

Massachusetts Honors ATWIN Education for Advancing Innovation in Education

Founded by Harvard educators, ATWIN Education connects youth with experts to pursue impactful, real-world questions beyond the classroom.

CAMBRIDGE, MA, UNITED STATES, August 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As artificial intelligence reshapes industries and the future of work, educators around the world are asking a fundamental question: How do we prepare young people not only for the careers of tomorrow, but for a lifetime of curiosity, purpose and contribution?

This summer, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts honored ATWIN Education with an Official Citation recognizing its commitment to advancing innovative approaches to education and expanding real-world learning opportunities for young people.

For ATWIN Education, however, the recognition represents far more than an organizational milestone.

It affirms a belief that has guided the organization since its founding: preparing young people for the future has never been the responsibility of one school, one university or one organization alone. It is the shared work of an entire community.

Building the ATWIN Youth Community

ATWIN believes talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. Every young person deserves the opportunity to ask questions, explore their interests, discover their passions and contribute meaningfully to their communities.



Students engage with Cambridge Savings Bank through the ATWIN X-STEAM Program, connecting learning with community partnerships and practical applications beyond the classroom.

Rather than asking students, “What do you want to become?” ATWIN begins with a different question: “What problem do you want to help solve?”

That simple shift transforms learning from the pursuit of grades into the pursuit of purpose.

Anny Chan, Founder of ATWIN Education, reflects on the vision behind ATWIN: “ATWIN was founded on a simple belief: every young person’s questions matter. When educators, researchers, families, businesses and community organizations come together around young people, extraordinary things begin to happen. We are not simply preparing students for academic success or future careers. We are protecting their curiosity, helping them find purpose and realize they can make a positive difference.”

Since its founding, ATWIN Education has brought this vision to life through the ATWIN Youth Community, designing experiences that connect young people with inspiring mentors, diverse perspectives and opportunities to explore beyond the classroom.

Informed by educational research, ATWIN continues to develop the X-STEAM Framework, encouraging young people to pursue their own questions, develop self-directed learning skills and become lifelong learners.

Rather than simply providing educational exposure, ATWIN co-develops learning experiences with schools, universities, research



Educational and community leaders celebrate as ATWIN Education receives an Official Citation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, recognizing a collective commitment to creating innovative learning opportunities for young people.



At Massachusetts General Hospital, students participate in a newborn simulation that invites reflection on empathy, responsibility and human connection.

institutions, businesses and community partners. These experiences immerse students in real-world contexts, where they explore complex questions, reflect on their learning, apply knowledge across disciplines and develop ideas that connect curiosity with positive impact.

Continuously refined through research, practice and reflection, the framework reflects ATWIN's commitment to advancing research-informed approaches to teaching and learning that support both students and educators.

Research Meets Practice

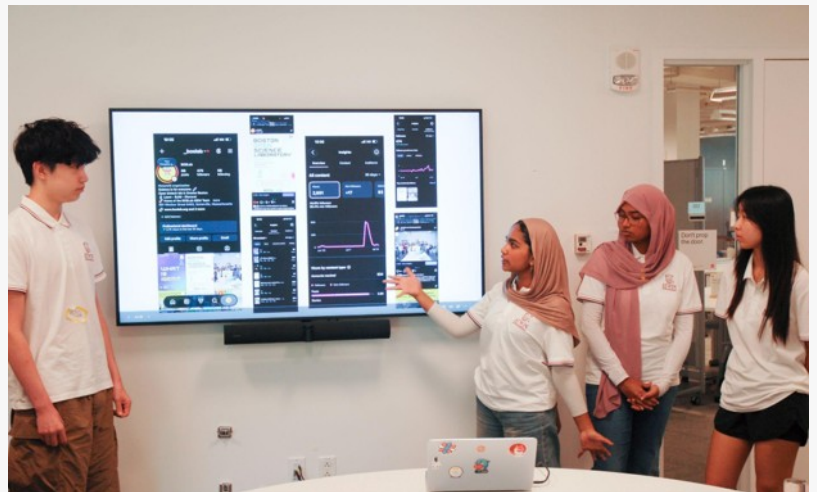
The X-STEAM Framework is being developed through ongoing collaboration with researchers and practitioners, drawing on evidence-based practices and educational research to advance inquiry-based, interdisciplinary and real-world learning.

The MIT FrED Factory team reflected on the partnership: "Our collaboration with ATWIN Education reflects a partnership that bridges educational research and practice. Together, we are exploring how inquiry-driven and problem-based learning approaches can help young people engage with innovation, design and manufacturing in new ways. By bringing together researchers, educators and industry partners, this work contributes to the ongoing development of new approaches for innovation education among K-12 learners."

