
20 Years of Building the Out-of-School Time Network: BOSTnet's Milestones

In 1987, a small group of low-and moderate-income parents recognized from firsthand experience that the need for quality child-care far outweighed the supply of accessible resources in their communities. They came together as Parents United for Child Care (PUCC) and began the work of mobilizing a constituency for change that, today, includes thousands of parents, providers and other community allies. Twenty years later, as BOSTnet (Build the Out-of-School Time Network), our organization continues its mission *to enhance the quality and increase the capacity of the out-of-school time network*. BOSTnet, strengthened and defined by these organizational milestones, envisions a future in which *all* families have a rich network of out-of-school time opportunities that challenge, reward, and inspire children and youth.

BOSTnet Highlights:

The *Guide to Boston's Before and After School Programs* has been printed for 17 years.

BOSTnet's Directors Roundtables have convened monthly for ten years.

BOSTnet has provided training forums for out-of-school time professionals for 14 years.

BOSTnet has led the out-of-school time field for 20 years in providing resources to programs, promoting promising practices and networking opportunities.

1988

- BOSTnet coordinated the citywide hearing on the need for more school-age programs. Boston Mayor Thomas Menino was in attendance among several hundred parents.

1989

- BOSTnet surveyed 5500 families in the Boston area, held a press conference and released the survey report and recommendations.
- Recommendations and Key Findings were released: 2/3 of parents said they would be very likely to send their child to an after-school program they liked and could afford and 68% of these families had incomes under \$25,000.
- BOSTnet initiated a petition drive to increase the number of extended kindergarten classrooms in the Boston Public Schools.

1990

- BOSTnet held "Developing School-Age Child Care Programs in Boston" - a technical assistance conference for program planning and start-up. **Today, BOSTnet continues to distribute a "Start Up Manual" for out-of-school time programs.**
- BOSTnet completed an Alternate Transportation Survey completed by all after school programs in Boston
- Ongoing organizing of parents to establish School Age Child Care Programs in schools and community based sites.

1991

- **Published the first "Guide to After School Programs Serving the Boston Public Schools" which included fifty after-school programs in Boston.**
- Published ten issues of Parent Power, the newsletter for Boston parents.
- Sponsored a statewide conference for starting up before and afterschool programs.
- Provided technical assistance and distributed six planning grants to create or expand school-age programs in Boston.
- Hosted the "Rally to Save Child Care" on the Statehouse steps.

1992

- Launched the Boston School Age Child Care Project (BSACCP), an initiative to increase the quality, supply, and affordability of programs for school-age children in Boston.
- Issued "A Report Card on Five Years of Alternate Transportation in the Boston Public Schools"
- Won 5 additional extended day Kindergarten classrooms in the BPS.

1993

- BSACCP Grants awarded to 19 before school, after school, and kindergarten surround care programs.
- BSACCP made Boston programs affordable for an additional 3,190 children from low- and moderate-income families through its Affordability Grants program.

1994

- Received funding from the Riley Foundation to work with the Dudley Square Neighborhood Initiative and Dudley residents to plan and fund school-age services that meet local needs.
- **Conducted survey of fifth and sixth grade BPS parents concerning their needs for after school programs for middle schoolers.**
- Updated "Guide" to include information on middle school and before school programs
- Won 30 additional extended day Kindergarten classrooms in the Boston Teachers Union/BPS contract.
- BOSTnet, then PUCC, was selected as the local lead organization for the national Wallace Reader's Digest Funds' MOST (Making the Most of Out-of-School Time) initiative.
- MOST leveraged more than \$2 million in resources for Boston's out-of-school time programs.
- Along with lead organizations in Chicago and Seattle, BOSTnet contributed to identifying key elements that influence out-of-school time services to determine the most effective practices to increase the supply of quality, affordable out-of-school time care.
- Involved 200 parents in early childhood forum, "Parents Taking the Lead: What We Want for Our 3, 4, and 5 Year Olds," with Mayor Thomas Menino, State Senator Dianne Wilkerson.
- Facilitated a town meeting with U.S. Senate and Gubernatorial candidates in a coalition with 65 organizations working on children's and family's issues. Nearly 300 constituents asked questions and heard how the candidates stand on family issues.

1995

- **Launched the Directors Roundtables, which provided networking opportunities more than six times per year. More than 40 out-of-school time directors participated in Roundtables.**
- BOSTnet's membership grew to include 1500 low and moderate income parents.
- The Parents Agenda Project initiated organizing efforts in five Boston neighborhoods.

