Success in life starts long before kids graduate from school and seek jobs. Long-term economic opportunity and well-being depend on years of learning and education, which are, in turn, influenced by access to health and social services, family and community support, early childhood development and much more. The Boston Promise Initiative (BPI) formed in 2012 to connect these dots in the Roxbury and North Dorchester neighborhoods, nurturing and supporting children and families from cradle to career.

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**Skills and Capacity**
- Community organizing, partnership development, data analysis, group facilitation

**Issues**
- Education
- Housing Stability
- Health and Well-Being
- Economic Security

**Partners**
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhood Initiative, Boston Public Schools, Boston Plan for Excellence

**Tools**
- Surveys, resident-led committees, roundtables, communities of practice, community events

**Supporting Kids, from Cradle to Career**

Led by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), BPI formed the Dudley Village Campus—a core neighborhood with three population centers and more than 24,000 residents. Residents and community leaders now organize projects and outcomes in five key areas: investments in neighborhood change, school-ready children, successful students and schools, post-secondary completion and career readiness, and strong and healthy families.
Community Organizing Gives Residents the Power to Lead

The nonprofit DSNI is known for its powerful track record of resident-driven organizing around environmental justice, equity and land tenure. DSNI applied that successful model to the BPI, as well, giving residents the power and resources to create a neighborhood of opportunity.

**PARTNER**
BPI began with a federal partnership, bringing best practices from other cities that have launched Promise Neighborhood Initiatives as well as federal funding. In Boston, DSNI and its extensive network of community partners and leaders joined together to create an integrated “community campus.” Additional partners included community activists and organizers, schools and educators, health care and social service workers, housing and employment specialists, and more.

**ENGAGE**
BPI is led and organized directly by residents, and its many distinct programs engage residents in a variety of areas:

- Person-to-person surveys allow hundreds of residents to directly share their opinions and needs.
- A School Readiness Roundtable brings together a cross-sector group of early childhood partners to work together on school readiness.
- Youth and teens are engaged in mentoring, trained as youth organizers and serve on a youth committee that oversees BPI programs and opportunities for youth.

**ASSESS**
BPI uses a range of indicators (such as graduation rates or health data) to track progress on its five key outcomes. It also uses extensive surveys to directly understand residents’ experiences. True to its mission of supporting the neighborhood, BPI trained and paid residents to conduct professional surveys.

**ACT**
More than a dozen distinct projects are advancing BPI’s five objectives. These projects range from a small grant program giving community groups resources to solve persistent problems, to an organized effort to advocate for equitable school bus routes, to a robust campaign ensuring no child goes homeless in the Dudley Village Campus.
Impacts for Opportunity

Roxbury and North Dorchester are prime neighborhoods for fostering opportunity through investments in education and families. In the Dudley Village Campus, 51 percent of households have children younger than 5; investments in these children and their community can ensure a lifetime of success. DSNI’s 30-year track record of building leadership and organizing skills means that residents are already well positioned to work together, mobilize the community and advocate for opportunity.

Over the 5 years of the Boston Promise Initiative, DSNI and partners have developed a full K–12 pathway for residents in the Dudley Village Campus. Together, they have brought more support to students whose families are at risk of homelessness, increased the neighborhood’s high school graduation rate and created a unique data-sharing agreement with Boston Public Schools.

Education

One of the most important drivers of long-term success is the availability of high-quality educational opportunities for young people, from birth to age 24. BPI’s School Readiness Roundtable and Education Committee bring together a wide variety of stakeholders—including youth, families, early childhood providers, schools, hospitals, libraries and playgroups—to build that education pipeline. Members share solutions, coordinate services and connect residents with resources.

Housing Stability

Children without homes face extra hurdles to learning and thriving, so BPI launched the “No Child Goes Homeless” campaign. This partnership tackles homelessness in a holistic way, including conducting housing needs assessments, providing crisis support in schools, leveraging a community land trust to buy foreclosed properties and organizing eviction prevention efforts.

More information: BPI