When an Entire Community Becomes the Classroom



As part of the ATWIN Youth Community, students share their learning journeys through a student-led podcast with Cambridge Community Television (CCTV), contributing their perspectives and connecting with the wider community.



Students present their project recommendations for BOSLab, applying research, collaboration and problem-solving skills to address a real-world challenge through the ATWIN X-STEAM Career Practicum.

Throughout the summer, students in ATWIN's 2026 X-STEAM Discovery Program and Career Practicum learned alongside researchers, physicians, engineers, entrepreneurs, educators and community leaders across Greater Boston.

Collaborations with institutions and organizations including Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Massachusetts General Hospital, Google, Moderna, Pfizer, Novartis, Sanofi, Automata, Cambridge Savings Bank and BOSLab enabled students to engage with diverse fields and perspectives, explore real-world challenges and understand how inquiry, innovation and collaboration can contribute to positive change.

These experiences reflected ATWIN's educational ecosystem, where learning extends beyond classrooms into laboratories, hospitals, companies and communities. Students connected their curiosity with real-world challenges and considered how they could contribute to positive change.

At the center of these experiences were three guiding questions:

- What am I curious about?
- What problem do I hope to solve?
- How can I use what I learn to make a positive difference?

Students arrived with different interests and aspirations. Some envisioned careers in healthcare, while others were drawn to engineering, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, biotechnology or entrepreneurship. Many were still exploring, not because they lacked potential, but because they had not yet discovered the questions and experiences that could connect their learning to a deeper sense of purpose.

Rather than directing every student toward the same destination, ATWIN adopted a student-centered approach that encouraged each young person to pursue questions that mattered to them, develop ownership of their learning and explore pathways aligned with their interests and aspirations.

For some students, this shift changed how they viewed education itself. Learning that once felt disconnected became connected to their curiosity, future possibilities and personal goals. As they began to see why their learning mattered, they developed greater ownership and motivation to continue learning beyond the program.

For many students, those questions soon became deeply personal.

The Moment Education Became Personal

During a newborn simulation at Massachusetts General Hospital, students experienced the responsibility and compassion involved in caring for others. Later that evening, several students shared that they had called their parents simply to say, "Thank you." The experience extended far beyond medicine; it became a lesson in empathy, gratitude and human connection.

At Moderna, one student in the X-STEAM Career Practicum experienced a turning point in her educational journey. After a period of uncertainty, she saw how technology and healthcare could come together to address some of society's most pressing challenges, helping her discover a career path she was genuinely passionate about. Returning to school, she said she no longer felt lost, but motivated to pursue learning with a clearer sense of purpose and direction.

Another story unfolded in the X-STEAM Discovery Program. The youngest member of the cohort arrived shy and unsure of himself. Over the course of the program, he stepped outside his comfort zone, built meaningful friendships, engaged confidently with researchers and professors, and initiated a podcast with Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) to share his classmates' voices with the wider community. He shared that the encouragement and care he received from ATWIN Junior Teaching Scholars and the teaching team gave him the confidence to grow. Inspired by that experience, he hoped to one day return as a Junior Teaching Scholar himself to support future students and help them discover a sense of belonging.

At the closing ceremony held at the Massachusetts State House, a student who returned to participate in ATWIN again reflected on the experience that had meant the most to him. As a neurodivergent learner, he shared that beyond the workshops, projects and visits, he found something even more valuable: a community where he felt understood, encouraged and accepted for who he was.

"I found a place where I could be myself, ask questions without being judged and learn from people who believed in me."

The impact extended beyond the students themselves. Reflecting on a neuroscience workshop co-developed with ATWIN Education, a researcher from the MIT McGovern Institute for Brain Research shared: "Working with ATWIN Education to co-develop this workshop gave me the opportunity to engage with many thoughtful and curious students from an impressively diverse range of backgrounds. While I hoped to inspire them to pursue their curiosity, their thoughtful questions and optimism about the future reminded me why I chose a career in research and renewed my own sense of inspiration."

For ATWIN Education, these moments capture the true purpose of education. Its impact is measured not only by what young people learn, but by who they become: young people with the confidence to pursue their curiosity, contribute to others and shape a future they believe in.

Learning Through Contribution

ATWIN believes learning becomes transformative when young people use their curiosity and knowledge to create positive impact in their communities.

During the Career Practicum, students partnered with BOSLab, a Cambridge-based nonprofit biotechnology makerspace, to address a real organizational challenge: expanding community engagement and increasing awareness of biotechnology education.

Working with BOSLab's leadership, students investigated community needs, interviewed stakeholders and developed strategic recommendations to support the organization's mission. Following the project, BOSLab implemented several student recommendations and reported more than 2,000 new social media viewers within one week, demonstrating how young people can address real-world challenges and create value through their work.

