

Counting What Counts: Assessments that Matter for At-Risk Students

PROJECT TEAM PROFILE

Boston Day and Evening Academy <http://www.bacademy.org/>

The Boston Day and Evening Academy is an eight-year-old Horace Mann Charter school celebrating its tenth year as a public high school within Boston Public Schools. BDEA's mission is to educate over aged, at-risk high school students in the City of Boston. BDEA has developed a unique, competency-based approach to educating our students, which is not based on credit hours, but rather on demonstration of skills and knowledge. BDEA has been recognized in the City of Boston and nationwide as a successful model for serving at-risk, over-aged high school students. In 2005-06, BDEA held over 50 visits to the school, including visits from educators, parents, students, and politicians from the United States, Europe, and Canada who wanted to learn about our school's innovative programming and approach to educating our students. BDEA is a long-time member of the *Coalition of Essential Schools* and one of the five founding schools of Boston's nationally-known Pilot School network.

Amesbury Academy of Strategic Learning

<http://www.ci.amesbury.ma.us/home.nfs?a=amesbury&s=special&group=127>

The Academy of Strategic Learning (ASL) is a Horace Mann Charter school devoted to fostering the social, emotional, and academic development of young people who have not found success in a traditional public school environment. The academic program is standards based and strives to build competencies in language arts, math, social studies, and science/technology. Individualized learning plans drive the individual student's program of study. Community service learning and community-based projects provide a real world environment for inquiry-based learned and exploration.

Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School

The Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School is a Commonwealth Charter school working closely with the Lowell School District and other community organizations to provide education to at-risk students in grades 9-12. Many of our students are older, and struggle with social and emotional problems, behavioral issues, or mental health concerns. These students tend to be disenfranchised by the traditional education process and many have previously dropped out of school. Last year, 100% of our 10th grade students passed the MCAS test in English Language Arts and 90% passed the exam in mathematics. For ten years, LMACS has offered a highly-challenged, at-risk population a rigorous, supportive environment for an excellent high school education.

Although we continue to look for new ways to support our students, we have consistently found our small program offers the best diploma-granting option for high school students who have previously dropped out of school in the Lowell area. Additionally, we are asked on a regular basis to share our experiences with other schools, districts, and organizations who are struggling to meet the needs of this student group.

Champion Charter Public <http://www.brocktonpublicschools.com/schools/charter/index.html>

Champion Charter Public is a Horace Mann Charter school that offers a small setting where students can be known by at least one caring adult. We have created an environment where customized instruction and attention to students' needs are critical to their academic success. An Advisor Program which supports students' academic success was started this year in collaboration with Educators for Social Responsibility. The small class size allows for student-centered instruction and one-on-one attention that helps students to feel secure in their knowledge, and to progress towards becoming independent learners.

Champion Charter Public is a Diploma Plus school. Partnerships with Southeast Center for Healthy Communities, Fuller CRAFT Museum, Massasoit Community College, and Brockton Area Private Industry Council support the school.

Dr. Michael Nakkula, Harvard Graduate School of Education

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~projectif/index.html>

Dr. Michael Nakkula is a research associate at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the founder and director of Project IF (Inventing the Future), a university-school-community partnership model that places Harvard students in mentoring, tutoring, and counseling relationships with youth in public schools and subsidized housing communities. Through Project IF he studies the impact of these and related educational and youth development approaches for potential adoption in other settings. For his work on the intersection of urban education and human development, Dr. Nakkula was named the initial recipient of the HGSE's Marie and Max Kargman Assistant Professorship in Human Development and Urban Education Advancement (1998-2004). His latest book, "Understanding Youth: Adolescent Development for Educators" (Harvard Education Press, 2006), co-authored with Eric Toshalis, presents a case-based overview of adolescent development as it plays out and is facilitated within a host of school settings.

Project for School Innovation – www.psinnovation.org

Project for School Innovation (PSI) is a nonprofit organization that brings together teachers and principals from charter, pilot, and district public schools, in order to explore and disseminate successful practices and new ideas. Since its inception in 2000, PSI has sought to cultivate a network that facilitates professional growth through learning groups and peer coaching, and prepares teachers and principals to lead their colleagues in driving educational reform. PSI has worked with the schools of this panel since 2003 and has published two books based on their successes: *Supporting At-Risk Students* with LMACS, and *Building Supportive High Schools* based on the practices of all four schools.