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 [The Media and Technology Charter High School](#)

**Laura Wernick**

The Media and Technology Charter High School (known as MATCH) in Boston, MA had the highest overall pass rate of any comparable Boston high school: 89 percent of the class of 2005 passed both the English and math MCAS. That's not only 37 points higher than the Boston district average; it's 14 points better than the statewide average. That accomplishment is even more remarkable when one considers that 73 percent of MATCH pupils come from households modest enough to qualify for free or reduced school lunch.



One of the keys to MATCH students' success is a one-on-one tutoring program. Every 9th and 10th grade student receives 200 hours of adult tutoring over the course of the year in 4 hour blocks. In the MATCH program, each student is assigned to one tutor for the semester so that a mentoring relationship can evolve beyond academic support into a relationship that provides stability, friendship and encouragement to the child. The results have been carefully documented and the impact is clear: consistent, individualized, high-duration tutoring makes a significant difference in the academic performance of at-risk students.



In a unique school setting, MATCH is housed in a renovated former auto dealership. This 184-student high school in downtown Boston is focused on assuring that its students are prepared to succeed in college. The facilities don't contain a kitchen or cafeteria: the students have lunch at nearby eateries. The flag pole on the roof of the building is really a rent-generating cell tower. The principal personally greets every student at the door each

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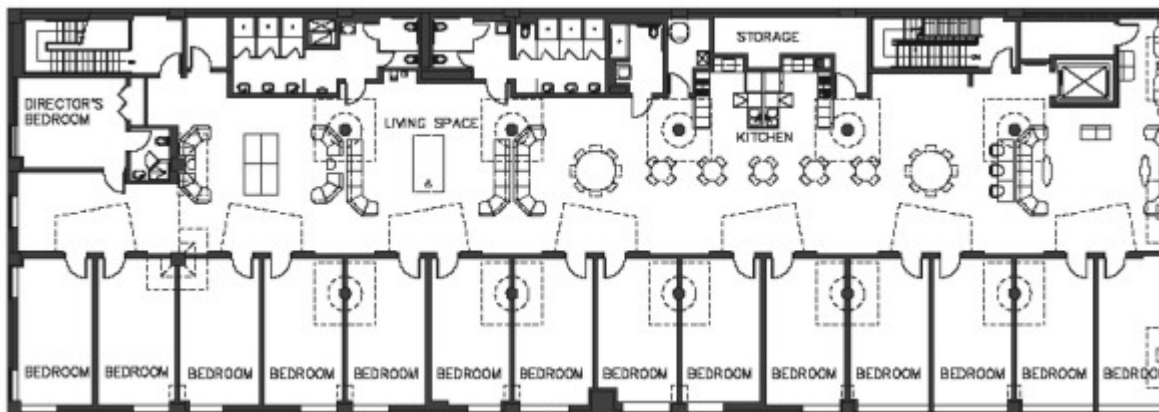
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morning and says goodbye to each one every afternoon. The newest renovation houses a dormitory for the high school students' tutors on the third floor of the school.

Located near many area colleges, MATCH has previously hired college students as tutors who were paid in-part by MATCH and also received work-study payment through their colleges. However, the desire for more tutors over longer periods of the day and more consistently over the school year posed an interesting problem for the school. How could MATCH really get these mentors to connect with the students and stay connected with them over time?

The concept of an extended program for college students or recent graduate students who were willing to dedicate 9 months of their lives to these urban youths began to evolve. MATCH operates out of a recently renovated, 3-story building. Only the lower two floors of the 3-story building house the school. Originally it was hoped that the 3rd floor could be rented out to generate income, but it remained empty. An idea began to germinate. Could the 3rd floor be turned into a dormitory for recently graduated college students? These recent grads could live above the school, provide significant tutoring time every day, gain valuable real world experience and make an impact on a high school student.

The idea was met with enthusiasm. Funds were raised and the renovation was initiated. The nature of the 3rd floor was a major determinant in the ultimate layout of the space. With a narrow shoebox shape and with windows on three sides certain decisions were predetermined. The 14 dorm rooms themselves are located along the long side of the building with the west side facing glass. The program supervisor's room is located at one end and the rest of the space is left open for recreation, relaxation and communal space.



Match Floor Plan



The living is somewhat spartan and the amenities are few. Three people share a single, 250 square foot room. In the communal area there are two adjacent kitch

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toilet rooms, and a storage area. Plenty of wide open space for recreation includes a ping pong table, lounge chairs and a television area. With a bright yellow color scheme, the 3rd floor has already been fondly dubbed the “Yellow Submarine”.

The tutors are college grads from top universities, aged 22 to 26, who work 50+ hours per week within the school. They get a small living stipend and free housing. One third of the mentors plan to go to med school/law school next year; a third plan to become teachers;; and a third plan to work in the field of education/nonprofit leadership. Is this a one-of-a-kind, unique situation? So far, it is. But it may not be for long. The mentors are gaining real world experience, and they are seeing the impact that they are having on the students' life. The high school students are thriving with the consistent one-on-one relationships. This is certainly a model that could be replicated.

Laura Wernick, AIA, REFP is the Vice President of [HMFH Architects](#), Inc. in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Ms. Wernick's architectural practice focuses on the design of learning environments. She is active in the national dialogue on architecture and education and speaks at educational conferences on topics such as the history of urban school design, technology in education, and sustainable design practices in architecture.



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