

A. After-School Initiative Program Description

Created in 2000, ReadBoston's After-School Initiative has worked with over 70 after-school programs throughout the city of Boston to promote a love of reading, literature, and literacy. At its core, ReadBoston's After-School Initiative is designed to increase the exposure of children and youth to literacy, and build their engagement, interest and skills. To accomplish this, ReadBoston works closely with after-school directors and staff, coaching staff to lead engaging literacy activities. These activities include reading aloud with groups of students, poetry writing, singing, drama, independent reading, and book-related arts projects. ReadBoston also purchases and develops book collections and small libraries for after-school programs, creating inviting spaces for reading.

ReadBoston's After-School Initiative comes at a time when there is recognition of the value of focusing on literacy programming in after-school programs. To promote a culture of literacy, ReadBoston's After-School Initiative trains after-school program staff to sustain the literacy practices modeled by ReadBoston's coaches. In order to accomplish this, literacy coaches meet weekly, on-site, with program staff. During weekly coaching sessions, literacy coaches follow a yearlong curriculum based upon ReadBoston's years of working with community and school-based after-school programs. Weekly coaching sessions focus on specific goals and include handouts for coaching time. Topics include:

- How to lead an effective group read aloud; What kinds of questions engage children; How to vary your tone and voice effectively;
- How to choose quality books to read aloud for different ages of children;
- Incorporating multicultural books into reading time;
- Engaging students in independent reading;
- Incorporating music into reading time;
- Engaging poetry activities to do with children;
- Drama and movement games;
- Book related arts and crafts projects.

Another important focus of ReadBoston's work is developing the physical space of after-schools to make books, reading, and literacy a more central program focus. Literacy coaches accomplish this through the development of new or expanded program libraries or comfortable reading corners. Towards this goal, ReadBoston purchases hundreds of books as well as carpets or bookshelves. Attention is paid to decorating the reading spaces with children's artwork, writing, and literacy-rich materials. ReadBoston has observed the dramatic positive change in children's attitudes towards reading when spaces are transformed into cozy and inviting reading corners.

B. Key Goals of ReadBoston's After-School Initiative:

- After-School staff receive ongoing coaching by Literacy Experts from ReadBoston.
 - After-School staff lead quality reading activities that support school day efforts.
 - After-School directors make reading activities a consistent priority in program schedules.
 - Students read more frequently and develop a greater excitement for reading.
 - Students have access to new, quality books in their after school programs provided by ReadBoston.
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C. Major Accomplishments:

1. ReadBoston's After-School Initiative was recently part of a two year, in-depth evaluation completed by Dr. Beth Miller, of Miller-Midzik Research Associates and Wellesley College. The evaluation focused on several key questions. How do programs change as a result of their experience working with ReadBoston? How are staff members affected by their experiences with coaching? What changes occur for the children and youth participating? Results from the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive. Selected quotes and data from the final evaluation are below.
 - "The results of the evaluation indicate real change on the part of programs, staff and children. This is a tremendous achievement that should not be underestimated, especially in the challenging context of after-school programs."
 - "In terms of achieving its intended effects, the After-School Initiative is one of the most successful initiatives I've ever seen."
 - "The Initiative broke new ground in the effort to increase the educational context of after-school programs, currently a major concern for the field. Based on research suggesting literacy as a focus and coaching as a delivery mechanism, the Initiative demonstrates that, with appropriate support, after-school programs can make meaningful change in literacy practices over a one-year timeline."

- “85 percent of directors agreed or agreed strongly that in the future the structure of the after-school program will include more time for literacy.”
- “There is a whole feeling within the program that we enjoy literacy, and it is important that literacy is a large part of our program so that students find it fun. The program initiated silent reading for 15 minutes at the end of every day; they led a read-a-thon and are trying to integrate it into other subject areas (students type up their writing on the computer and work on editing).” -A site director
- “Surveys completed in the spring [of 2006] from program staff suggest that staff believe they gained a great deal through coaching. 86% of staff felt they had a better understanding of the role of literacy in their program.”

2. During the course of a typical year, ReadBoston works with approximately 700 students, with an average of 45 students per program. Since its inception ReadBoston’s After-School Initiative has worked with over 70 programs throughout Boston.

3. ReadBoston’s After-School Initiative has developed a unique yearlong “After-School Coaching Curriculum” that builds upon ReadBoston’s years of experience leading literacy professional development in after-school programs. Weekly lessons focus on specific reading goals and come with handouts for coaching time.

4. ReadBoston’s After-School Initiative was recently awarded the Coretta Scott King Book Donor Grant. This grant is awarded to reading programs that bring books into the lives of children in under-funded communities. ReadBoston was proud to be associated with this prestigious award.

4. After-School Initiative has secured ongoing funding from high profile donors including a three-year commitment from the John W. Henry Family Foundation, a seven-year commitment from Bank of America, funding from the Wallace Foundation through the Partners for Students Success Initiative, and the Cabot Family Charitable Trust.

