



BRIDGE BOSTON
CHARTER SCHOOL



2014-2015



Our Mission

Bridge Boston Charter School students will thrive in a challenging, joyful, inclusive K1-8 public school community that values close partnerships with families and a focus on the whole child. Our students will develop the skills necessary to excel academically in rigorous high schools, reach their individual potentials, and view themselves as creators of their own futures. Through full-service programming, Bridge Boston Charter School will work to remove the health and social obstacles that hinder student learning.

Who Are Our Students?

- 20%** currently or recently homeless
- 40%** English Language Learners
- 21%** special learning needs
- 100%** qualified for free or reduced lunch
- 99%** students of color
- 20%** have been supported by the Department of Children & Families

100% have unlimited potential

Dear Friends,

I sit down to write this letter having just completed my first school year here. On a personal level, I look back at my decision to join Bridge Boston and feel so fortunate to be a part of this tremendous and inspirational community. On an organizational level, Bridge Boston is thriving. As we embark on our fifth academic year, it is an appropriate moment to think about the school's journey so far and where we go from here.

The Bridge Boston mission and commitment to being a joyful, full-service school with high academic standards has remained constant throughout our history. Our deep dedication to reaching the students who need us most, our innovative recruitment methods, our Teaching Fellows program, and our full service model are some of the elements that have propelled us since day one.

At the same time, four years of experience and a deeper understanding of our school as a community have allowed us to evolve as an organization. The size of the student body, the breadth of our social-emotional program, and our ability to individualize teaching for every student are just a few examples of how the school has progressed. Steadfast in our commitment to improve each year, we see ourselves on a continual journey. With great excitement, we forge ahead towards critical milestones on the horizon: our first charter renewal, building our permanent home, and developing our middle school program.

Bridge Boston is still a young school, and has all the vibrancy and possibility of an institution that is poised to develop in a multitude of exciting directions. At the same time, this school holds fast to the core values that drew each teacher, administrator, parent, family member, friend, volunteer and community partner to this place.

I am immensely grateful to all of the people who come together every day to create this wonderful place for so many deserving children. I am thankful you have joined us on this journey.

Sincerely,

Yully Cha

Executive Director



How do we find our students?

As a public charter school, Bridge Boston is open by lottery to all students in Massachusetts. Our goal, however, has always been to teach children from Boston's most under-served neighborhoods. We connect with families through intensive recruitment at homeless shelters, medical clinics, housing developments, and social service agencies including the Department of Children and Families. The end result of our focused recruitment efforts is a population of children whose needs are particularly well-suited to Bridge Boston's full-service offerings. We currently have over 1,600 children on the wait list for a chance to attend our school.

Joyful and Demanding Classrooms

Classrooms at Bridge Boston are both joyful and demanding. Our philosophy has always maintained that fun and learning can and must happen together!

Our dedicated teachers build strong results through principles that have been with us since our founding.

- Rigorous attention to each student's needs and progress in mastering core skills.
- Classrooms of 20 or fewer children with two teachers.
- Extended school day lasting from breakfast at 7:15am until buses depart at 5pm.
- Rich summer program attended by over 70% of our students.

As the school has grown, we have also tested new ideas and developed improved ways of teaching our students.

- Instituting "Resiliency Groups" to help students work through trauma.
- Developing a thriving music program.
- Testing new ways of teaching our growing ELL and special needs populations.

These are just a few of the ways in which academics at Bridge Boston have evolved. Just as we continually encourage our students to set higher and higher goals for themselves, our Master Teachers, Teaching Fellows, and Specialists continually push themselves to find better ways of imparting knowledge and a love of learning to our children.

The proof that this philosophy works is in our academic outcomes. In a network of 104 Massachusetts schools, only one school scored higher than Bridge Boston's 3rd grade in English Language Arts test results. In math, no other school scored higher than Bridge Boston's 3rd graders.



"When Bridge Boston first began, we were five teachers in a room writing curricula from scratch. At the end of our first academic year we took a breath... and then got right back to work. Since that first year, the teaching staff has met each summer to reflect, retool our plans and reimagine an education that best suits the learners that walk through our halls. Now, four years later, we are able to look back to see how far we have come, and look forward to imagine where else this journey can take us."

