



**Citizen Schools' Contribution to Improved Learning
in Expanded Learning Time Schools**

Research Brief

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Summary

In the 2006-07 school year, ten public schools across five urban districts in Massachusetts began implementing the Massachusetts Expanding Learning Time to Support Student Success Initiative (ELT). Citizen Schools is the lead partner providing ELT services to students in three of the ten schools, which are collectively known as ELT Cohort I. This research brief examines the role and contributions of Citizen Schools in these three schools during the first two years of the initiative. The brief includes results of analyses of available data on student and school performance and findings from interviews with school administrators and Citizen Schools campus directors in the three schools.

Examination of the schools' test performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) found consistent evidence of improved student learning, indicating the strong potential for the ELT initiative to help improve achievement for students who are struggling academically. The improvement in math performance is particularly notable, especially among students with the greatest learning needs.

Citizen Schools programming contributed to these learning improvements in three major ways. First, Citizen Schools' trained staff extended the work of classroom teachers delivering academic instruction, particularly through the provision of opportunities for students to apply emerging academic skills in varied contexts. Second, Citizen Schools created settings and activities in which students could develop the personal traits needed to take maximum advantage of enhanced academic learning opportunities. These traits included interpersonal skills and academic motivation. Third, Citizen Schools contributed significantly to the mobilization of external resources that could bridge the gaps separating schools, families, and the community.

Context for This Review

Based in Boston, Citizen Schools operates a national network of apprenticeship and youth-development programs for middle-grades students, connecting adult volunteers and trained staff to young people through the provision of hands-on learning activities.

The ELT initiative is a product of collaboration among state legislators, the Massachusetts Department of Education, civic leaders, and Massachusetts 2020, a private school-reform organization. Drawing on exploratory work conducted by Massachusetts 2020 and others, state leaders saw the possibilities for increasing student knowledge and achievement through growth in the amount, quality, and diversity of learning experiences offered within an expanded school day. Using plans developed by selected schools and districts and then approved by the state education department, the ELT schools extended their school day by 30 percent or more, re-configuring their schedules to accommodate increases in core academic instruction, enrichment programming, individualized instruction, and teacher professional development.

In Cohort I, Citizen Schools is a lead partner in the provision of ELT services to students at the Clarence R. Edwards Middle School and the Mario Umana Middle School Academy in Boston and the Salemwood School in Malden. Although all three of the schools engaged Citizen

Schools directly, the three schools involved Citizen Schools in varying ways in the provision of expanded learning time. Two of the schools, Edwards and Umana, implemented what Citizen Schools has termed a “partner-dependent” model, relying on Citizen Schools to staff a substantial portion of the additional school time. Kate Carpenter Bernier describes the partner-dependent ELT model as “regular school teachers, paraprofessionals, and staff from outside providers [coming] together to deliver academic and enrichment programming in the hours between 1:30 and 4:30” (2008, p. 5). Before implementation of ELT, the school day at Edwards and Umana extended from 7:20 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., the same schedule followed in most of Boston’s middle schools. The ELT initiative extended these two schools’ schedule to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday. At Salemwood School in Malden, the pre-ELT schedule was 8:15 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. for students in grades 1-6 and 7:45 a.m. to 2:20 p.m. for seventh- and eighth-graders. With ELT, Salemwood adopted the same core schedule for all students in grades 5-8, beginning at 7:45 and extending to 3:30 or later, depending on program options and student choice. At Edwards, Citizen Schools worked with all sixth-grade students and a smaller group of seventh- and eighth-grade students, and it collaborated closely with the school’s educators. This approach represents Citizen Schools’ preferred model for the support of expanded learning time.

Implementation of ELT in the Three Schools

The ELT initiative required participating schools to increase time spent on core academic instruction, enrichment programming, and teacher professional development. Because conditions and preferences were different in each school, the schools’ approaches to expanded learning differed in important ways.

- Edwards School, Boston.** Math enrichment was a defining feature of the expanded day at the Edwards School. Through academic blocks in the mornings and enrichment blocks in the afternoons, student learning time for math expanded by an additional four hours per week. Classroom teachers led seventh- and eighth-grade math enrichment, known as Math League, while Citizen Schools staff led Math League for all sixth-graders. After Math League on Monday through Thursday, sixth-grade students participated in Citizen Schools apprenticeships and other activities, while seventh- and eighth-grade students participated in other forms of enrichment, such as football or musical theatre, led by both teachers and outside providers. Students were dismissed early on Fridays to permit time for teacher

Questions Guiding This Inquiry

1. *What conditions are needed to permit schools, particularly middle-grades schools, to involve external partners in educational enhancement and expanded learning in ways that promote improved student achievement?*
2. *To what extent did the three ELT schools create conditions for educational success, especially through their partnerships with Citizen Schools? How did Citizen Schools contribute to the successful implementation of the ELT initiative in the three schools?*
3. *To what extent did student learning improve in the schools? What policies and actions of the schools and Citizen Schools may have contributed to the improvement?*

professional development. A school ELT coordinator managed the afternoon enrichment block and worked with external providers. Citizen Schools served all 173 sixth-graders in 2008-09 at Edwards.