For one high school student who had become disconnected from traditional schooling, the experience became a turning point. Through conversations with community members and exploring ways to address their needs, he discovered a passion for connecting people and designing solutions that create social impact. Inspired by the experience, he shared his hope of establishing a nonprofit organization to expand access to STEAM education for underserved young people.

For him and other students, the experience reshaped their understanding of learning itself. By seeing that their questions, research and ideas could make a difference today, not only prepare them for the future, they developed a stronger sense of purpose and renewed motivation to continue learning beyond the program.

The experience reinforced a belief at the heart of ATWIN's work: young people are not simply preparing to contribute to the world someday. They have the curiosity, agency and ability to create positive change today.

A Community That Grows Together

The ATWIN Youth Community is built on a shared commitment among parents, educators, researchers and industry partners to help young people take ownership of their learning and discover pathways for growth.

One parent reflected on how the program transformed her child's relationship with learning: "The greatest outcome wasn't simply what my child learned during the X-STEAM Program, but seeing her take ownership of her own learning. After returning home, she began independently exploring new topics, requesting additional learning opportunities, reaching out to people she met during the program for interviews and creating her own podcast series to continue sharing ideas. ATWIN sparked her curiosity and made her excited to keep learning, exploring and discovering what she is truly passionate about."

Professor Victor Pereira of the Harvard Graduate School of Education reflected on how the

students' growth reaffirmed the purpose of his work: "What impresses me most is not simply what students accomplish during the program. It is watching them continue asking questions, pursuing independent research, mentoring younger students and believing they can contribute to their communities. Their growth reminds me why educating future teachers is so important, because the impact of great education extends far beyond a single classroom."

One Junior Teaching Scholar reflected on how her role in ATWIN evolved from learner to mentor: "When I first joined ATWIN, I came here to learn. Returning as a Junior Teaching Scholar showed me that I could also help others learn and grow. Watching younger students become more confident reminded me that learning is not only about personal growth, but also about using what we have gained to support others."

Industry partners observed the same curiosity, engagement and willingness to contribute. Following ATWIN's visit, the team at Automata shared: "What stood out most was the students themselves. They came thoughtful, engaged and genuinely curious, asking insightful questions and remaining fully present throughout the experience. It's clear ATWIN is preparing young people to think critically and engage meaningfully with industry."

Together, these perspectives reflect the strength of the ATWIN Youth Community. When families, educators, researchers, industry and community partners invest in young people together, learning extends beyond classrooms and continues long after programs end.

The result is not simply stronger academic preparation. It is a community of young people who develop the curiosity to ask questions, the agency to pursue their own learning and the confidence to contribute positively to the world around them.

Beyond a Summer Program

For ATWIN Education, the Summer Discovery Program and Career Practicum are not standalone experiences. They mark the beginning of a lifelong journey of curiosity, purpose and contribution.

Long after the summer ends, students continue growing through the ATWIN Youth Community, pursuing independent projects, building relationships with mentors and peers, and supporting one another as they explore new interests and opportunities.

As students grow, many choose to return through the ATWIN Junior Teaching Scholars Program, not simply as participants, but as mentors, role models and leaders. By guiding younger students, supporting activities and sharing their own experiences, they help cultivate the same curiosity, confidence and sense of belonging that once shaped their own journeys. Through this process, they discover that leadership is not about standing in front of others, but about lifting others up.

With each new generation of students, the community continues to grow. What begins as a two-week summer experience becomes a lifelong community of learners, mentors and leaders who continue asking meaningful questions, pursuing new knowledge and inspiring those who follow.

A Shared Commitment

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts recognized this collective effort by presenting Official Citations to educational and community leaders whose partnership has helped expand opportunities for young people through innovative approaches to education.

Those honored included Professor Victor Pereira of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Dr. Jill Crittenden of the MIT McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Gregory Green of Cambridge Agenda for Children Out-of-School Time, and Anny Chan, Founder of ATWIN Education.

For ATWIN Education, this recognition represents the collective efforts of educators, researchers, families, businesses and communities who share the responsibility of preparing young people for the future.

ATWIN Education extends its sincere gratitude to every partner whose generosity, expertise and encouragement continue to make this shared vision possible.

Organizations interested in partnering with ATWIN Education are invited to become part of an ecosystem of educators, researchers, industry leaders and community partners working together to inspire curiosity, develop agency and empower the next generation.

About ATWIN Education

ATWIN Education, an inquiry-driven social enterprise founded by Harvard educators and grounded in educational research, helps young people discover purpose, develop agency and transform curiosity into meaningful action. By bringing together schools, universities, research institutions, businesses and families, ATWIN creates an educational ecosystem that extends beyond classroom walls. This collaborative network empowers students to pursue questions that matter to them, apply their learning to real-world challenges and contribute to the communities around them.

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