

## The Issue: Achievement Gap

### CITIZEN SCHOOLS MASSACHUSETTS

Citizen Schools Massachusetts is an innovative nonprofit organization that partners with middle schools in Boston and throughout the state to **expand learning time for low-income children by nearly three hours every day**. We work with schools that enroll a high percentage of students receiving free- and reduced-price lunch and are squarely focused on improving academic outcomes. Our partner middle schools provide us on-site space – classrooms that normally sit empty after the school bell rings – and work closely with our “second shift” staff to integrate school day curricula into our programs as a way to align our work with school and district priorities.

The program model is designed to address the need among low-income students for **more learning time, more relevant education activities and more relationships with caring adults**. Citizen Schools provides academic support, fosters 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership skills, and engages skilled volunteers from business and civic organizations who teach hands-on apprenticeships side-by-side with our trained educators. Our programs combine the critical, intensive learning time that students need to succeed with interactive, engaging learning projects that connect academics to college and careers.

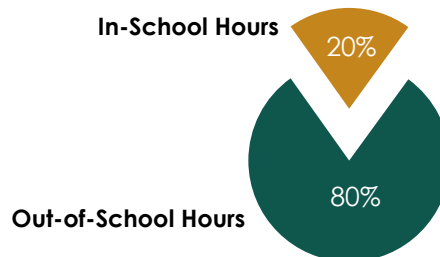
Despite decades of reform efforts and great success on many education fronts, Massachusetts continues to struggle with an achievement gap between minority and low-income students and their suburban upper and middle income counterparts. In 2006, 41% of African American and 45% of Latino 10<sup>th</sup> graders scored proficient or above on the MCAS; the same year, 76% of white students scored in that range; in reading, the results were similar. Two years later, the results have improved but the gap remains: on average, white and middle-income students tended to score between 15-20 points higher than minority and low-income students on the 2008 MCAS. This gap persists into high school, where minority and low-income students dropout at much higher rates and take longer to graduate. Research shows that middle school is a critical point for engaging students and preventing them from dropping out in high school. The Citizen Schools model engages young people in learning and provides them interactive learning that complements the school academic curriculum. Citizen Schools believes that all students have the potential to discover a love of learning in middle school that will inspire them to succeed in high school, college, the workforce, and civic life.

### CITIZEN SCHOOLS: GETTING RESULTS

Data from our longitudinal study in Boston indicate that Citizen Schools graduates increase their state exam proficiency over time, academically outperform their peers by high school, and are 24% more likely to graduate from high school than their peers.\* Even more compelling, the study shows that 85% of our alumni enroll at colleges compared to 33% of low income students from Boston. Our most recent grade data from all Massachusetts campuses show that **66% of our students either maintained a passing grade or improved a failing grade to a passing grade in Math and 65% did the same in English**. In addition, our campuses across the state averaged 89% attendance in 2007-2008. We expect these results to continue to improve and to last as our students travel through the education pipeline, into high school and beyond.

\* Projection based on graduation data of Citizen Schools cohort in Boston, MA.

Citizen Schools was launched in Boston in 1995 as part of a national movement around expanded learning time. We currently work with over 1,400 middle school students, 150 trained after-school staff, and about 380 skilled volunteers in 14 schools and 6 school communities throughout Massachusetts.



Citizen Schools adds 40% more learning time on top of the regular school day, which provides additional time for rigorous learning.

## APPRENTICESHIPS: OUR DIFFERENTIATOR

*Every semester, Citizen Schools engages hundreds of volunteers from throughout the community to share what they know and love with young people in real-world projects. Students learn about **art and curating** with the Harvard Art Museum, **marketing** with Google, **space exploration and rocket science** with MIT and Cubist Pharmaceuticals, **law** with Wilmer Hale, **financial planning** with Fidelity and much more, including **yoga, culinary arts and eco-friendly shoe design!** These apprenticeships are paired with unique academic and team-building activities designed to help kids succeed in school, prepare for high school, and develop real-world skills.*

## A Good Return on Investment

- In FY05, MA spent an estimated \$9,096 per student per year which = \$36,384 per student for 4 years of high school. In spring 2006, the graduation rate for low-income students was 62.3%, making the **cost per graduate about \$50,000.**
- A \$472,000 investment in Citizen Schools in FY10 would result in at least a 20% increase in the graduation rate for the 1,450 students we expect to serve. That works out to an investment of \$325 per student served.\*
- As a State, if we could replicate such a 20% increase in the graduate rate across the Commonwealth, we could reduce the 4 year cost per graduate to \$43,000 since 20% more low-income students would finish high school.
- Thus, a modest investment by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts of \$325 per student served at Citizen Schools could enable us to maintain, learn from and eventually grow a program that is proven to help improve on-time graduation rates for low income kids.

\* Projection based on graduation data of Citizen Schools cohort in Boston, MA from PSA Independent Longitudinal Study.

### WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Relying heavily on our evaluation data, as well as strong partnerships with school and district personnel, Citizen Schools' ELT model holds great promise to advance achievement and expand opportunity for all of Massachusetts' youth, **especially those from low-income backgrounds.**

Working in partnership with the state, school districts, and local school staff, Citizen Schools is poised to support and expand the Massachusetts *ELT Pilot* launched in 2006, which provides students with at least 30% more learning time. Building on our success at three of the original seven ELT schools (the Edwards and Umana schools in Boston and Salemwood in Malden), Citizen Schools is exploring expansion at new ELT schools. We believe that we can be a "partner of choice" for schools looking to provide their students **more learning time, project based learning models, and more relationships** with caring adults from their communities. Together, we can close the achievement gap and ensure that all of Massachusetts' students are prepared for college, work and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

