



Creating Pathways to Success at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell



Studies show that a key predictor of consistent employment in adulthood is early exposure to the world of work in the teen years. ⁽¹⁾

Without the support of our community, the youth we serve are at-risk of becoming part of the nearly 5 million young people -- or about 1 in 9 -- between the ages of 16 and 24 that are "disconnected" -- neither working nor in school. ⁽²⁾

The Pathways Initiative at the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Lowell will ensure that the most vulnerable teens in Lowell have equal opportunities to succeed, break the cycle of poverty in their families, and have bright futures. Although 20% of Lowell residents live in poverty, 87% of the teens we serve live in poverty.

Research has shown that teens living in poverty face many barriers to successful futures:

- Poor families are less likely to have access to informational resources about college. ⁽³⁾
- Adolescents from lower socioeconomic classes generally have less career-related self-efficacy when it came to vocational aspirations. ⁽⁴⁾
- Only 13% of children who experience poverty are likely to graduate from college. ⁽⁵⁾
- Teens and young adults (16-24) who are neither working nor in school – often

referred to as “disconnected youth ” or “opportunity youth” – are at increased risk for poverty, criminal behavior, substance abuse, and incarceration. ⁽⁶⁾

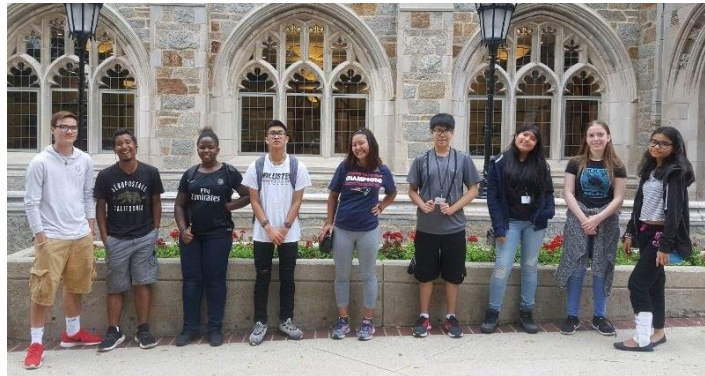
- “Disconnected youth” are disproportionately people of color, especially Hispanic or Latino or African- American. ⁽⁷⁾ At our Boys & Girls Club, 27% of our teen members identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 17% identify as African-American. Only 6% identify as White.

In addition to poverty, the teens we serve often face other challenges:

- According to the Lowell Police Department, there are 23 gangs in Lowell with more than 1,000 gang members and associates in Lowell. .
- Many teens live with domestic violence and/or substance abuse in their homes.
- Many of the teens we serve experience mental health issues stemming from poverty and other stressors in their lives.

However, research also shows that:

- Mentoring increases teens’ self-efficacy and improves their outlook towards their future, increasing their potential for successful employment. ⁽⁸⁾
- Workforce development programs increase teens’ abilities to explore different careers, understand the connection between preparation and success, and gain practical work experience. ⁽⁹⁾



Club teens on a recent visit to Boston College

Therefore, our approach is:

- Provide teens with high-quality, one-on-one mentoring, including career and college readiness case management.
- Engage teens in workforce development programming consisting of: 1) career exploration and matching; 2) skills development; and 3) work-based learning experiences.
- Provide teens access to our licensed certified social worker (LCSW) to help with the issues in their lives that prevent them from reaching their goals.



A teen Club member received homework help after school

What makes our strategy unique is our ability to provide teens with these many services and programs under one roof.

If you would like to learn more about the Pathways Initiative, or take a tour of our new Teen Center and Career & College Readiness Center, contact Angel at abrunelle@lbgc.org.



Teens tour a restaurant kitchen to learn about the hospitality industry

- (1) JP Morgan Chase & Co. "Building Skills Through Summer Jobs: Lessons from the Field." (2015).
- (2) Measure of America, a project of the Social Science Research Council. (2018).
- (3) Brown, M. G., Wohn, D. Y., & Ellison, N. "Without a map: College access and the online practices of youth from low-income communities." *Computers & Education*, 92, 104-116 (2016)
- (4) Ali, S. R., McWhirter, E. H., & Chronister, K. M. "Self-efficacy and vocational outcome expectations for adolescents of lower socioeconomic status: A pilot study. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 13(40), 40-58 (2005)
- (5) Ratcliffe, C., "Child Poverty and Adult Success." The Urban Institute. (2015)
- (6) Belfield, C. R., et al. "The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth." Civic Enterprises. (2012)
- (7) Ross, M., Prchal Svajlenka, N. "Employment and disconnection among teens and young adults: The role of place, race, and education." The Brookings Institute. (2016).
- (8) Anton, P. and Temple, J. "Social Return on Investment in Youth Mentoring Programs" (2007)
- (9) U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, Career Focused Mentoring for Youth.

