



*“Beacon was one of the best choices I ever made. The teachers expected so much, my peers were so smart and they all wanted what I wanted: high school, college and a career. I am not surprised that 100% of my Beacon classmates are headed to college. I still talk to a few of them every day.”*

*-Briana Cardwell, Beacon '09, New Hampton School '13, Bowdoin College '17*

Beacon Academy identifies, confronts and bridges the achievement gap between Boston’s low-income urban students and their more affluent peers. Beacon Academy's mission is to change the trajectory of our students’ lives through access to excellent educational opportunities. We provide an extra 14 months of full-time school for promising and motivated urban students who have completed the 8th grade, but who are under-prepared for challenging independent schools. Our school proves that all children, regardless of the ZIP code in which they are born, can be academic and social leaders if provided with aspirational opportunities, resources and respect.

Founded in 2005, Beacon Academy is the only school of its kind in the country. We are dramatically different than other programs with similar goals because we are the only institution that offers a full-time extra year of school. Further, our results prove that our innovative model works: Beacon breaks the cycle of generational poverty characteristic of too much of urban Boston. Beacon has three essential components: our 14-month school, our Alumni Program and our Strategic Outreach to share best practices in educating urban youth. Beacon directly aligns with the Learning by Giving Foundation because we are committed to reducing the economic opportunity divide in Boston.

### **Goals, Plans and Successes:**

At Beacon Academy our goals are clear. First, we work with 18-24 highly motivated but under-educated students for 14 months at Beacon in preparation for the rigors of independent school. Second, we place 100% of our students in schools where they will perform to their academic, social and leadership potential with all necessary financial aid. We seek high school and college graduation for all of our students. Lastly, we seek every opportunity to share our learning about how best to close the achievement gap and serve low-income students of color.

We are committed to limiting Beacon’s 14-month school to 20-24 students in order to offer each student deep and lasting life-altering change. During the year, students and graduates face the ongoing and unpredictable ramifications of poverty, such as homelessness, domestic abuse or family events that disrupt opportunities to study. Beacon “stays small” so that we can intervene immediately, provide safety when necessary and strategize with students about how to keep their educational goals on track. We “grow” through our Alumni Program, which increases by 20 students a year.

### **Funding:**

The total budget for the three arms of our school, including in-kind rent, is \$1,392,325. 61% of this total budget is dedicated to our full-time 14-Month School, 25% is for our Alumni Program and the remaining 14% is for our Strategic Outreach to share best practices of educating urban youth.

Tuition for the school year is \$25,000 per student. (Our Summer Program is an additional \$5,000 per student.) A parent or relative is required to contribute a small portion of the cost of tuition based on

income. Since our students' families live at or below the poverty line, they are able to contribute about \$350 for the year of school. Beacon raises the remaining tuition as part of our overall fundraising efforts. Students are provided with computers, graphing calculators, textbooks, novels and other necessities, which they take with them to high school. Within the budget of \$25,000, students are provided with the intensive academic curriculum described below; up to three meals a day, which are typically at Simmons College; field trips; cultural experiences such as theatre; our sports program; and the necessary transportation expenses to access all of these opportunities. 13% of our budget is raised from family or small community foundations, 10% is from corporate foundations, 1% is from endowment drawdown, 1-2% from tuition and the remainder is contributed directly from individuals, many of whom are multi-year donors.

### **Exceptional Leadership:**

Beacon Academy was founded by Cindy Laba, Chief Program Officer, and Marsha Feinberg, Chief Executive Officer. Beacon's Head of School, Mervan Osborne, has also worked at Beacon since we first opened our doors. Mervan, Marsha and Cindy are uniquely suited to lead Beacon Academy because of their combined past experiences in social work, education and non-profit leadership. Cindy had the idea for an extra year of school between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades after her work at a Boston charter high school. She was deeply disappointed by what she saw, especially compared to the education that the children of her more affluent friends were receiving in private schools. Cindy simultaneously realized that the children she knew who were fortunate enough to attend some of the areas most elite independent schools were not being exposed to a deep enough experience of racial and economic diversity. She observed that many stereotypes were being perpetuated because of the huge gap in the quality of education between urban public schools and well-resourced independent and suburban schools.

A recent study shows that students in the bottom economic quartile are four grades levels behind those children in the top economic quartile. To address this gap, Beacon has developed not only a rigorous curriculum but also an organizational structure that surrounds students with highly experienced and engaged adults. Our four full-time teachers all have advanced degrees and collectively 45+ years of teaching experience. Beacon also depends on the efforts of our 24 highly engaged trustees and 100+ volunteers who tutor and mentor students. Our small staff consists of two men and eight women. Our team's diversity includes an African American man (Head of School), an Asian American woman (English teacher) and the remainder are white men and women (including our two founders, Marsha and Cindy).