- ***Umana Academy, Boston.*** According to interviews with Umana staff, strong after-school programs, including a partnership with Citizen Schools, were in place prior to ELT. However, the school found that students with the greatest needs were not regularly participating in the school's after-school programs. Extending the school day provided an opportunity to reach students who were not involved and to provide them with the enrichment and additional academic instruction they needed. Initially, few other changes were made to the school schedule. However, scheduling conflicts between the academic blocks led by teachers and enrichment blocks led by partner providers created logistical challenges that necessitated changes in the model. In its most recent form, the school day included an additional two hours of math and two hours of English language arts (ELA) instruction per week in the afternoons. On days when students were not in the extended academic blocks, they participated in programming offered by external partner providers, including apprenticeships and other activities led by Citizen Schools. Teachers participated in 40 minutes of professional development per week. And, as at Edwards, an ELT coordinator managed the partnerships with external organizations, and students were dismissed early on Fridays. The Citizen Schools program served 158 students in grades 6-8, or 28 percent of the students in those grades, in 2008-09.
- ***Salemwood School, Malden.*** The expanded day at Salemwood School developed differently from the expanded day in the Boston schools. Salemwood School is a K-8 school divided into K-4 and 5-8 grade clusters. Students in grades 5-8 participate in the expanded day and have the option to participate in the Citizen Schools program after school. The expanded-day model at Salemwood School permitted all blocks of instructional time to be lengthened. Other new elements of the school day included a 45-minute enrichment block on Fridays led by teachers and, in some cases, Citizen Schools Teaching Fellows, and 45 minutes of common planning time for teachers in the afternoons. Unlike the partner-dependent model where teachers and outside providers work together to deliver academic and enrichment programming within the extended school day, Salemwood students in grades 5-8 were dismissed at 3:30 and could participate in the Citizen Schools program until 6:15 on a voluntary basis. Like the other Citizen Schools partner sites, the Citizen Schools program at Salemwood School existed prior to ELT implementation, and enrollment in the Citizen Schools program increased with the implementation of ELT. According to one interviewee, enrollment in the Citizen Schools program increased about 20 percent every year following implementation of the ELT initiative. In 2008-09, the program served 90 students, or 18 percent of the school's students in grades 5-8, and had a waiting list for the first time.

Implementation of ELT was not static in any of these schools. Schools and partners modified their redesign of the school day as they adapted to changes in enrollment numbers, staffing, student

interest, and academic need. Each school took steps to evaluate its own ELT implementation and used the data to inform decisions about implementing the initiative and managing partnerships.

Evidence of Improved Student Learning

Student test scores at the Edwards, Umana, and Salemwood schools improved following implementation of the ELT initiative in 2006. The proportion of students in grades 6-8 scoring proficient or above on the MCAS math and ELA tests across all three schools increased over time. These increases matched or exceeded achievement growth recorded by students in grades 6-8 in three other school clusters: other ELT Cohort I middle-grades schools, all Massachusetts middle-grades schools, and Massachusetts middle-grades schools that were eligible for Supplementary Educational Services (SES) due to their educational needs. Edwards students, in particular, made exceptional improvement in math. The percentage of Edwards students performing in the lowest academic performance level in math decreased from 54 percent to 32 percent over the first two years of the initiative, and Edwards students achieving proficiency increased from 13 percent to 30 percent. The following discussion reviews achievement change in the combined cluster of Citizen Schools ELT sites and then individually at each school.

Changes in Math and ELA Performance in the Citizen Schools Cluster

As a group, the Edwards, Umana, and Salemwood schools performed lower, in terms of percent of students scoring at the proficient level, at the start of the ELT initiative than did all other clusters of middle-grades schools to which they were compared, including the other four Cohort I ELT schools serving the middle grades, all SES-eligible middle-grades schools in Massachusetts, and all of the state's middle-grades schools overall. These comparisons are shown in Exhibits 1 (for math) and 2 (for ELA). The proportion of students scoring proficient or above on the math MCAS in the Citizen Schools partner sites increased 14 percentage points from 2006 to 2008. Other Cohort I ELT schools serving the middle grades improved by eight percentage points, and SES-eligible and all middle-grades schools both improved by nine percentage points from 2006 to 2008.

In English language arts, the proportion of students scoring proficient or above on the MCAS in the Citizen Schools partner sites increased by seven percentage points from 2006 to 2008, exceeding ELA growth in the other school clusters.