5. ReadBoston has developed four literacy curriculum kits: ***Integrating the Creative Arts and Literacy: Drama, Poetry, Music and More, Under the Sea, My Community***, and ***Reading It Can Happen: A Read Aloud Kit***. Each literacy kit focuses on its respective theme and comes with picture books, poetry books, art materials and read aloud guides. The read aloud guides outline concrete strategies to make the reading time come alive with discussion questions and book-related projects. Every after-school that partners with ReadBoston selects at least one kit. Read aloud guides, books and materials from the kits are integrated into weekly coaching sessions.

D. Site List from 2006-2007

- Condon Elementary After School
- Dorchester Place School Age Program
- Kennedy After School Program
- Mildred Ave. STARS After School Program
- St. Katharine Drexel After School Program
- United South End Settlements After School Program
- YMCA On-Site School Age Child Care
- James J. Chittick After School Program
- Winthrop After School Program
- St. Columbkille After School Program
- Jackson/Mann After School Program
- Franklin Park After School
- Little House After School Program
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Site List 2007-2008

- Agassiz After-School Program
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- Emily A. Fifield Elementary School
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E. Application Time Line and Process:

All program sites that partner with ReadBoston are chosen through a competitive RFP process. To be selected programs must: (a) demonstrate a strong interest in promoting literacy programming; (b) demonstrate the staff capacity and interest to participate in a year-long, intensive professional development cycle;

and (c) be willing to problem-solve and modify or alter certain aspects of the after-school program (e.g. program schedule) to meet the demands of the coaching and make time for the literacy activities themselves. Sites seeking a second year of services may re-apply.

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ReadBoston seeks a diverse cohort of sites. Programs may be run by multi-service agencies at neighborhood sites, while others are operated by independent community-based organizations at schools, churches and higher education facilities.

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G. Partnerships

- **Black Ministerial Alliance**
 - Provides literacy workshops for 7 after-schools who are a part of the BMA.
- **Boston Public Schools**
 - Works closely with Boston Public Schools Literacy Coaches and BPS' Elementary Literacy Department as part of Boston's After-School Literacy Coaching Initiative.

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- **DELTAS (Department of Extended Learning Time/Boston Public Schools)**
 - As part of the Bridging the Gap series, led a three-part workshop series: Engaging Elementary Students in Literacy Learning.
 - “Reading Aloud with Students: A great way to promote reading success;”
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 - As part of the LEAH initiative, led literacy workshops for high school tutors who work in after-schools

- **Partners for Student Success (PSS)**
 - Receives funding from this public school initiative to bring ReadBoston’s After-School Initiative to after-schools partnered with elementary schools focused on improving students’ literacy skills and MCAS scores.

- ***Philips Brooks House Association at Harvard University***
 - Provide literacy training to after-school staff in the fall as well as extensive literacy training to summer counselors in June. Workshop topics include:
 - “Why Read Aloud?”
 - “Book Extension Activities and Games in After School”
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- **WestMOST Network**
 - Provide summer literacy trainings for staff:
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H. Key Documents/Handouts

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- ❑ **A Nation of Readers**
- ❑ **Tips for Choosing Books to Read Aloud**
- ❑ **Why It's Important to Pre-Read a Book?**
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- ❑ **Docs in Spanish**

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- Book related arts and crafts projects.

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 - After-School directors make reading activities a consistent priority in program schedules.
 - Students read more frequently and develop a greater excitement for reading.
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C. Major Accomplishments:

1. ReadBoston's After-School Initiative was recently part of a two year, in-depth evaluation completed by Dr. Beth Miller, of Miller-Midzik Research Associates and Wellesley College. The evaluation focused on several key questions. How do programs change as a result of their experience working with ReadBoston? How are staff members affected by their experiences with coaching? What changes occur for the children and youth participating? Results from the evaluation were overwhelmingly positive. Selected quotes and data from the final evaluation are below.
 - "The results of the evaluation indicate real change on the part of programs, staff and children. This is a tremendous achievement that should not be underestimated, especially in the challenging context of after-school programs."
 - "In terms of achieving its intended effects, the After-School Initiative is one of the most successful initiatives I've ever seen."
 - "The Initiative broke new ground in the effort to increase the educational context of after-school programs, currently a major concern for the field. Based on research suggesting literacy as a focus and coaching as a delivery mechanism, the Initiative demonstrates that, with appropriate support, after-school programs can make meaningful change in literacy practices over a one-year timeline."

- “85 percent of directors agreed or agreed strongly that in the future the structure of the after-school program will include more time for literacy.”
- “There is a whole feeling within the program that we enjoy literacy, and it is important that literacy is a large part of our program so that students find it fun. The program initiated silent reading for 15 minutes at the end of every day; they led a read-a-thon and are trying to integrate it into other subject areas (students type up their writing on the computer and work on editing).” -A site director
- “Surveys completed in the spring [of 2006] from program staff suggest that staff believe they gained a great deal through coaching. 86% of staff felt they had a better understanding of the role of literacy in their program.”

2. During the course of a typical year, ReadBoston works with approximately 700 students, with an average of 45 students per program. Since its inception ReadBoston’s After-School Initiative has worked with over 70 programs throughout Boston.

3. ReadBoston’s After-School Initiative has developed a unique yearlong “After-School Coaching Curriculum” that builds upon ReadBoston’s years of experience leading literacy professional development in after-school programs. Weekly lessons focus on specific reading goals and come with handouts for coaching time.

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