1996

- *The Opening Doors to Schools and Learning Initiative* has brought together parents, schools, and community organizations to start 14 new out-of-school time programs, increasing the availability of OST programming by nearly 250 new slots each year.

1997

- BOSTnet conducted a citywide "SACC [School-Age Child Care] the Vote," voter registration drive to increase low- and moderate-income parent representation in child care and family policy decision-making.
- Planned and implemented the statewide **ACE Campaign** (Affordable Childcare for Everyone) to make the ACE Bill a priority for the State Legislature in 1998.
- **BOSTnet led local efforts, in collaboration with Boston 2:00 to 6:00, to recognize October as "Lights On Afterschool" month. "Lights On" is a national effort founded by the Afterschool Alliance.**
- Launched the Facilities Initiative, a collaboration with the Child Care Capital Investment Fund, has distributed over \$3 million in planning and capital grants to 60 programs that have submitted proposals for renovating their physical space to improve their environments and increase enrollment capacity.

1998

- BOSTnet launched satellite initiatives with a focus on improving out-of-school time programs and systems on the North Shore (Lynn) and in Brockton.
- The Opening Doors to Schools and Learning Initiative brought together parents, schools, and community organizations to start 14 new out-of-school time programs, increasing the availability of OST programming by nearly 250 new slots each year.
- **ACE Campaign victories included the passage of two key provisions of ACE legislation: 1) the expansion of the child and dependent care tax credit for working families 2) the requirement that the Department of Transitional Assistance notify verbally and in writing all welfare recipients of the child care services and subsidies to which they are entitled.**

1999

- **Awarded Inclusion Grants to support programs to provide services for children with disabilities.**
- **Provided three training forums serving more than 120 out-of-school time professionals.**
- Provided AmeriCorps members who were managed by BOSTnet and served in several after-school programs as additional staff.
- Launched the certification program APEX (Achieving Program Excellence) with Bunker Hill Community College. The program helped 15 workers earn salary increases and gain both responsibilities and promotions.

2000

- BOSTnet created the Emerging Leaders Fund and raised more than \$18,000 for leadership initiatives to honor 13 years of service from its founder Elaine Fersh.
- The Affordability Grants program helped to make Boston programs affordable for over 3,000 children from low- and moderate-income families.
- The ACE Campaign continued to be led by BOSTnet resulting in \$47 million added to the Income Eligible during the FY00 and FY01 budget cycles – increasing access to affordable child care for thousands of new families!

- The legislature passed the following ACE Bill provisions: doubling of the child care and dependent tax credit; and, requiring Department of Transitional Assistance to notify verbally and in writing all current and former TANF recipient about the child care programs to which they are guaranteed.

2001

- **On April 30th, 2001, Maryellen Coffey joined BOSTnet as the new Executive Director.**
- Published “Meeting the Challenge: Financing Out-of-School Time Programming in Boston and Massachusetts”.
- Launched the four-year Engaging Families Initiative with the United Way and the Wallace Foundation. Awarded grants and technical assistance to 10 programs serving black and Latino families.
- Adopted the Lead to Opportunities for Youth with Disabilities Initiative (LOYD) from the Disability Law Center. Awarded grants to 8 after-school programs to promote inclusion.
- Launched the four year Community After School Initiative (CASI). through the Boston After school for All Partnership. Provided grants and technical assistance to improve organizational development of small programs and build peer-learning networks.
- Hosted the first local Lights On! After school event for the After school Alliance national campaign.
- **The ACE Campaign’s most impressive accomplishments were the significant increases it yielded in the state budget for child care subsidies for low income families, which totaled more than \$83 million over three years.**

2002

- Awarded Community After School Scholarships (CASS) Grants to 20 community based after-school programs, to improve access and affordability for families.
- Led three “Ins and Outs of Kindergarten” workshops for parents of children transitioning from full day kindergarten to public schools.
- ***BOSTnet’s Guide to Before and After School Programs* included 293 programs and was made available on line in English and Spanish.**
- Hosted Lights On After School! for the second consecutive year. Provided the first After school Learning Showcase where more than 1,000 children representing 46 Boston OST programs gathered on the Boston Common to show off the learning and activities that make their programs unique.
- Bostnet planned and hosted with Mass School Age Coalition, the first School age Lobby Day. BOSTnet convened over 40 programs of staff, children and parents at the State House for a rally and legislative meetings.