Nina Leuzzi – K1 Master Teacher and founding team member of Bridge Boston

Confidence and Enrichment Through Music

As we pursue high academic standards, we are also conscious of the need to expose our students to enriching opportunities, to beauty and to joyful experiences. Our music program, inspired by the El Sistema music education program, serves all of these purposes. This academic year has been an exciting one for our music program:

- As Bridge Boston expanded to include grade three, we developed a new music curriculum for this age group. Our third grade musicians have learned to sit in orchestral formation, follow a conductor, and play two- and three-part harmonies.
- Using a variety of practice strategies, students are learning to proactively ask for feedback and to see mistakes as opportunities for further learning.
- We continue to perform at three all-school concerts each year including our final concert of the year: a public, outdoor concert at Franklin Park Zoo. Students not only learn how to play, listen to, and appreciate music; they also learn how to persevere, to hold themselves to high standards, and to achieve in ways they may not have expected.

“Our current first grade class of violinists mastered their instruments with more enthusiasm and swiftness than in previous years, and I think it’s because they look to the example the 72 older students have set. They admire the poise and confidence of the older students, and look forward to becoming leaders themselves.”

Julie Davis – Music Master Teacher



Doing Whatever it Takes

The founding Bridge Boston team believed that schools were meant to be more than dispensers of academic knowledge. We have always been in the business of creating a community and, as such, we are committed to caring for one another. Our Full Service mantra has always been to do whatever it takes to enable a child to reach their potential.

Our children have many needs – for glasses, tooth sealant, hearing screenings, asthma pumps, clothing, weekend food, and counseling. Our parents also have needs – for eviction counseling, ELL classes, parenting help, job referrals, assistance in setting up health insurance benefits, and transportation to homeless shelters.

- If a child is constantly tardy, we work with parents to come up with a plan.
- If a child has surgery, we advocate with the hospital and help with transitions.
- If a child is under the care of the Department of Children and Families, we communicate with social workers, provide suitcases and arrange weekend visits.

Our Director of Students and Families is dedicated to pursuing vibrant community partnerships that allow the school to meet the health and social service needs of our students. The days are never long enough and the work is hard. But as a full service school, we must constantly strive to create a milieu where the question is always, “What else can we do?”

Working Through Trauma

Bridge Boston creates a safe physical and emotional environment for students. As we have strengthened our relationships with students and families and become more aware of their exposure to violence and trauma, we have increasingly used the lens of trauma-informed schooling to guide our work:

- We began working with Dr. Adam Silk, a psychiatrist who has advised us in our work helping students develop stronger coping mechanisms. Many students participate in a weekly “Resiliency Group” practicing empathy, teamwork, conflict resolution, and effective communication.
- Because we prioritize partnering with families in all that we do, we have social-emotional benchmarks in students’ report cards each quarter and discuss these during family-teacher conferences to collaborate on strategies for growth.
- We are working to become more data-driven in our program analysis, developing additional research-based intervention strategies, and implementing a social-emotional curriculum that better meets our needs.

“Every member of our school community helps create an environment of trust and connection. Whether you are a teacher, family member, administrator, student, or volunteer – the feeling of family is palpable.”

Joanna Rees Steffey – Director of Students & Families



“One of the best things Jennifer Daly did as a founder was to steep this school in an unwavering commitment to do whatever it takes. Joanna Rees Steffey, who joined the school shortly after its inception, brought the same focus to her role heading student services. Together, Jennifer and Joanna are the cornerstone of our ability to provide full-service in a comprehensive, whole school manner. They are strategic and knowledgeable, and they prioritize our children and families in everything they do.”

Yully Cha – Executive Director

Journey of Our First Class

In our first year, Bridge Boston brought together 72 students and families to form our inaugural cohort. Here's a snapshot of our first K2 class and their journey so far. Together, we have made great progress!

K2



- Year-long exploration of The Farm, with field trips to the Museum of Science, Lookout Farm, Ward's Berry Farm, and Whole Foods

- Eye screenings from New England Eye

- Language services to students who are not native English speakers

Tons of imaginative play!

- 1:1 counseling services for students with special needs

- Mastery of addition and subtraction with numbers up to 5

"One time when I was feeling sad about something and didn't want to go to school, Ms. Daly talked to me about it and made me want to come to school."

Sekai, 3rd grade student

2nd



- Second annual dental exams

- Violin study & performance at WinterFest Concert

- Writing of nonfiction books

- Study of the Yanomami people of the Amazon

- School assemblies about capoeira, folk singing, the rainforest, and recycling

1st



- Year-long exploration of "Habitats," with field trips to Blue Hills Reservation, Franklin Park, New England Aquarium, and the Strand Theater



"The teacher that most inspired Justin to reach his full potential is Ms. Crowley. She's the most compassionate, strong-willed teacher who won't settle for less. She magnifies your worth as a person."

