



BOSTON SCHOOLYARD INITIATIVE

Transforming schoolyards into dynamic centers for recreation, learning, and community life.

A Final Farewell from the Boston Schoolyard Funders Collaborative

Dear Friends:

After 18 years, 88 schoolyards, 32 outdoor classrooms, the creation of two nationally-recognized schoolyard education programs, and 850 teachers reached with professional development, the Boston Schoolyard Funders Collaborative (BSFC) is closing our doors. It has been an amazing run, with outstanding support and unique partnerships with Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools and you.

Together we completed a schoolyard project at every feasible BPS elementary and K-8 school in Boston. We brought nature and opportunities for increased physical activity to Boston's children. We improved teaching and learning at Boston Public Schools. We changed the face of Boston. In one of the longest-running and most successful public-private partnerships Boston has ever

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NEW BSI VIDEOS

Take a look at our new videos! Click [here](#) to see how BPS teachers are taking learning outdoors, and click [here](#) to view footage from our recent event "Learn, Play, Grow: A Celebration of the Boston Schoolyard Initiative."

ANNOUNCING THE OUTDOOR

known, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative made a big impact, for which you should be incredibly proud.

We have seen many of you this year at some of our events - the "Learn, Play, Grow" photo exhibit at City Hall, "A Celebration of the Boston Schoolyard Initiative" at the Higginson-Lewis, or our "Salute to Teachers" at the Boston Nature Center. In addition to these milestone events, we have been documenting key learnings from our work and sharing them with others so they can benefit from what we have learned. Members of the BSI team presented at the International School Grounds Alliance and American Society of Landscape Architects conferences, and a group of BPS teachers will present BSI's Science in the Schoolyard program at the upcoming National Science Teacher Association conference this spring. In addition, we will be leaving this documentation for you on our website: videos on the [BSI story](#) and the [BSI education program](#); an Outdoor Classroom User's Guide; Schoolyard and Outdoor Classroom Design Guides; and Introduction to Teaching Outdoors, Science in the Schoolyard and Outdoor Writers Workshop teaching resources. We are particularly excited to share with you our new online Science in the Schoolyard evaluation. The evaluation was done by Outlier Research, a project of the Center for Elementary Math and Science Education at the University of Chicago. The study found that taking students outdoors for science increased student interest in science, an important indicator of future success in science. You can find all of these resources on our website at www.schoolyards.org.

While we are closing our doors, we don't see this as the end of schoolyard work in Boston. As the BSFC winds down, others are stepping up to take on important roles. Boston Public Schools is set to fund the landscape management consultant who serves as the chief BPS outdoor classroom steward; a new Outdoor Classroom Leadership Committee, a support team for schools with outdoor classrooms, has emerged; Science in the Schoolyard professional development programs, led by BPS teacher leaders, are likely to continue; and we are hopeful that the next mayoral administration will step up to revitalize BSI-renovated schoolyards on a 12-15 year cycle.

It has been an honor to work with a talented BSI team and dedicated partners to create vibrant and engaging learning and play spaces for Boston's children. Together, Mayor Menino, the Boston Schoolyard Funders Collaborative, Boston Public Schools, and each of you have helped us lay a foundation that we hope Boston builds on for years to come.

Sincerely,
Myrna Johnson, Executive Director

CLASSROOM LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

BSI is thrilled to have been involved in the formation of a new advisory group dedicated to ensuring the continued use and stewardship of the school district's 32 outdoor classrooms. The Outdoor Classroom Leadership Committee will be staffed by the BPS Facilities green schools team, and includes involvement from many BSI partner organizations and volunteers. For more information contact Sebastian Downs at sdowns@bostonpublicschools.org

BSI IN THE NEWS

Our work to transform schoolyards across Boston has been featured in several recent news articles. Check out the stories about us in [The Atlantic](#), [Boston Magazine](#), and the [Boston Globe](#).

 Send to a Colleague

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Study: Boston Teachers Effectively Engaging Students in Outdoor Science Learning

New research points to the educational benefits of the Boston Schoolyard Initiative "Science in the Schoolyard" program.

A [new independent study](#) reports that nearly 70% of participating Boston Public Schools (BPS) teachers are using transformed schoolyards and outdoor classrooms to engage elementary school students in science education, and that BPS students with outdoor science lessons expressed increased interest in science, an important indicator of future success in science.

The report states, "Many teachers reported that when their students are able to touch, feel and interact with phenomena outside, they are not only more interested, but the learning is more authentic and meaningful to them."



The Boston Schoolyard Initiative commissioned the external study to evaluate the impact of Science in the Schoolyard (SSY), a professional development program to help teachers use the urban natural environment in their schoolyard to teach science lessons aligned to the district curriculum. [Watch a video of BPS teachers teaching science in the schoolyard.](#)

About 60% of the teachers surveyed had participated in at least one Science in the Schoolyard course. The research also included a survey of nearly 800 students in grades 3-5 at seven elementary schools, as well as student focus groups.

Where is the BSI Team Going?

While our doors officially closed 12/31/13, some of us will be available on a limited basis while we fully wind things down. In the next few months, if you have questions please contact Kim Comart (administrative; kcomart@comcast.net), Kristin Metz (education/SSY evaluation; kristinmetz@outlook.com); or Maureen White (stewardship/city transition;

maureenclairewhite@gmail.com); Neil McCarthy (outdoor classroom maintenance, both short term and longer term!)

For information on longer term outdoor classroom resources and contacts see our [Outdoor Classroom Users Guide](#).

Here is contact info for the rest of the BSI team:

Ross Miller: rossmiller@earthlink.net

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