

# BPS Arts

## EXPANSION INITIATIVE



The belief in the powerful role that arts can and should play in the life of students and an urban school system led to the launch of the Boston Public Schools (BPS) Arts Expansion Initiative in 2009, with strong leadership by Superintendent Carol R. Johnson and a collaboration of external funders. The multi-year Initiative provides infrastructure to accelerate expansion and coordination of arts learning opportunities across the school system. The overriding goal is to increase access, equity and quality of arts learning for all students. The Initiative is closely aligned with the district's overall reform strategies outlined in the BPS Acceleration Agenda.

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Spring 2012 Update

## Overview:

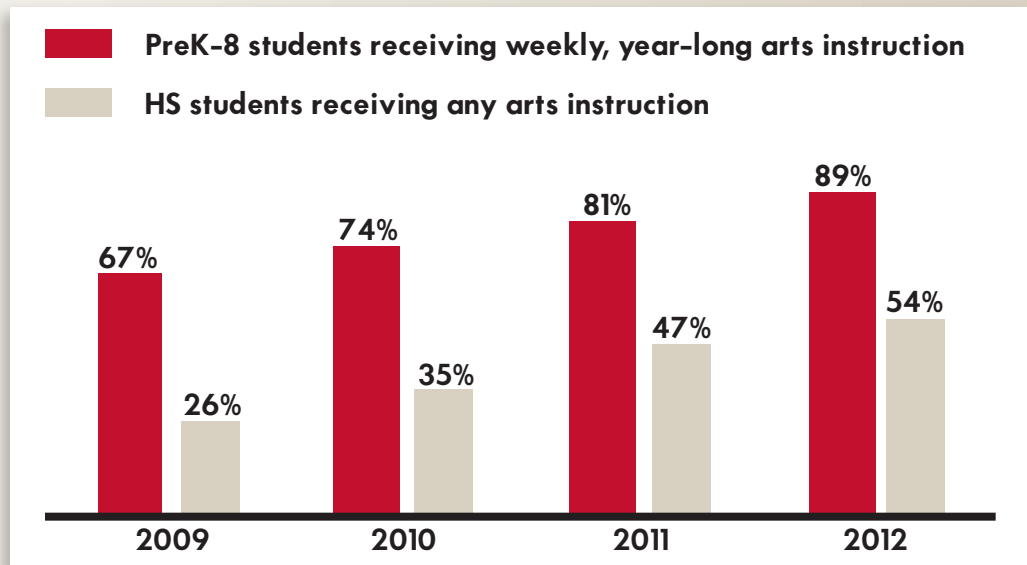
The BPS Arts Initiative's focus is to ensure that all BPS students, regardless of where they attend school, have access to high quality arts education. While the arts are a considerable presence in many schools, there are still too many children who lack access to these opportunities on a consistent basis.

## The Initiative is guided by a multi-year three part strategy:

- **Expanding direct arts education:** To reach 100% of all students in grades pre-K through Grade 8 through once weekly, year-long arts instruction and develop targeted strategies to meet the needs of high school students.
- **Building capacity:** At both central office and school levels to support systematic expansion of arts education throughout the district.
- **Strengthening coordination:** To build strong and sustainable partnerships between schools and the rich and diverse arts, cultural, and higher education institutions in Boston.

## Progress to Date:

In the time since the Arts Expansion Initiative was launched in February 2009, more than 14,000 additional elementary, middle, and high school students have opportunities to experience the arts during the school day, compared with the 2008-2009 school year. Now, nearly 9 of every 10 students in kindergarten through grade eight receive arts instruction at least once a week for the whole year, reaching ever closer to the Initiative's goal of 100% of students. In high schools, the number of students accessing any arts instruction during the school day has more than doubled.



## Initiative Design:

One of the primary tools of the Initiative has been the creation of the BPS Arts Expansion Fund that focuses on direct arts expansion in schools aligned with the Initiative goals. To date, the Initiative has raised over \$4 million of the \$5.5 million goal (2009-2015) for the Arts Expansion Fund. In school year 2011-2012, over \$800,000 in competitive grants from the Fund are supporting 48 grantees working in 50 schools to directly impact over 8,000 students. Grant applications to support school-based arts programming in the 2012-13 school year will be available in February 2012. Supporters of the Arts Expansion Fund include the Barr Foundation, Boston Foundation,

the Catherine & Paul Bittenwieser Foundation, Hunt Alternatives Fund, the Klarman Family Foundation, the Linde Family Foundation, and the Shapiro Foundation along with other foundations and individual donors.

In February 2012, The Wallace Foundation made a \$4M investment over 4 years to support the implementation of a long-term arts education plan for the Boston Public Schools. This follows a \$750,000 grant from Wallace that enabled the Initiative to engage in an 18-month planning process with a broad range of stakeholders to develop the plan. The implementation grant will build capacity to expand and sustain high-quality arts education for all BPS students through new approaches

to arts instruction, curriculum, professional development, partnership coordination, and student and family engagement.

Importantly, the Arts Expansion Initiative has had a district-wide effect at BPS. The philanthropic community's strategic investments have been leveraged with additional public funding, with BPS making a significant and increasing yearly investment in arts. For FY12 the expenditure is over \$18M – an increase of over \$2M annually compared to 2009, during this time of tight municipal budgets and fiscal constraint. The effort has been a true public/private partnership leveraging increased public investment via catalytic private philanthropy.

## Initiative Management:

The BPS Arts Expansion Initiative is a collaboration among EdVestors, the Boston Public Schools, the philanthropic community, and the many partners that support and provide arts education in the schools. EdVestors serves as the convener and managing partner of the work, working closely with the district to set strategy, coordinating with multiple arts partners, raising all funds to support the Initiative from the collaborating donors, and measuring progress against the Initiative's work plan. EdVestors also administers the Arts Expansion Fund, working closely with Arts Expansion Fund grantees as well as the BPS Arts Office. For more info, contact [artsfund@edvestors.org](mailto:artsfund@edvestors.org) or 617-585-5740.