Bridge Boston Parent

Study of "The Ocean" and field trips to whale watching and Nahant Tidal Pools

Cellos added to our musical ensembles

Resiliency Groups for students with social-emotional needs

Reading benchmarks reached or exceeded by 91% of class

Report on a family member or neighbor's journey to this country

1st of 104 schools in MA on Achievement Network testing

Field trip to Fenway Park

PARCC test

Two- and three-part harmonies on string instruments

Year-long study of Immigration

3rd
♥

"This will always be a special class. I remember when they built their paper violins, when they hatched their chicks, when they presented their first play. They have both struggled and soared. Some of them carry huge burdens, unimaginable for people their age, and yet they go forward, buoyed by our hope for each of them."

Jennifer Daly, Principal



"When I go into Mr. Bulger's room, I know what I will find – a sense of calm and purpose, excellent lesson plans, an absolute investment in student achievement and in building a strong community within the room. Children adore him. It has been a privilege to work alongside him and watch him grow as an educator, and I have no doubt that his voice will be critical to our school's future."

Jennifer Daly – Principal



Journey of a Founding Teacher

Sean Bulger joined Bridge Boston as a Teaching Fellow during the school's inaugural year. His journey at Bridge Boston has brought him to a point where he's now a Master Teacher, Director of the Summer Program, and instrumental in student recruitment, space planning, and school openings.

First Year Fellow

- “I loved the philosophy of this school – we look for families who need help educating and advocating for their children. Children at this age are amazing learners. Students who started the year not knowing the alphabet ended the year knowing how to read sight words or even whole books.”

Second Year Fellow and Donovan Urban Teaching Scholar at Boston College

- “Through the Donovan Program, I realized we were doing things differently than other schools and it made me even more committed to the Bridge Boston philosophy. We don't give up on our students. If one thing doesn't work, we'll try something else. If that doesn't work, we keep trying.”

1st Grade Co-Teacher

- “I co-taught with Breanne Norvell, and we learned a lot from each other. Your first year of teaching can be really challenging, and I was grateful that we were able to share the work as well as a common philosophy about teaching.”

2nd Grade Master Teacher

- “I felt very lucky to move up a grade with my kids – I had taught some of them for several years in a row and knew them really well. Our relationships were really powerful. It never felt like a one-way communication, but rather like an on-going conversation between people who really trust each other.”
- “I also had the opportunity to mentor a Teaching Fellow. It was wonderful to be able to relate to her experiences and to help her complete the rigorous year as I had done while I was a Fellow.”

2nd Grade Master Teacher and Summer Program Director

- “My journey at Bridge Boston has been one filled with immense joy and challenges. Sometimes the work feels impossible, but for every one challenging moment, there are two moments where I feel a deep connection with a family, or watch as a student makes huge academic or social gains. These moments occur because of Bridge Boston's unique mission and they make the impossible work possible.”
- “Bridge Boston has flourished so much in the last four years and I am looking forward to watching it thrive for many years to come.”

Our Teaching Fellows are dedicated, committed to children, and from a diverse range of backgrounds. Their presence creates a lower teacher-student ratio and more individualized attention for each child. Their passion, commitment, and energy promote the school's culture of doing whatever it takes to help our students succeed. Through the Fellows program, Bridge Boston is proud to contribute to the training of young teachers – like Sean – who are dedicated to urban education.



Building a Permanent Home

Our journey to a permanent schoolhouse has been arduous at times – this year we managed the difficult logistics of being split between two buildings. With the help of many of you, our supporters, we are actively designing a school that meets our needs at maturity. We hope to move in for the 2017-2018 school year and look forward to sharing the details with you as they take shape!

“Bridge Boston is fortunate to have a path to our permanent home so early in our journey. As we live every day into our mission of great teaching, joyful classrooms, and support for the whole child, our Schoolhouse will ensure that we will continue to serve Boston families for decades into the future. We are indebted to everyone who has helped us achieve this great milestone.”

Cheryl Alexander – Founding Board President



Financials

Bridge Boston Charter School

Income Statement for year ended June 30, 2015*

Revenues

Per pupil Tuition	\$2,943,062
Public grants	\$382,507
Transportation (in-kind)	\$279,522
Pensions (in-kind)	\$132,819
Private Funding	\$330,130
Miscellaneous	\$32,474

	\$4,100,514

Expenses

Personnel	\$2,079,555
Organizational	\$416,257
Program	\$744,306
Facilities	\$590,101

	\$3,830,219

Net Income **\$270,295**

*Income statement is adjusted for items associated with our capital project.

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Bridge Boston Foundation**

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To schedule a visit, please contact
Yully Cha at 857-229-1601 or
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"The dedication of each Bridge Boston community member - from family members to teachers to Board members, donors and volunteers - is what drives us forward while keeping us solidly committed to our mission. I am thankful to each one of you and look forward to our joint efforts on the next phase of our journey."

Beth Kressley Goldstein – Incoming Board President