



# Boston Urban Youth Foundation Prospectus



## Description:

*Boston Urban Youth Foundation's **Building Futures Educational Initiative** addresses the issue of violence through early prevention strategies for youth most at risk of future violent behavior – those on a trajectory to school dropout. Building Futures targets chronically truant middle school students and equips them with concrete academic and life skills that ensure school engagement, high school graduation, and college access.*

**Location:**  
Roxbury, MA

**Website:**  
www.buyf.org

**Founded:** 1992

**Current Budget:** \$960,000

## Geography & People Served:

Chronically truant middle school students in the Boston public schools

## Social Problem:

- Each year, about 4,000 (35%) of BPS middle school students are chronically truant, a primary indicator of later dropouts.
- Dropouts are the breeding ground for violence and crime; 85% of ninth-grade offenders in the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice System become dropouts.
- The consequences of dropping out are especially sobering for Latino and African American males, half of whom are likely to end up in prison before age 30.
- Boston has a dropout crisis. Each year, while 3,000 students graduate, another 1,600 have already dropped out.

## Key Accomplishments & Social Impact:

- At least 500 Building Futures students have graduated from high school.
- 50 Building Futures participants are attending college now, and 27 participants have graduated from college since 2001.
- A Harvard Graduate School of Education study cited Building Futures as an exemplary truancy-reduction program.

## Goals – Two Years (July 2007–June 2009):

- Increase the number of students served from 250 to 900 annually by 2009.
- Train eight new employees to staff three new schools.
- Build a long-term public-private partnership with the Boston Public School System.

**Increase in Philanthropic Investment – 18 Months:** \$355,000

**Social Innovator:**  
Chris Troy

**Contact Information:**  
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ctroy@buyf.org

### Ways to Invest

#### In-Kind Support

- Helping to devise a marketing communications plan and collateral materials
- Adding 3-4 Board Members with business expansion experience
- IT systems update expertise
- Donating office furniture and computers for new program staff
- Developing new employee handbooks and operations manuals in anticipation of rapid expansion

#### Financial Support

- \$50,000** Salary of Life Coach for 50 students
- \$25,000** Support 30 students on College Tour
- \$10,000** Cost of College Interns for 200 kids in summer program
- \$5,000** Gas and maintenance for after-school program van
- \$1,000** Technology for student progress tracking system at one school

## Need & Opportunity

### **Social Problem**

What was hailed as the “Boston Miracle” is over. Boston’s comprehensive approach to violence reduction in the 1990’s was nationally recognized as a model for other urban centers. Coordinated efforts among law enforcement, community leaders, clergy, and city youth workers effectively reduced criminal activity and provided alternative programs for youth prone to violence. However, the last three years have witnessed a dramatic rise in violence, focused particularly in the densely populated neighborhoods of Roxbury and Dorchester. The recent spike in youth-related violence has alarmed community leaders and public officials. The debate over how to deal most effectively with the crime wave is in full swing. Some argue for more law enforcement resources to deal with known offenders while others call for more investment in programs that could steer young people away from crime. Meanwhile, violence among teenagers continues to climb, demonstrated by these disturbing statistics:

- Shooting incidents have risen dramatically in two years, from 268 in 2004 to over 377 by the end of 2006.<sup>1</sup> In 2005, more than half of the victims were teens.<sup>2</sup>
- In a recent study by the Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center, 85% percent of Boston urban youth reported witnessing one or more acts of violence over the course of a year, *and nearly a third said they had a family member killed in a shooting, stabbing, or beating.*
- 41% reported that it would be either “very easy” or “fairly easy” to get a gun.<sup>3</sup>

Further findings from the study reveal that everyday life is perceived as dangerous to urban teens. Half experienced personally one or more incidents of victimization, and 70% felt that gangs in their neighborhood were dangerous. The results are a life of terror for residents. Ironically, while youth violence perpetrators wield the gun, they are in fact victims themselves. Only by creating a way out of violence for these youth can the cycle be stopped.

