

THE HYAMS FOUNDATION, INC.
TEEN FUTURES
JUNE 2009

INTRODUCTION

Teen Futures is a new three-year initiative being sponsored by the Hyams Foundation to address the school dropout crisis in the cities of Boston and Chelsea. Today, in these cities, there are over 7,000 young people who have left school and who are unemployed. The goal of this initiative is to improve the success of these young people (ages 16-22) by increasing the number who gain their high school credential and commence a path towards higher education or a career focused training program. This goal will be accomplished through increasing the quality and the quantity of programs that combine education, skill development and employment. In focusing on the dropout crisis, the Foundation is also targeting an area of significant racial disparities, as the majority of students dropping out are African American and Latino. While the Foundation recognizes that many young people, including those with high school diplomas, continue to struggle, the Foundation has chosen to concentrate its resources on this extremely vulnerable group recognizing that they hold tremendous potential and that they **can** succeed if provided with the appropriate pathways and support. Currently, eight organizations have been selected to be a part of the *Teen Futures* initiative and meet monthly in a Learning Community.

THE HYAMS FOUNDATION

The mission of the Hyams Foundation (the Foundation) is to increase economic and social justice and power within low-income communities in Boston and Chelsea. The Foundation envisions these cities as places where success is not determined by race and where low-income communities of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds can afford to live, have opportunities to advance, and contribute to civic life and community well being.

In June of 2007, the Foundation adopted a five-year strategic plan focused on three areas: affordable housing, civic engagement and teen development. In the teen development area, the Foundation committed to the goal of increasing the long-term success of low-income teens of color and committed resources to developing a strategy aimed at supporting youth who had left school and were not working.

To develop its strategy, the Foundation engaged in a multi-year planning process that included: interviews and focus groups with community based organizations; literature reviews of national and local studies; learning sessions with experts in the field; and feedback sessions with key stakeholders around potential initiative components.

The Foundation's research yielded a wealth of knowledge regarding the target population and successful service strategies including:

- Teens who leave school do so for many reasons including: personal crises, negative interactions with teachers, being pushed out, experiencing a developmentally inappropriate curriculum or needing to work;
- Efforts designed to re-engage teens who have left school must involve multiple pathways that can meet and respond to a young person's individual needs while also providing multiple opportunities for re-engagement;

- Serving young people who have dropped out of school must be embedded within a youth development framework if they are to be prepared for long-term success;
- A limited number of programs currently take a holistic approach to re-engaging young people, especially older teens, who have dropped out of school and, while deeply committed in their efforts, would benefit from support to increase both their quality as well as their overall capacity to serve interested young people.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

The result of the Foundation’s research is *Teen Futures*, a dynamic three-year, \$3 million initiative based on the theory of change that supporting organizations that combine **education, skill development and opportunities for employment** offers the greatest potential for successfully preparing young people who have dropped out of school and are not employed for adulthood:

- **Education:** Options for young people to earn their high school credential including dual college enrollment options.
- **Skill development:** Opportunities to build a wide range of life skills, such as leadership and civic engagement
- **Employment:** Applying job related skills in work and/or volunteer settings.

Teen Futures is a multi-faceted initiative made up of the following **five components**:

1) Direct Grants

The Foundation has selected seven Boston and Chelsea groups based on their strong service record and their compelling program models to receive a three-year program implementation grant, upon the successful completion of a three-month planning period. Collectively, the following groups will serve 1,262 young people over the three-year initiative, representing approximately 18% of the current number of all dropouts:

- ***Boston Day and Evening Academy:***
The Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA), is a Horace Mann Charter school operating year round to serve 350 students who are over-age for grade level and who are either at risk for dropping out or have already dropped out of high school. The school provides competency based academic instruction where students progress towards a high school diploma by meeting a group of benchmarks. The school has a proven record of success with a graduation rate of almost 50%, comparable to that of the BPS rate, with a high-risk population. Skill development is infused throughout the curriculum as students develop presentation and leadership skills. Through *Teen Futures*, BDEA is creating a Post-Graduate Transition Year Program, a network for supporting students as they transition to the worlds of work, college or training programs by linking students to post-secondary opportunities, internships, jobs, financial planning and on-site mentors.
- ***Bridge Over Troubled Waters (with its partners STRIVE and Teen Empowerment)***
For over forty years, Bridge Over Troubled Waters (Bridge) has provided outreach services, health care, counseling, housing, education, job and career training to help homeless, disconnected and other high-risk young people leave the streets and obtain economic self-sufficiency. In its current Education, Vocation and Workforce Development Program, youth

have an opportunity to improve academic skills and attain their GED through a self-paced curriculum. Youth also work with a job and career counselor to identify potential career paths. Through *Teen Futures*, Bridge is partnering with Teen Empowerment (TE) and STRIVE to provide a selected group of young people with the opportunity, upon improving or attaining their GED scores, to first participate in a TE Civic Engagement Module and then move on to STRIVE for job training and placement.

