There was so much for us to accomplish this year! We searched for and engaged our new Executive Director, Craig Martin. At the same time, under experienced interim ED Diana Lam, we moved with unbroken continuity, expanding and honing how we do our work. The Bridge Boston staff and community were abundantly present every day for our mission and our students, who are so full of joy, promise, and excellence.

What we do is too important to stand still.
One afternoon, a former student wandered into the building. It was Gabe, now a freshman at a high school with a fine reputation. Former students come back partly to reconnect—and partly to lord over their former classmates that they now get released at 2:00. Indeed, the 7th- and 8th-graders streamed downstairs from music class, and they paused to exchange hugs and high fives with him. It was a lovely moment.

Gabe rarely stops smiling, and he beamed as he let me know that his life in the new school was going well. “I am well-prepared,” he told me with great seriousness. He said there was more homework than at Bridge, more frequent assessments, and the teachers “…are nice.” He paused, looking for the right words. “It’s just…they don’t want to know me as a human being, like teachers did here.”

I was transfixed. How often students speak a truth I’ve been trying to articulate. Yes, the primary work of these early years is knowing children as human beings, embracing their humanity with everything we have.

So much of education has become transactional. People talk about what an education buys. They justify everything with data. It’s reduced to performance: the significance of what we do is boiled down to a happy video or “good” data. Now, I like the videos. I look long and hard at the data.

But the center of any school is its commitment to holding hearts and stretching them. I am dead clear that the teachers my own children learned the most from were the ones they felt most understood and loved. Love moves mountains. It really does.

At Bridge Boston, love moves so much of what we do. I look around and see it majestically illustrated every single day. I see it in a music program that physically, intellectually, artistically, and joyfully engages students, starting with the youngest ones. I see it when Teaching Fellows accept new responsibilities and expand their own experiences with our scholars—budding scientists, mathematicians, writers, and artists. I see it when we help our students be resilient and positive. I see it in held hands, warm hugs, and cheers. I see it in quiet conversations.

It’s in high-fives from Coach Kerven to start the day. It’s Ms. Aimee giving a rambunctious second-grade class its third re-set in five hours. It’s a washer/dryer on site for families to use. It’s a building full of staff and programs that work to eliminate the barriers to learning and open the world to our children.

This work is not for the faint of heart. I am here because I see a school that gets it. This is a calling. It takes passion and discipline and, yes, love. Love is courageously moving throughout our school community. Thank you for moving with us. I am delighted to be here and look forward to meeting you at Bridge!

Yes, the primary work of these early years is knowing children as human beings, embracing their humanity with everything we have. Thank you for helping us.

Executive Director Craig Martin and Principal Jen Daly
Craig Martin. He’s ready for us. We’re ready for him.

Our leadership team’s experience, drive, and focus meant we could keep moving forward with all the things Bridge Boston does—adding and adjusting academic strategies, classroom practices, services—without breaking stride. This in turn allowed us to give the search for our new Executive Director the time and attention it required.

Craig Martin comes to us from a five-year transformational stint at the Michael J. Perkins School in South Boston, where he led an incredible turnaround with big increases in student ELA and Math achievement, reduced suspension rates, and reduced chronic absenteeism. He developed innovative enrichment programming to raise children’s sights and expose them to the world outside school.

Craig is a nationally recognized and awarded educator—the 2018 Elementary Principal of the Year in Massachusetts. He’s committed to teaching the whole child, social emotional learning, engaging and working in partnership with parents and families, all of which make him such a good fit for Bridge Boston. He brings passion, experience, and an unquestionable devotion to the potential in every child. And he is ready to change everything to change the lives that will change the world.

“Children remember everything. They build their livelihoods, dreams, and future around the very moments we shape before them. ... So we must listen attentively, learn emphatically, and lean wholeheartedly into what will support them, guide them, and prepare them for that amazing future.”

Craig Martin
Executive Director, Ms. Hanley’s first grade circle time
Hard, joyful work doesn’t stop.
Each Bridge Boston student comes to us with unique interests, talents, and goals. We are motivated each day by our desire to provide the best and most appropriate academic and full-service support to each of them.

This year, we adopted Eureka, a new math curriculum, schoolwide to strengthen our students’ math foundations and spark more consistent achievement. The program encourages a powerful nimbleness with numbers. Along with it, teachers are using new materials and websites and we have a new math specialist position to support it all.