### **Root Cause Factors**

#### **The “Pipeline to Prison”**

According to the Center for Juvenile Justice, high school dropouts are three times more likely to be arrested than high school graduates.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, 85% of ninth graders in Department of Youth Services (DYS) custody become dropouts.<sup>5</sup> Dropouts face higher hurdles when it comes to breaking out of a pattern of violence. For example, job opportunities for dropouts are dim. Furthermore, Boston is worse than other American cities of comparable size, ranking 44<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 largest cities for employment among young dropouts.<sup>6</sup>

Without jobs, teenage dropouts fall into a deeper crisis, and often resort to crime as a way of survival. Dropouts comprise 75% of the state prison population and 59% of federal inmates.<sup>7</sup> The probability of prison time for African American male dropouts is especially sobering. Of African American males who drop out of school, 52% end up in prison by the time they are 30 years old.<sup>8</sup>

The effects are not limited to dropouts and their neighbors. The economic consequences to society are enormous. In Massachusetts, when incarceration costs are factored in, the lifetime tax contribution gap between high school dropouts and bachelor degree recipients is close to \$1,000,000.<sup>9</sup> If the dropout rate were reduced by even 1%, it would represent a return to the state of hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenue.

<sup>1</sup> Boston Police Department Crime Statistics

<sup>2</sup> McPhee, *Boston Herald*, June 27, 2006

<sup>3</sup> *Boston Youth Survey*, Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center. Available: [www.hsph.harvard.edu/hyvp/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hyvp/).

<sup>4</sup> *Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Data and Information*, Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety Programs Division, December 2004 p.58

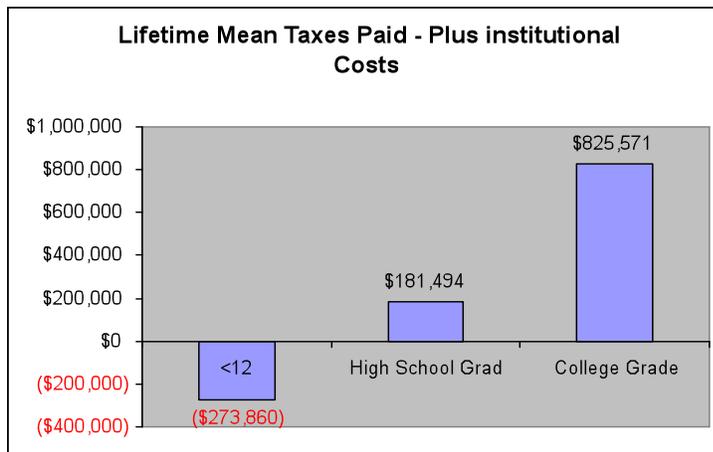
<sup>5</sup> *Too Big To Be Seen: The Invisible Dropout Crisis in Boston and America*. Boston Youth Transition Task Force, May, 2006 Available: [www.BostonPIC.org](http://www.BostonPIC.org)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> *Whatever It Takes, How Twelve Communities are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth* American Youth Policy Forum

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> *The Fiscal and Economic Consequences of Dropping Out of High School*. Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University. Study for Boston Private Industry Council, January 2007. Available: [www.BostonPIC.org](http://www.BostonPIC.org)



The cycle of dropout is compounded by the myriad of stressors found in communities of high poverty. Over 66% of inner-city youth live in families that earn less than \$20,000 a year.<sup>10</sup> The dearth of family and school support systems, coupled with a lack of positive role models and ready opportunity, leave youth with a profound lack of hope and vision. It is estimated that the number of youth with emotional and behavioral issues requiring mental health services is reaching epidemic proportions. A study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control estimated that 10% of high-poverty youth have profound emotional and behavioral issues that warrant medical treatment.<sup>11</sup>

For those struggling in school, the problems often become overwhelming. Despair coupled with short-term needs takes over and the incentive to remain in school diminishes each year.<sup>12</sup> Although students may seem to drop out suddenly in high school, studies reveal that it is actually a gradual process.<sup>13</sup> When a child begins to fall behind academically in middle school or sooner, the sense of failure accumulates. With no support system to fall back on, the trajectory to dropout becomes inexorable.

