



## ***Case Study: BWP Enables Boston to Train Urban Teens as Tomorrow's Innovators***

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***SUMMARY: BWP guided a Harvard University innovation curriculum into Boston's public high schools at a time when this project was preparing to go to Paris or Singapore. Now, at no cost to the City of Boston, the 100k ArtScience Innovation Prize is providing cutting-edge training to Boston's future workforce, and demonstrating how Boston acts as a living laboratory for truly transformative ideas.***

In his 2009 State of the City Address, Mayor Thomas M. Menino announced to a thousand people in Dorchester's Strand Theatre – and tens of thousands more in TV land – that this year would see a new innovation curriculum for urban teens enrolled in the city's public high schools.

"The students will learn how to develop and implement cutting-edge ideas. This is exactly what drives Boston's dynamic economy, and what will strengthen our position as a hub of innovation in the years ahead."

That announcement was literally enabled and engineered by Boston World Partnerships. We did the patient, behind-the-scenes work to put this partnership together. Our network let us know about the lead. We brought the opportunity to the attention of administration leaders. We brokered a series of conversations with the Mayor, key members of his cabinet, and hands-on administrators in the Boston Public Schools. We stayed with this challenge through the phrasing of the speech – and well beyond.

### *Background*

How often do we hear how urgent it is to prepare our young people for the particular challenges and opportunities of the global knowledge economy? Renowned biomedical engineer and Harvard professor David Edwards is a celebrated innovator in the field of inhaled medicines. In recent years, he has focused on understanding and replicating the process by which ideas are translated into actual innovations. He calls this process ArtScience, referring to the fusion of inductive and deductive thinking that it requires.

Some ten years ago, Professor Edwards and his wife Aurelie created and endowed the Cloud Foundation, a Boston-based non-profit, as an "art oasis" for urban teens. Since then, Cloud has shifted its programming to focus on cross-disciplinary inspiration and education.

Now, at the core of Cloud's mission is the *100K ArtScience Innovation Prize*. The competition combines art and science education with experiential learning to combat global issues such as disease and poverty. Based on a curriculum from the Idea Translation Lab at Harvard University, this innovative model encourages students to explore "new ideas at the intersection of art and science to create social change."

### *Challenge:*

Professor Edwards and his team at the Cloud Foundation were ready to pilot the *ArtScience Innovation Prize* and were exploring opportunities in Paris and Singapore. As a small, non-profit organization, they needed help to frame a partnership that would engage elected officials, school administrators, teachers and others as authentic stakeholders in making the competition a success.

### *Solution:*

Social entrepreneurs – like all driving leaders – need the right connections to help get an idea of the ground. BWP serves that need by providing access to key, relevant influencers and decision makers. In the case of the Cloud Foundation, we made targeted introductions to connect Cloud's point person Carrie



Fitzsimmons (a BWP Connector herself) with the highest authorities relative to the Boston Public Schools: Mayor Menino and Superintendent of Schools Dr. Carol Johnson. This led to the high-profile endorsement from Mayor Menino, which in turn raised awareness and enhanced the foundation's ability to access key partners in the school department, the media, and the philanthropic community.

We also put Ms. Fitzsimmons into conversations with former School Superintendent Michael Contompanis, and Martha Pierce, the Mayor's liaison to the school department. Finally, we made a meeting for her with Mike Sullivan, the deeply dedicated teacher who runs the science department at the O'Bryant School for Math & Science.

In short, BWP enabled every touchpoint in the conversation about whether the ArtScience competition was good for Boston's public school students, and how it would work. In all of these cases, BWP framed the meetings around the principle of mutual benefit. In the words of Ms. Fitzsimmons:

"BWP was critically instrumental in helping us reach the right people to build up the ArtScience Prize. They opened so many doors and they made it so easy."

Having secured the backing of school officials, BWP lobbied to have the competition announced in Mayor Menino's State of the City Address, giving the news a major platform at the start of what would be an enormous push for funding and buy-in from a variety of stakeholders. Thereafter, BWP kept in contact with Ms. Fitzsimmons as her team moved forward. When they needed an event space that could accommodate 300 students for the public launch of the competition, BWP stepped in again, connecting Ms. Fitzsimmons with the key staff at the Boston Ballet, based on their shared interest in education, the arts, and innovation. "What was a bit of a crisis for us turned out to be very fortuitous," Ms. Fitzsimmons said. "The Boston Ballet's space was so far beyond what we had previously planned." In September, 300 students filled the Ballet's largest rehearsal studio, and the competition was off and running!

This case study is a representative example of how BWP uses its network of Boston-connected influencers to frame mutually beneficial conversations that offer positive economic outcomes for Greater Boston, and how we then help the parties to that prospective deal navigate the necessary details.

#### Outcomes:

- Mayor Thomas M. Menino agreed to champion of the ArtScience Prize, announcing it in his 2009 State of the City Address, televised throughout southern New England on WCVB-TV.
- The *ArtScience Prize* is in its pilot year and working in close conjunction with the Boston Public Schools. About 300 students applied to be in the competition, and 90 are now enrolled. There is no cost to the students or to the Boston Public Schools. The winning team will share a cash prize and will travel to Paris to further explore their innovations in collaboration with French teens.
- 23% of participants in the *ArtScience Prize* come from the O'Bryant School of Math & Science – the most of any high school – thanks to Cloud's close partnership with Mike Sullivan.
- The ArtScience Labs are planning on replicating the *ArtScience Prize* nationally and internationally based on its success in Boston. The first confirmed replication site is Oklahoma City, OK. Similar conversations are underway with several other international cities.