



Somerville Public Schools

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2017

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SOMERVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARTNERS WITH BREAKTHROUGH GREATER BOSTON TO EXPAND OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME LEARNING

Somerville, MA – The Somerville Public Schools (SPS) and [Breakthrough Greater Boston](#) (BTGB) are entering a partnership this year that will offer SPS middle grades and high school students the opportunity to participate in six years of intensive, out-of-school time programming starting in the summer of 2018. BTGB focuses on a combination of academic programming, advocacy, and one-on-one mentoring from college students who are part of BTGB’s unique Students Teaching Students model. After more than a year of discussions about a potential partnership, BTGB is breaking ground in Somerville this fall with a student recruitment campaign across the district in preparation for direct service delivery to students starting the summer of 2018.

“Breakthrough’s approach to working with students for six years and engaging college and high school students as teachers and mentors, has proven to be very effective in preparing students for post-secondary success,” commented Superintendent of Schools, Mary Skipper. “Their model of intense out-of-school time programming, coaching and advocacy allows students to build the skills they will need for long-term success. We are very excited to be launching this partnership with them.”

“The research on this—and the proof we’ve seen among our own students—is clear: the more opportunities we can provide for students to continue learning and growing beyond the school day, the more tools they can take back into the classroom to enhance their learning and the better we are ultimately preparing students for success beyond high school,” said Somerville Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone. “I want to thank BTGB for joining with us in bringing quality out-of-school time programming to our students and expanding their educational experience.”

BTGB was founded in 1992 by MacArthur “Genius Award” Winner, Dr. Angela Duckworth and currently serves nearly 500 students in Cambridge and Boston. Breakthrough anticipates that once the expansion to Somerville is complete, the organization will impact an estimated 900 students and 200 future teachers each year. In late August this year, BTGB announced that it received a generous Catalyst Grant Award of \$500,000 from the Wellington Management Foundation to support the organization’s continued expansion, including their expansion to Somerville. Starting this fall, BTGB will recruit sixth grade students at every school in the district who will start as rising 7th graders in the program next summer. Students are introduced to the Breakthrough experience in BTGB’s middle grades summer program which offers engaging, student-centered summer classes along with mentoring, homework help, recess, and community building. BTGB anticipates enrolling an initial cohort of 50 sixth graders from around the district by this winter, and will be hosting special events for admitted students before they begin their intensive summer program in 2018. The Somerville program is expected to grow by 50 additional rising 7th graders each year for six years, to a full program enrollment in grades 7-12 of 300 students.

“We’re excited to be opening our third site in Somerville,” stated Elissa Spelman, Executive Director of Breakthrough Greater Boston in an earlier announcement about their anticipated expansion to Somerville. “The families in this city, along with its educators, are passionate, engaged, and focused on the future.



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We're honored to support their collective visions through our intensive college access and teacher training programs.”

In their Teacher Training Program, Breakthrough attracts a diverse corps of high-achieving college students who work with full-time teachers to learn the profession, and then gain hands-on experience working with middle and high school students during the BTGB afterschool and summer programs. BTGB Teaching Fellows complete a rigorous program that includes more than 500 hours of training and classroom experience. Ranked by the Princeton Review as a Top 10 internship nationally, BTGB's Teacher Training Program also leverages the power of the Students Teaching Students model to mentor, support, and inspire younger students. More than 70% of Breakthrough's teachers go on to pursue teaching careers.

Engaging the community is also an important component of the BTGB's model. Community members interested in supporting Breakthrough Greater Boston's work in Somerville are encouraged to learn more about volunteer opportunities at <http://www.breakthroughgreaterboston.org/volunteer> or to reach out to Jennie McDonald-Brown, BTGB Somerville Site Director, at jmcdonaldbrown@btgbmail.org. BTGB is particularly looking for volunteers interested in serving on its Board of Directors, young professionals board or as Academic Mentors working one on one with students.

Expanding out of school time learning opportunities is one of the key focus areas in Somerville's work as a founding member of the Harvard Education Redesign Lab's [By All Means](#) initiative. Somerville is one of six U.S. cities of this multiyear initiative whose focus is on eliminating the link between children's socioeconomic status and academic success. By All Means aims to help cities develop comprehensive child wellbeing and education systems through the work of city-wide, cross-organizational Children's Cabinets. Other partner cities include Oakland, Lewisville, Newton, Salem, and Providence.

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