

At Home in the Modern World

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### IN THE MODERN WORLD

## Denise Korn



In 2003, Denise Korn marched into the Boston public school system with one goal in mind: to demystify the process of design. She had already learned, as copresident of the Creative Economy Council in New England, that changing the curriculum would not be easy. Instead of coming at it from the inside out, she would do it from the outside in: "I asked them to give me their brightest, most hungry students, and I'd pair them with the most amazing designers in Boston," she explains. With that, Youth Design Boston, a seven-week summer internship program, was born.

Korn's inner-city high school students, from sophomores to seniors, are taught everyday

skills—such as how to write and dress professionally—but also how to develop rich, multidimensional ideas and communicate those to high-profile clients.

"I am a huge believer in exposing kids as early in their educational cycle as possible to the power of design and what design means in the world," Korn adds.

Now, six years after its inception, Youth Design Boston has a 100 percent success rate: Every participating student has gone on to college, many choosing to study graphic or industrial design. "They really want to succeed in doing something with their lives. For that reason alone they just go for it—and they take advantage of networking and forming future relationships."

Now partnered with the AIGA's Boston chapter, Youth Design Boston is carving out a place in the mayor's summer job initiative. Youth Design is also celebrating the launch of new chapters in Denver and Rhode Island—a national expansion that gave Korn the idea to design products with her students through a live video link between participants in each city. "They'll design products that are relevant for what other kids in their demographic think about," she says. "They design what already has meaning in their lives."

[aiga.org](http://aiga.org)  
[korndesign.com](http://korndesign.com)



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