



Somerville Public Schools

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CITIZEN SCHOOLS TO OFFER PROJECT-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES AT EAST SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Students will be exposed to hands-on learning that will equip them with the skills, opportunities, and mindset to succeed in the 21st century economy

Somerville, MA – As part of a city-wide effort to expand out of school time learning opportunities, particularly in the middle grades, the [East Somerville Community School](#) (ESCS) is partnering with [Citizen Schools](#) this year to provide middle grade students with enriched learning opportunities that will equip them with real-world skills and guide them toward college and career success. Citizen Schools utilizes a combination of during-the-school-day support that allows a school-based Citizen Schools team to become an integral part of the school community, as well as an out of school apprenticeship model where students work side by side with volunteers from the community who teach courses they are passionate about, exposing them to future career pathways. [The result](#) is a closing of the gap in middle school performance, high school graduation, and post-secondary success. 70% of students who participated in a Citizen Schools program in 2015-2016 mastered 21st century skills, 71% graduated from high school compared to 59% of matched peers, and Citizen Schools alumni are two times more likely to graduate from college.

“When you make teaching and learning interactive and relevant to today’s youth, students will not only thrive, they will lead,” said Superintendent of Schools, Mary Skipper. “The Citizen Schools model connects adult mentors with middle grades students during an important developmental time in students’ lives, and it does so in a way that helps students develop mastery of critical 21st century skills while exposing them to future pathways. We are thrilled to be partnering with Citizen Schools and look forward to the new opportunities that this Extended Learning Time partnership will offer our students.”

“We’re really excited to learn about and become a part of the Somerville community, and we look forward to supporting the community in any way that we can,” said Megan Bird, MA Regional Executive Director for Citizen Schools. “Our focus is on building authentic partnerships with students and community organizations.”

Citizen Schools’ expansion into Somerville is supported by a generous \$200,000 financial commitment from Biogen Foundation, a long-time partner of the Somerville Public Schools and Citizen Schools alike, who is the anchor sponsor in the first year of the partnership at the East Somerville Community School program. The program will focus on ESCS students in grades 5 and 6 for the initial year of the partnership, with plans to expand to grades 7 and 8 in the near future. The program provides an additional enrichment opportunity and academic support to assist students in their important transition into middle school and then high school. During the school day, a Citizen Schools team of seven that includes a Campus Director and 6 AmeriCorps Teaching Fellows will provide academic support and general operations assistance where more capacity is useful at the school, building relationships and rapport with students along the way. AmeriCorps Teaching Fellows, many of whom are pursuing careers in education, in turn are able to learn from full-time teachers at the school who serve as great models of what strong educators do to inspire and support students.



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The first day of the Citizen Schools afterschool program at ESCS is Monday, September 18th. The afterschool program is an opt-in, four-day-a week, 2.5-hour program for students in grades 5 and 6, and includes an academic block where students receive homework support from teaching fellows. Students then participate in semester-long apprenticeships which are led by volunteers in the community who share their area of expertise and career field experience as they work side by side with students. While a full complement of volunteer partners is in place for this fall's program, interested volunteers are encouraged to contact Marisabel Jaramillo at marisabeljaramillo@citizenschools.org for information on becoming a volunteer partner for the East Somerville Community Schools program in the spring.

Students are able to choose from a wide array of apprenticeship options and meet with volunteers once a week for the course of 10-12 weeks. At the end of 10 weeks, students present a showcase project at a community-wide event, teaching back to others what they've learned through the course of their apprenticeship.

“The positive impacts that this type of out-of-school program can have on learning should not be denied any student” said Mayor Joe Curtatone. “But the reality is that lower-income kids do not have equal access. Studies show that by the 6th grade, higher-income kids have participated in 6,000 more hours of enrichment activities than their lower-income peers, creating what educators call the 6,000-hour learning gap. In Somerville, we are working to close that gap, and we are fortunate to have community partners at our side like Citizen Schools and Biogen Foundation that understand that it's critical that all students have access to quality out-of-school programs. We are honored to work with Citizen Schools and wish to thank Biogen Foundation for funding the program.”

“Citizen Schools' proven model integrates a student's class day experience with out of school time to reinforce learning, and increases student engagement by involving them in the real world application of what they learn in the classroom,” added Laura Pitone, Chair of the Somerville School Committee. “We are extremely excited to offer the Citizen Schools experience to our middle graders at the East Somerville Community School to complement our current out of school time offerings.”

Originally launched in Boston, Citizen Schools now partners with schools across the United States, in Massachusetts, California, New York, and North Carolina. Citizen Schools programs lengthen the learning day for students in low-income communities, expanding academic interest, exploring new topics and skills, and developing a foundation for their future through hands-on learning. The programming and in-school/out-of-school model has proven to be greatly beneficial and impactful for middle grade students during a critical point of their intellectual, emotional, and social development. A November 2016 study of Citizen Schools' Extended Learning Time model by [Abt Associates](#) found that “Citizen Schools participants are significantly more likely to report that the program helps their self-esteem and pro-social behaviors and that they are also more likely to participate in activities that help them learn about college and careers.” Learn more about the work of Citizen Schools at www.citizenschools.org.

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.