- ***Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses, Inc.***

Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses, Inc. (FDNH) has been providing a variety of services to the Dorchester neighborhood since 1965 and advances the vision that education is a means to transforming Dorchester. Through *Teen Futures*, FDNH is expanding its *College Prep* program that enrolls teens in an alternative education program that allows them to achieve high school graduation standards and advance to, succeed in and graduate from college. Students develop social and life skills in one-on-one coaching and instruction from teachers and their case manager and have the opportunity to participate in paid internships in other FDNH programs.

- ***Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción***

Born out of the efforts of Puerto Rican activists in 1968, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA) is a community-building agency dedicated to increasing social and economic power through education, economic development, technology and the arts. Through *Teen Futures*, IBA is expanding its Pathway Technology Campus (PTC), a collaboration with Bunker Hill Community College in which young people complete their GED, enroll in college and/or take college courses, complete certificate programs and receive vocational job training. IBA will provide other services in conjunction with community partners involved with StreetSafe, a youth violence intervention initiative being sponsored by The Boston Foundation.

- ***LARE Training Center (with its partners CAPIC, Centro Latino de Chelsea and Career Source)***

LARE, a division of American Training Inc. founded in 1979, currently conducts a GED program and a variety of occupational skills training programs that include externships such as in medical billing and medical assisting. Through their participation with LARE, all students, many of whom are young parents, are placed into either a skills training program, college or a job. Through *Teen Futures*, LARE is creating a partnership with Community Action Programs Inter City, Inc. (CAPIC), Centro Latino de Chelsea and Career Source to expand the number of youth served as well as enhance current program offerings to include services such as employability skills workshops, vocational exploration, job placement, social services support, and life skills mentoring.

- ***Roca***

For twenty years, Roca has been working to build relationships with the young people that everyone else has left behind and to support their transformation to live out of harm's way and put them on a path of economic independence. Through *Teen Futures*, Roca is expanding its Educational and Pre-Vocational Program through which Roca combines intensive street outreach; a comprehensive menu of pre-vocational programming aligned with three levels of GED; prevocational, transitional and advanced transitional employment; and competency based programming embedded within their Transformational Relationship Model to re-engage youth.

- **YouthBuild Boston (with its partner YouthBuild Just-a-Start)**

YouthBuild Boston (YBB) and its partner Youth Build Just-A-Start (JAS) have over thirty years of experience providing an education, skill development and employment program connected to the building trades. Through *Teen Futures*, YBB and JAS are adding the position of Life Resource Advisor to provide new post-program follow up services as well as support for the most struggling incoming students (who might otherwise drop out of YouthBuild), thus making YouthBuild's successful and highly regarded model more accessible to a wider group of young people.

An eighth group, *Year Up*, received a planning grant to explore how its current program, a one-year, intensive training program that combines technical and professional skills, college credits, an educational stipend and corporate apprenticeships, can be accessible to students without a high school credential (a current pre-requisite). Dependent upon the results of their planning period, which ends in the fall of 2009, Year Up may be invited to apply

2) Learning Community and Communication

Representatives from the grantee organizations and their partners meet monthly in a Learning Community to share best practices, learn from experts in the field and explore potential avenues for collaboration. Learnings from this initiative will be shared periodically with the wider field through forums and symposiums. The groups have identified the following initial topics to explore: (1) outreach, engagement and retention strategies; (2) sharing successful non-traditional and innovative approaches; (3) exploring opportunities to collaborate; (4) improving program impact and evaluation; and (5) learning from the latest related research.

3) Evaluation

The Center for Youth and Communities, based at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University, is leading the evaluation of this initiative and has a strong track record in the field of youth development. Center staff is currently working with the groups to finalize an evaluation framework and gather baseline data.

4) Technical Assistance

As groups grow stronger in their work, organizational needs will arise. Grantees will be supported to design and carry out individual technical assistance plans.

5) Public Policy

Building upon the belief that practice can inform sound public policy, the Hyams Foundation intends to use the lessons learned from *Teen Futures* to both support current and inform future public policy related to the high school dropout issue and to engage young people in this work.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTNERSHIP

The Hyams Foundation has committed \$3 million over the next three years to *Teen Futures*. These resources will adequately support the direct grants and current evaluation plan. The Foundation is extremely interested in having others learn more about and consider joining in supporting components of *Teen Futures*. Those interested in learning more should contact Tammy Tai at the Hyams Foundation, (617) 426-5600, ext. 312 or by email at ttai@hyamsfoundation.org. We welcome your interest and participation in *Teen Futures*.