### Current Landscape

Boston is experiencing a “dropout crisis.” For every 10 children entering kindergarten in the Boston Public School System, roughly four will not make it to high school graduation. While approximately 3,000 students graduate each year, another 1,600 have already dropped out. African American and Latino youth bear the brunt of the dropout crisis. Together, these two groups comprise 70% of all dropouts living in Boston.<sup>14</sup>

In 2004, Mayor Menino addressed the dropout crisis by convening the Boston Youth Transition Task Force to examine the issue and provide recommendations on how to turn back the dropout tide. After two years of study, the Task Force identified a number of prevention programs and “second chance” dropout recovery systems for teens. It also recommended that the city focus greater efforts on dropout prevention versus intervention because prevention strategies are acknowledged to more effective and cost-efficient than attempting to get a student back in school who has already given up.

Change in a large public system takes time. Entrenched structural and funding mechanisms geared to high school students inhibit the development of intervention strategies in earlier years. For example, an extensive remedial education system at the high school level is focused on dropouts. To move to a prevention versus intervention strategy would require the dismantling of a bureaucratic structure involving tens of millions of dollars as well as addressing the issue of union job protections built into existing long-term contracts.

Meanwhile, more than 4,000 middle school students are truant in a given year, representing close to 35% of the overall population.<sup>15</sup> The school system lacks a citywide strategy to address the issue. At the school level, there is no systematized way of identifying and managing chronically truant students. Usually, attendance records are not reviewed until well into the school year. Truant officers are charged with returning truant students to school during school hours, not with intervening to remedy the root of cause of the problem.

<sup>10</sup> US Census, 2000

<sup>11</sup> Simpson, GA, *U.S. Children with Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties*. June 23, 2005 Available: [www.cdc/nchs/data/ad/ad360.pdf](http://www.cdc/nchs/data/ad/ad360.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> *Too Big To Be Seen: The Invisible Dropout Crisis in Boston and America*. Boston Youth Transition Task Force, May, 2006 Available: [www.BostonPIC.org](http://www.BostonPIC.org)

<sup>13</sup> *2004 Boston Youth Survey*, Harvard Youth Violence Prevention Center. Available: [www.hsph.harvard.edu/hyvpc/](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hyvpc/).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

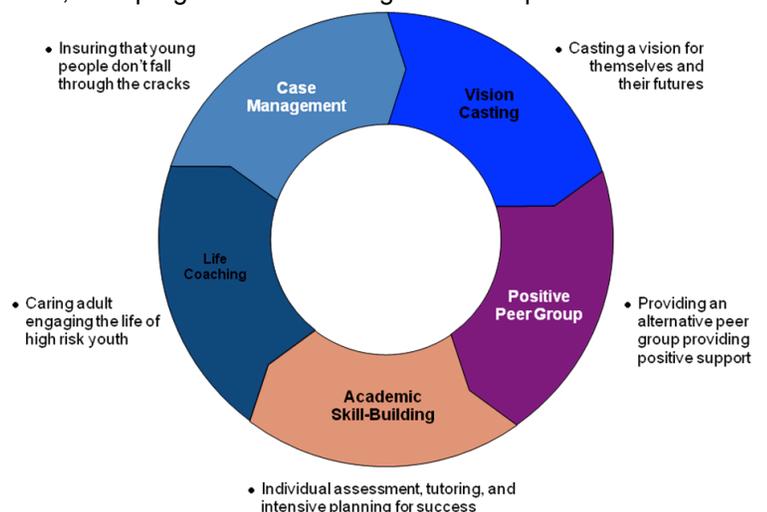
Moreover, given the lack of public funds to work on prevention, the BPS relies on a patchwork of services provided by community based organizations, the majority of which work outside of school walls and where participation is voluntary. Thus, it's the more high-performing students who self-select into after-school programs, while the high-risk kids take to the streets. Due to entrenched union and cultural bias, most middle schools will not allow outside organizations to occupy school buildings after the end of the school day.

### Social Innovation in Action: Building Futures “one kid at a time”

The primary focus of the Building Futures initiative is to engage high-risk truants in middle school and provide them with a comprehensive network of high-impact, year-round in- and out-of-school services. By targeting students early in the dropout trajectory, the program seeks to dramatically reduce truancy and future dropout rates. Building Futures is the only program in the Boston schools that proactively addresses the truancy issue. Truant students are identified in sixth grade and receive extensive help during their middle school years. Once in high school, students can choose to continue being mentored through graduation and into college.