A daily intervention block for grades 5, 6, and 7 is now in place. Teachers work with materials specific to each student’s needs. A child gets intensive, focused support as soon as they show their grasp of material is tenuous. Using this approach, many of our students made exceptional progress in reading.

What else? A new and innovative test for dyslexia. Fantastic work from seventh graders who produced their own “This I Believe” series. Boston Lyric Opera’s Little Red Riding Hood right in school, as well as a program called “Africa Yoga” for our youngest grades. Students went to a literary discussion at Simmons College, a concert at the Strand, a tour of the New England Aquarium, and a mock trial at the Moakley Courthouse. They participated in a turtle rescue at the Franklin Park Zoo, and went to the Museum of Fine Arts to view Egyptian artifacts in preparation for their study of Greek gods and goddesses.

And of course, a cornerstone of our curriculum is daily music, from group instruction and private lessons as needed, to orchestra rehearsals. Talk about joyful hard work with myriad benefits, yielding multiple competencies. How wonderful to hear the sound of our students’ music in the halls.
New kitchen. New chef. Real food.
The first meal ever produced at Bridge Boston’s new kitchen was a batch of green eggs and ham sandwiches cooked by Chef (and new Director of Food Services) Guy Koppe. The eggs for the sandwiches were donated by Round The Bend Farm in South Dartmouth, MA—and they were green from spinach!

We have gone on to feed our students fresh, made-from-scratch, cooked-right-here, nutritious, and delicious food—a vital part of our commitment to full service. Chef Guy has spearheaded this revolution, providing breakfast and lunch, snacks, and celebratory dishes. (Teachers can buy food as well—a perk!) The school has relationships with two farms. We can visit them. Our students know where Bridge Boston food comes from, and are learning at a concrete level more of how the planet works.
Better together.
It’s no surprise that community is such a closely held value at Bridge. Our relationships with others affect so much. How we learn. If we learn. How we trust. How we earn trust. How we work. If we succeed.

One significant achievement? We developed a new classroom community: our SELF (Social Emotional Learning Focus) Program. It gives children with significant social/emotional needs a safe, structured, and predictable classroom along with substantial support. A certified special educator and full-time coach teach all academics. A senior behavioral coach directs a targeted social/emotional curriculum. A clinician provides direct counseling services, family support, and as-needed crisis support.

Students in the program take daily swimming lessons, go on long hikes, and garden, which all help build self control and coping strategies. As each student learns to meet challenges, we will re-integrate them into less structured classroom settings.

Our Director of Behavioral Health, Marsha Girault-Macias, leads our team of social workers and coaches and oversees the many threads of care we weave at Bridge. Here’s one: she piloted a program with our 3rd-graders, developing their innate (and extremely passionate) sense of justice early. The program has now expanded to include older students.

Better working together is also essential for teachers and staff. This year we did some good, hard work on diversity and inclusion. Teachers spent multiple professional development days auditing their curricula for racial, gender, and cultural bias, then looking for ways to develop culturally responsive teaching.

We also interviewed and surveyed staff for honest evaluations of our own environment. Is everyone heard? Is everyone seen? A small group of staff focused on this with YW Boston, who work to end racial and gender disparities and promote social cohesion. This staff group will produce ongoing professional development for all staff. It’s a work in progress. We want to forge new practices up and down the organization.

The Bridge Boston community goes far beyond our walls. Family engagement is vital (and high). We stay in close touch with a bi-weekly newsletter, family surveys, and parent-teacher community dinners including the back-to-school BBQ. We offer workshops like the “Blueprint for Financial Success: Financial literacy for families.” Parents create the end-of-year Carnival, host the Valentine’s Day dance, and volunteer on field trips and food drives.

Their children reach out, too. In honor of Martin Luther King, Jr., for MLK Day, every grade chose a service project. Students made cards for the elderly, fleece blankets and decorated socks for a local homeless shelter, and participated in the annual chop-a-thon for the Pine Street Inn.
Bridge Boston Charter School and Bridge Boston Foundation

Income Statement for year ended June 30, 2019

FY19 FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUES

Per Pupil Tuition 5,915,809
Private Funding 1,085,533
Public Grants 743,727
Pensions (in-kind) 749,526
Transportation (in-kind) 272,377
Miscellaneous 55,865
Total 8,822,837

EXPENSES

Personnel 6,206,473
Program 1,149,412
Organizational 439,464
Facilities 192,614
Depreciation 743,120
Total 8,731,083

Net Operating Income 91,754

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