80% of children in the Boston K1DS classrooms must be Boston residents.

*Provided to ten classrooms  **Program has 2 Boston K1DS classrooms
The Need

In 2005, Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino launched a citywide, universal pre-K program in the Boston Public Schools (BPS), creating classrooms to serve 4-year olds. The BPS pre-K program now serves over 2,300 4-year olds. Internal and external evaluations of the program, including a Harvard Graduate School of Education evaluation of over 2,000 students,* show that regardless of race and income, children who participate in a BPS pre-K program benefit substantially in language, math, executive functioning and self regulation. Longitudinally, students who attend BPS pre-K outperform peers (including students from community-based programs, Head Start and children who do not attend any formal preschool), with a 9% difference on their 3rd grade MCAS ELA proficiency scores (2011 MCAS Data: 43% vs. 33.8%).

With demand for K1 from families at an all-time high, in 2012 BPS released a request for proposals seeking to expand a successful single-classroom pilot at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Dorchester to additional community-based preschool classrooms, fulfilling Mayor Menino’s commitment to expanding access to high quality early education in high need communities.


Measuring Impact

The impact of Boston K1DS on classroom quality and children’s academic skills is being evaluated by a team of researchers from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, using methodology based on the scale-up and evaluation of BPS’ nationally recognized pre-K program. As part of the evaluation, Boston K1DS classrooms are observed twice each year to measure classroom climate, instructional practices, and classroom organization. Additionally, the fidelity of curriculum implementation is being measured, with a special focus on dosage, quality, and adherence to the curriculum. Understanding the fidelity with which different elements of Boston K1DS are implemented will help us understand which aspects of the model have the greatest impact on child outcomes. Information about children’s learning and development, including direct assessments of their language, self regulation and early math skills, is collected each fall and spring while children are in Boston K1DS classrooms and during the fall of the following year once they enter kindergarten.

The Boston K1DS evaluation will allow us to identify best practices and a plan for scaling this public-private partnership to additional center-based preschool classrooms across Boston in an effort to ensure that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Funders

Boston K1DS is a partnership between the Boston Public Schools, Thrive in 5, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, and the Barr Foundation. Boston K1DS is funded by the Barr Foundation, Boston Public Schools, the @SCALE Initiative, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care’s Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment Grant (part of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Fund), the Jessie B. Cox Trust, and the Harold Whitworth Pierce Charitable Trust.

For More Information about Boston K1DS, visit http://bpsearlychildhood.weebly.com/boston-k1ds.html or contact Michelle High-McKinnon, Program Director, at 617-635-9063 or mhighmckinnon@bostonpublicschools.org.