



**GradNation**  
AMERICA'S PROMISE ALLIANCE®



## **Boston Day and Evening Academy Site Visit Background Materials**

### **About**

An alternative public charter high school located in Roxbury, Massachusetts, BDEA was created to serve any Boston Public School student who is overage for high school, who has had trouble with attendance issues, has been held back in 8th grade, who feels they are not getting the attention in class that they need to succeed, or who has dropped out but is eager to come back to school to earn their diploma. BDEA is a student-centered, [competency-based school](#), and uses neither Carnegie units (A, B, C, D, F) nor traditional grade levels (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th) to measure success or progress. We are a family of teachers, support staff, students, and education, non-profit and community partners, all focused on one thing: learning. Join us in our classrooms, our garden, and in our continued work for equity in education.

### **Mission**

Boston Day and Evening Academy re-engages off-track students in their education preparing them for high school graduation, post-secondary success and meaningful participation in their community.

### **Vision**

Boston Day and Evening Academy will continue to be an innovative leader in student-centered education for off-track learners.

### **School Culture and Climate**

BDEA students are like any other high school student in Boston— except that they haven't been given the chance, or the tools they need to be academically successful. As a result, all of our students—all of them— have attended previous schools where they have struggled academically, have been held back one or more times, or have felt lost, unsafe, or unengaged. Once here, we find that students flourish, in large part because they are listened to, respected for who they are and for the gifts they possess, and because our method of teaching and assessment actually makes sense. As one student said, *I work at my own pace. Teachers make sure I 'understand' rather than 'know'.* And another: *I get a lot of support from people that believe in me even when I doubt myself.* And another: *I get taught as an individual so I can get help with what I need.*

### **Habits of Mind**

The six Habits of Mind have been adopted from the Coalition of Essential Schools and incorporated into BDEA's culture, creating a safe and nurturing, student-centered community which supports student learning. Habits of Mind are practiced in classrooms, in the hallways, on school grounds, and in our community, by students and staff alike.

### *Reflection*

I understand what I believe and the reason for those beliefs. I recognize that there are different ways of expressing myself. I am able to effectively communicate my vision to others in different ways.

### *Evidence*

I am able to determine the difference between fact and opinion. I know where to find information and how to understand it.

### *Perspective*

I understand the presence of bias in various forms of communication. I recognize the effect of these biases and know how to discern truth.

### *Connection*

I understand why things are as they are, and I am able to understand how seemingly separate parts of society, the world, and life affect each other.

### *Possibility*

I recognize that few things are inevitable. I am able to understand and evaluate complex ideas and issues and understand that for any given situation there could be multiple outcomes.

### *Relevance*

I understand the importance of different events, issues, ideas, and systems in my own life. I am committed to using this awareness to make informed choices.

### **Habits of Success**

Habits of Success are the qualities that keep students engaged, focused, and involved in improving themselves and their community. These habits are built into the fabric of the school and are especially relevant to Career Readiness and Exploration courses—as part of both Post-graduate Planning and Capstone curriculum—where they are an integral part of the competency rubrics.

### *Vision*

I set goals and make a plan for achieving them. I have direction and am optimistic.

### *Perseverance*

When faced with an obstacle, I push through by asking for help and refocusing. I am able to acknowledge my successes.

### *Curiosity*

I am not afraid to ask questions. I ask them with the goal of learning something new, and not necessarily to validate my own position. I am open-minded and believe that learning is ongoing.

### *Social Intelligence*

I am able to communicate effectively and comfortably with friends, family, peers, colleagues, acquaintances, and people I have just met. I am professional and appropriate in my conversations and I understand the perspectives of others, even when they clash with my own beliefs and opinions.

### *Self-Regulation*

I am self-aware and can advocate for positions in which I believe strongly. I regularly assess my own social and emotional health and recognize when I may need to ask for help. I am comfortable with myself, can trust my own council, and have integrity.

## **Teaching and Learning**

It is the teaching and learning that takes place within the school building, on the school grounds, in collaboration with our partners, and in the community that defines a BDEA education. As a Horace Mann, or “in district” charter school, our teachers are all part of the collective bargaining unit and sign an Election to Work Agreement, which is reviewed annually and revised as necessary by a team of teachers in conjunction with the head of school. This agreement ensures that our teachers are paid equitably, and that they understand the additional demands of time and expertise required to work in a student-centered, competency-based model.

The work of teachers is supported by staff, all of whom are dedicated to making sure that each student is treated with integrity, respect, and with an expectation for success. BDEA is characterized by its ability to meet students “where they are” on their learning path when they enroll and to assess progress based on the demonstration of proficiency in benchmarks and competencies. We encourage and celebrate student voice and we are trauma sensitive as a school. We are student-centered, personalized, and provide multiple pathways to graduation. We have significant student support services, a post-graduate planning pathway to help students prepare for life after graduation, and an emerging career pathways program. We don’t give up on students. If they are absent, we go to their homes and find out why and do what we can to get them back to school. If they give birth, or are hospitalized or incarcerated, we hold their spot until they can return. We provide Enrichment classes that help students to develop important life skills and to help them in making choices about college and career.

BDEA continues to expand its programming and has received national recognition as an alternative school making a difference in the lives of the city’s most challenged students. The school welcomes visitors from all over the world, representing educational institutions, public school districts, universities, and the private sector, who are interested in learning more about how to do school differently.

## **What is competency-based education?**

The primary—and the crucial difference between a competency based system of assessment and the traditional grading model, is that students begin a learning pathway (traditionally referred to as middle school or high school) based on assessed skill level in each content area, and not on arbitrary placement in grades (based on age). In a CB system, students are placed in Humanities, Math, and Science classes that are right for them instead of in a “grade” where the Math content might be far above their capability at the time, and Humanities content might be so easy that the student becomes bored and unengaged. Then, as students make progress in their class, they demonstrate what they have learned when they feel ready to do so. Once they demonstrate all of the benchmarks related to that class, they are rated “competent” and move on to the next class in that subject area.

Each content area (i.e. Humanities, Math, Science, Technology) is divided into modules, which correspond to an academic semester, quarter, or trimester (see [ROADMAP](#)). After

being assessed for their knowledge in each content area, students are placed into the module which puts them at their “learning edge” i.e. challenging, but not overwhelming. Students progress from module to module in each content area, based on their ability to show what they have learned multiple times, independently, and using the correct vocabulary. If students finish a trimester without demonstrating competency in an area, they repeat that module—and that module only—while moving ahead in other content areas.

## COMPETENCY-BASED MODEL

- Students are placed in courses based on their demonstrated skill.
- Course modules are 11 weeks long.
- No one fails. Progression from course to course is based on demonstration of competence.

### **Graduation Requirements**

Although each student’s [ROADMAP](#) to graduation is personalized, graduation requirements apply to everyone. When you graduate from BDEA, you will receive a Boston Public Schools diploma, not a HiSET (GED). In order to meet Massachusetts graduation standards, all students must:

- achieve competence in all courses
- complete Capstone with a rating of “competent” or “highly competent”
- pass standardized tests (currently MCAS) in ELA, math and science
- complete post-graduate planning requirements and courses

The rate at which you progress through BDEA is entirely up to you!