Building Futures is woven into the fabric of the school, with program staff building relationships with school staff as well as students in their daily environment. This way, disengaged students do not have to be coaxed to yet another “program.” Instead, their existing school experience is enhanced in myriad ways. For example, the Building Futures “Life Success Coach” works directly in the school, identifying truant students early in the year and acting as a mentor to the students and their families.

Recognizing that truancy can mirror a complex set of both academic and social and emotional stressors, Building Futures takes a holistic approach to addressing the needs of each child, from help with schoolwork to social services that include family participation. All aspects of a student’s life are taken into account, instead of simply isolating one aspect of a child’s life – such as homework – and expecting behavior to change.



The program uses the following five strategies to create a continuum of services and support:

- 1. Case Management:** With the support of school staff and parents, Coaches build close ties to youth through tracking, intensive planning, academic assessment, and individual counseling. This allows each student to set a long-term graduation plan (put into an agreement) and meet educational goals.
- 2. Life Coaching:** Participants are matched with professional adult Life Skills Coaches for long-term support. They assist youth with goal-setting, goal-achieving, and leadership skills. They help young people cope with crises and make good decisions that will lead to positive futures.
- 3. Academic Skill Building:** Building Futures works with teachers to increase students’ academic skill building, and to assess and improve academic skills. Building Futures also provides individual assessment, tutoring, homework assistance, and intensive planning for success in school.
- 4. Positive Peer Group Experiences:** To build positive relationships with others, Building Futures hosts leadership seminars, “Weekly Club,” college tours, weekend activities, summer camp, the Servant Leadership Initiative, and local student-led community service projects.

5. **Vision Casting:** Life Success Coaches and peer mentors work with each student to “cast a personal vision” for the future. Participants are taught to reflect on who they are, what gifts they possess, and what the future can hold for them. A combination of relationships with caring adults, academic skill building, trips, camps, and college tours helps each student create plans and goals for the future.

The powerful and positive effect of helping students achieve academic parity cannot be underestimated. As small successes build (attending school, finishing homework, passing exams), the students begin to develop a new ownership over their futures. Former truants begin to develop skills to manage their emotions and resolve conflict in more peaceful and mature ways. They not only improve their decision-making skills but also develop a more positive self identity and socially responsible values.

After middle school, students who choose to can continue their relationship with Building Futures in an unstructured way through informal relationships with Life Coaches and participation in mentoring middle school youth during after school hours. Because the transition to high school is a difficult one for many students, the BPS has approached BUYF regarding working with ninth graders in two high schools beginning in the 2007-08 academic year.

### Social Impact

The results of Building Futures’ efforts so far are impressive. Truancy decreased by 42%, 87% of program participants passed their grade, and high school graduation was an astonishing 98%. A study conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education validated the magnitude of the results, commenting that “the transformation of these students’ report cards from D’s and F’s to A’s and B’s is a significant stride toward academic improvement.” Just as impressive were the behavior outcomes: 60% of participants had fewer behavior problems in school, demonstrating their development of “internal assets” such as commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies and positive identity.

	2005- 2006	2006- 2007E	2007- 2008E	2008- 2009E
Truancy rate reduction –school-wide	27% to 42%	40% to 45%	50%	50%
Participants promoted to next grade	85%	85%	87%	90%
Percentage of participants who exhibit decreased behavioral problems in school	60%	60%	65%	70%
Number of participants who have gone on to high school	75	75	180	270

### Organizational & Program Health Measures

Building Futures’ results are not going unnoticed by the Boston School System. The BPS has expressed interest in strengthening its partnership with Building Futures, recognizing that the school system lacks the skill sets to implement a Youth Development model within school walls. *Building Futures’ value proposition to the BPS is its proven cost-effective way to reduce the dropout rate.* Through discussions with individual schools and the BPS central administration, the current plan projects Building Futures expanding its number of middle schools from three to four in the next school year. The growth of a strong public/private partnership is the driving force behind Building Futures’ expansion over the next three years. A number of variables affect implementation, not the least of which is the ongoing lack of permanent leadership in the Superintendent position. In response to this uncertain environment, Building Futures has developed a number of growth models. Ideally, the following chart illustrates the growth trajectory mapped out by the BPS and Building Futures.