### **Section 2:**

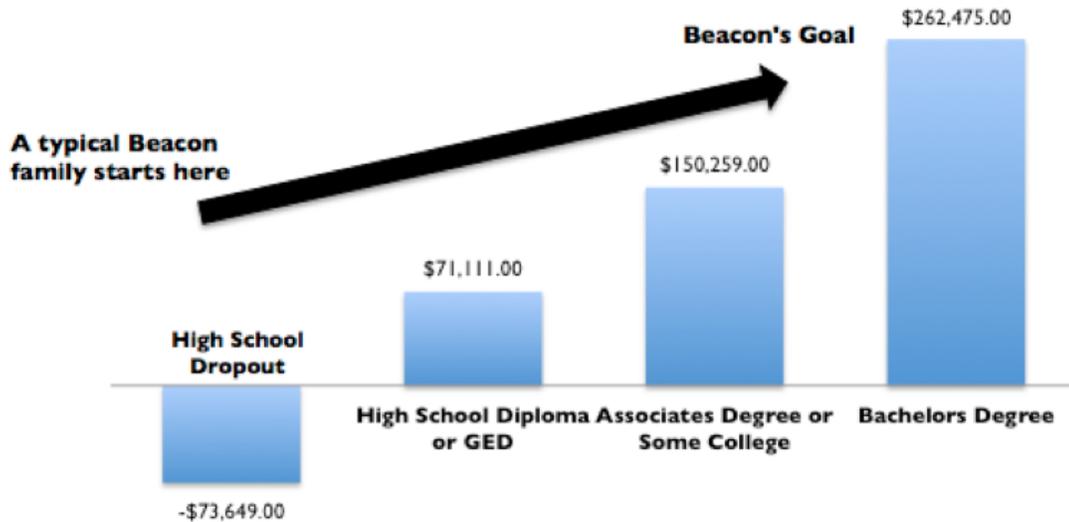
#### **Our Program – Changing the Trajectories of our Student's Lives:**

Should the Learning by Giving Foundation support our school, your Board should feel confident that Beacon has the tools, resources and experience to help students and graduates succeed throughout their educational journeys and embark on careers to break the economic opportunity divide. In the past year, we placed all members of the class of 2015 in excellent private schools, raised our high school graduation rate to 100%, bolstered our college advising program, congratulated members of our first two classes as they achieved the life-altering goal of college graduation, completed an intense Strategic Planning Process, started an endowment and won two awards for innovation and entrepreneurship. A \$10,000 grant would be used for general operating purposes and help us launch our students towards futures previously unimaginable.

**Economic Mobility:**

As we enter our tenth year, we have unsurpassed success in supporting our students as they pursue high school and college diplomas. Higher education directly correlates to economic mobility as Northeastern University’s Center for Labor Market Studies indicates that high school drop-outs “cost” society on average \$73,649 while someone with a bachelor’s degree contributes, on average, \$262, 475 in taxes.

**Estimated Lifetime Net State and Local Tax Contributions by Educational Attainment  
Taxpayers Aged 18-64**



**Statistics from Northeastern University**

Our students arrive at Beacon Academy dramatically under-educated and under-prepared. Many have never written formal essays and are missing key math skills and other basic knowledge. This lack of quality preparation perpetuates the cycle of poverty and hopelessness that characterizes too much of urban Boston and surrounding areas. Northeastern University’s report, “Getting to the Finish Line” states that only 7.5% of students of color from non-exam public schools will complete a two- or four-year degree within seven years of entering college. Further, the few who do move on to higher education are not adequately prepared and are placed in remedial college classes. In contrast, 80% of Beacon’s Founding Class graduated from college within six years of starting. 60% graduated within four. Beacon works to mitigate the crisis in education among economically disadvantaged youths through our intense academic program and our continued investment in our graduates.

**Academic Work:**

Over our intensive 14 months, our school days vary but generally include 8+ hours of instruction and independent study with additional daily homework of at least two-three hours. This schedule begins in July with five weeks of summer school and continues through the academic year. Experienced teachers, small classes, and an engaging, rigorous curriculum are the “not-so-secret” ingredients for motivating our students and for preparing them for success in highly competitive high schools, colleges and careers.

- **Core English Texts:** To Kill a Mockingbird, The Bluest Eye, Old Man and the Sea, Of Mice and Men, Romeo and Juliet, The Chosen and The Catcher in the Rye. Students

submit written assignments several times a week, master tough grammatical concepts and dramatically increase functional vocabularies.