2003

- BOSTnet planned and hosted the preparations for lobby day at the statehouse with Early Education for All. BOSTnet coordinated legislative meetings for parents and out-of-school time providers.
- Get On B.A.S.E-Building After School Excellence, BOSTnet’s Brockton project, collaborated with Mayor John Yunitz, Jr. and the Brockton Public Schools to produce the video, “Every Child A Champion”. The video highlights the positive impact programs have had on the lives of four children.
- B.A.S.E. hosted Brockton’s Lights On After School! annual breakfast including 100 community leaders.
- **BOSTnet became a Managing Partner of the Achieve Boston initiative, which launched a catalogue and website of professional development and training opportunities for out-of-school time professionals.**
- BOSTnet hosted the “Families Matter” Conference on Family Engagement and Involvement in Out-of-School Time for over 150 parents and providers of after-school programs. More than 12 workshops addressed strategies for building parent and provider skills to increase family involvement.

2004

- **BOSTnet officially changed its name from Parents United for Child Care to BOSTnet.**
- Held the first ever statewide conference on inclusion of children with disabilities into out-of-school time programs “All Means All”. Over 200 providers participated in nine workshops.
- Produced two maps of out-of-school time programs with Applied Geographics, using data from the annual Boston survey of the field.
- The Facilities Initiative distributed over a half-million dollars in grants and provided on-site technical assistance to 9 programs.
- **The Community After school Initiative selected a second cohort of 8 grantees to receive grants and technical assistance in organizational development.**
- Bostnet developed the Strong Directors, Skilled Staff initiative, selecting 12 programs to receive technical assistance and training in creating professional development action plans, to support workforce development and retention.

2005

- Provided the first Youth Program Resource Fair including free resources from over 70 vendors for the more than 300 after-school providers who attended.
- Held the second statewide conference on inclusion of older youth with disabilities into out-of-school time “All Means All”. More than 200 providers participated and U.S. Congressman Mike Capuano, Representative Kevin Fitzgerald and artist Jessica Vohs provided keynote addresses.
- Published *Focus on Families* with the Harvard Family Research Project.
- Published “Promoting Inclusion of Children and Youth with Disabilities: Tips and Tools for After School Professionals.”
- BOSTnet launched the new website.
- **BOSTnet launched The BUZZ, a bi-monthly e-newsletter providing over 900 out-of-school time professionals with information on BOSTnet events, trainings, publications. The BUZZ also gathers and leads providers to community resources.**
- BOSTnet was named the Regional Network leader for the Massachusetts After school Partnership.

2006

- BOSTnet provided 5,000 copies of the Guide to Boston’s Before and After School Programs, which included the first color map insert of 400 programs throughout the city.
- Provided the first forum on Promoting Positive Behavior in Out-of-School Time, sponsored by the Department for Early Education and Care.
- **BOSTnet launched the Middle School Network and training series.**
- Launched the Engaging Families Leadership Institute pilot, with 13 programs developing family engagement action plans using the Bostnet Engaging Families toolkit.
- BOSTnet established the Regional Policy Network of more than 50 providers and provided training in preparation for After school Advocacy Day and the “Can We Count On You?” Campaign.
- BOSTnet was appointed to the first legislative After School and Out-of-School Time Commission.
- **BOSTnet led the region in advocating for the After School and Out-of-School Time line item in the state budget. Funding was restored, which included \$1 million from the Department of Education for after-school programs with \$100,000 devoted to the inclusion of children with disabilities.**

Some of BOSTnet’s Current Activities...

BOSTnet, 11 Beacon Street, Suite 1000, Boston, MA 02108
www.bostnet.org

- BOSTnet continues to elevate its core strategies; Strengthening Youth Programs, promoting Access for All, and providing a picture of the Out-of-School Time Landscape.
- BOSTnet will provide a training series on the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities.
- BOSTnet will launch Net Benefits, an afterschool only portal where after-school programs can exchange information, match themselves with other programs who have similar needs to collaborate and cut costs; and, is a place for networks to form around common issues and develop strategies, to be facilitated by BOSTnet.
- BOSTnet will release State of the Field reports using data from our annual survey of the field on key topics such as Middle School, Inclusion of kids with Disabilities in Afterschool and Parent Engagement.