	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008E	2008-2009E
Number of Building Futures Schools	2	3	4	6
Number of truant middle school students served	250	250	600	900

Building Futures' effect on students' academic and social performance is tracked through its online Community Tech-Knowledge (CTK) system. The system provides real-time monitoring of participants' progress. The bottom-line measure is truancy reduction, but other factors are digitally stored and cataloged as well, including individual plans, assessments, and monthly tutoring reports. Data collection and record keeping take place at regular intervals and are analyzed to provide Coaches with relevant information for their work with students.

Currently, Building Futures serves 250 middle school students through its spectrum of programming. Now operating in three schools, Building Futures plans a dramatic expansion over the next 18 months, targeting three additional schools.

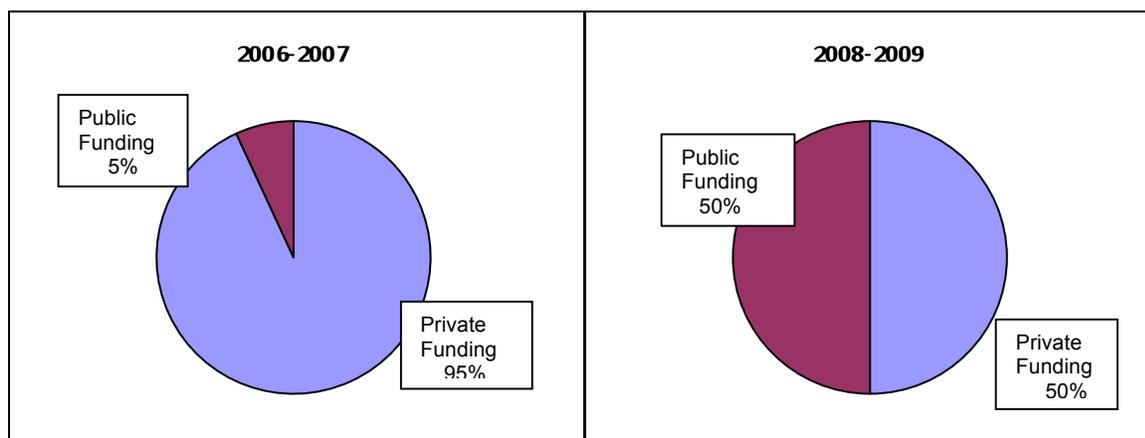
### Financial Sustainability

The BPS and Building Futures have a prime opportunity to create a strong public/private partnership. The partnership would facilitate expansion by combining public and BPS-controlled private grant funding with matched funds raised by BUYF. Discussions are underway to build initial funding into the BPS budget and BPS-controlled outside grants with the expectation that 50% of Building Futures' costs would be covered by public sources by 2009.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07E	2007-08E	2008-09E
Private Funds raised by BUYF	\$540,000	\$600,814	\$900,000	\$1,170,000	\$1,350,000
Funds allocated by BPS and other government contracts	\$ 60,000	\$50,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 930,000	\$1,350,000
Total Budget	\$602,896	\$650,814	\$960,000	\$2,100,000	\$2,700,000
School-based staff	6	7	8	10	18

The charts below

illustrate the effect of the public/private partnership on Building Futures' revenue.



### Leadership

Chris Troy has been President of Boston Urban Youth Foundation since 1992 and is responsible for developing the Building Futures model. Chris brings to the table over two decades of experience working with high-risk urban

youth. Financial management is overseen by Chris with expert advice from Account Management Solutions, which provides critical expertise in financial modeling. The 11-member Board of Directors includes leaders from

the education field, business, and the community. The expansion plan includes increasing the number of Board members to 20.

### **Key Funders**

Building Futures has been the recipient of ever-growing support from the Boston philanthropic community. Supporters include:

- Boston Public Schools
- Cabot Foundation
- EdVestors
- Flatley Foundation
- Hyams Foundation
- State Street Foundation
- United Way
- Yawkey Foundation