- **Core Math Program:** The explicit goal of the course is to develop mastery of arithmetic concepts, including number sense, fractions, operations, etc., and of algebraic concepts including polynomial, arithmetic and quadratic equations. Students use textbooks, handouts, graphing calculators and the Internet to accomplish these goals.
- **Facing History and Ourselves:** This course examines the uses and abuses of power through a historical look at the Civil Rights Movement, the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust. Students learn to be “upstanders” as they understand historical tragedies. Reading, writing, public speaking and research are key components of this course.

*Note: In addition to the intensive math, English and Facing History and Ourselves courses, students take classes in Research and Advocacy, Visual Thinking Strategies, and semester courses in science and Latin. Students also take SSAT preparation and their scores reflect an average of 22 points growth, 110% growth over baseline.*

### **Co-Curricular Program and Secondary School Advising:**

Our students also participate in community service learning, sports education as well as activities designed to increase their cultural fluency and their ease in social situations. Our students spend their second summer engaged in individually designed opportunities including academic work, enrichment opportunities, job placement and leadership development. An outstanding faculty and a dedicated cadre of volunteer tutors and mentors guide students' development and supervise their application process to secondary schools.

### **The Need for our Alumni Program:**

The Beacon Academy Alumni Program guarantees support, guidance and a community of achievement through high school, college and beyond. This success is predicated on our keen understanding of what it takes to keep our students in school. We know that our students, much like their peers from the same ZIP codes, face ongoing obstacles including a lack of rigorous academic preparation, campus isolation and the need for financial aid. Beacon addresses these issues head on: our school is demanding, and students gain more than the equivalent of two years of academic skills in one Beacon year. We place students in excellent high schools focused on college readiness with all necessary financial aid, and we stay with our students to combat campus isolation and other hurdles that too often drive away low-income students from college completion.

### **Alumni Program Components:**

- **Scheduled Alumni Events:** We host many annual events such as a high school and college seminar, a homecoming dance, a holiday party, two sets of care packages, and a graduation luncheon, which create an ongoing alumni community.
- **College Support:** We have actively developed our college support component of our Alumni Program. Components include: our own guide book designed to help students who are not familiar with the college application process, SAT prep, essay writing workshops, interview preparation, advising, college visits and access to gap funding. Attendance has grown tremendously in these workshops and every high school senior worked with us this year in his/her quest for college opportunities.

- **Emergency Fund:** Graduates may apply to Beacon for ancillary items not covered by tuition to help them be full participants in high school and college such as eyeglasses, textbooks, field trip expenses and athletic equipment.
- **Ongoing Relationships:** Our small size and intense relationships endure. Students articulate that they turn to Beacon friends first when struggling with issues of financial aid, domestic abuse or the college application process.

### **Alumni Successes:**

We are measured by the success of our 185 graduates who are excelling in independent high schools and colleges around the country: We carefully track graduates in high school and college. We look for quantitative measures such as our high school graduation rate (now 100%) and also qualitative measures like the willingness of our graduates to assume leadership positions (80%). With data, surveys and news from visits, we continually assess and improve our school, Alumni Program and outreach. This year, we have provided dramatically increased college application preparation for all sophomores, juniors and seniors.

### **Additional Statistics:**

- Collectively, our graduates have earned over \$38 million in scholarships for high schools and colleges.
- College students have earned additional “gap funding awards” from the Bill Belichik Foundation, the Dawnn of Light Scholarship and the Gammons Scholarship.
- Of our now 111 graduates from our first six classes, 100% have graduated from high school; and, of these graduates, 90% are enrolled in college.
- Among students in our Founding Class, 80% (12 out of 15 students) have graduated from 4-year colleges. Among the three remaining students, two are enrolled in community college and one is not pursuing college.
- Of our most recent graduates, the Beacon Academy Class of 2015, 100% (20 students) enrolled in private schools with all necessary financial aid. Schools include: BB&N, Concord Academy, Dana Hall School, Kents Hill School, Noble and Greenough School among others.
- Our graduates attend such colleges as American University, Bowdoin College, Colorado College, Connecticut College, George Washington University, Merrimack College, New York University, Northeastern University, Robert Morris University, Simmons College, Tufts University, The University of Massachusetts among others.
- 95% of our students stay connected to Beacon and to each other.

### **Beacon’s Impact and Strategic Outreach:**

While Beacon deeply transforms the lives of our current students and our 185 alumni, our impact extends well beyond these students and their families. We have a consulting program to share best practices of educating urban students, host leadership meetings for heads of schools, sponsor an annual symposium for over 200 local leaders and champions about race, class, and schools, and we engage over 100 volunteers and tutors in our social justice work. Most importantly, our students impact their next schools by consistently rising to leadership positions, defying stereotypes and improving the qualities of their school communities.