Exhibit 1
Math MCAS Proficiency Among School Groups, 2006 and 2008

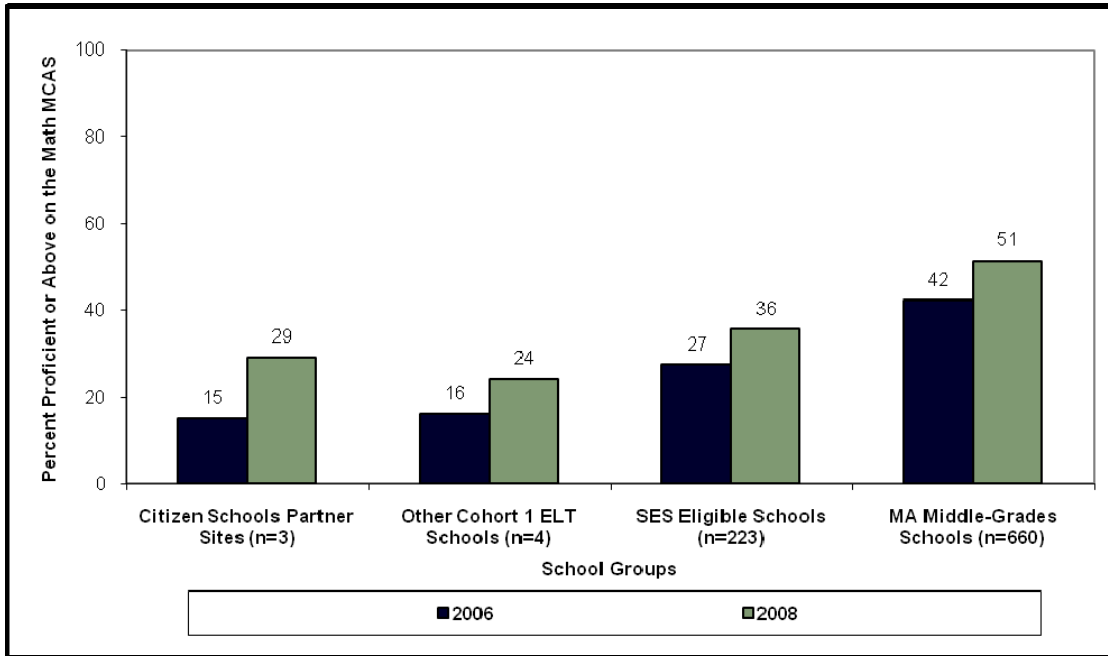


Exhibit reads: Student performance on the math MCAS improved an average of 14 percentage points in the first two years of the ELT initiative at the Citizen Schools partner sites.

Exhibit 2
ELA MCAS Proficiency Among School Groups, 2006 and 2008

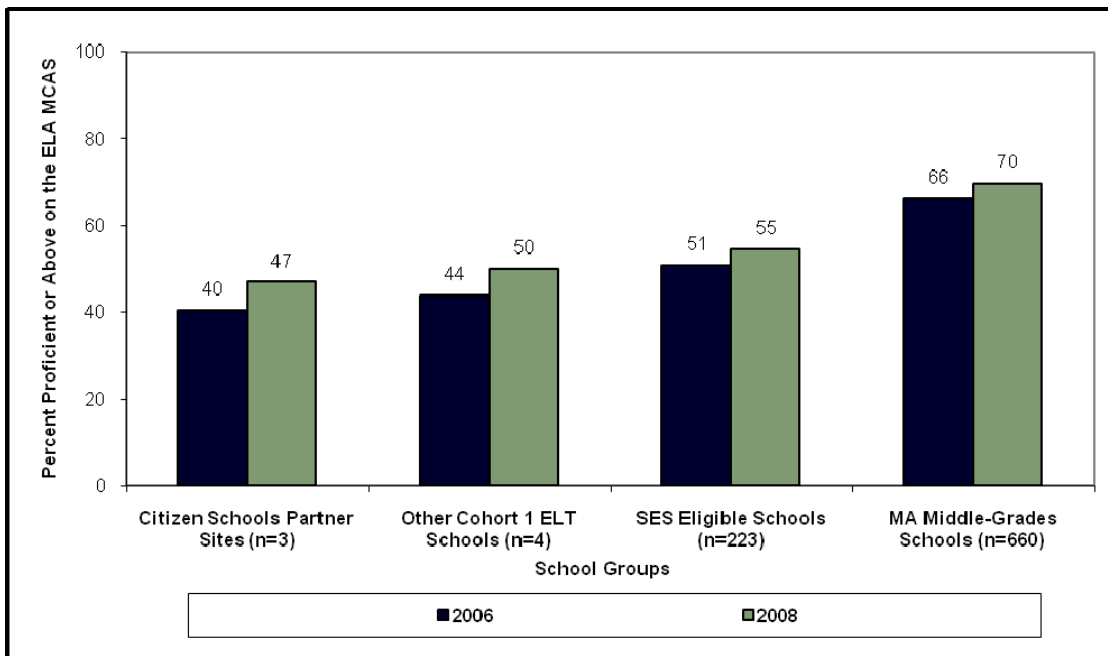


Exhibit reads: Student performance on the ELA MCAS improved an average of seven percentage points in the first two years of the ELT initiative at the Citizen Schools partner sites.

Performance Changes in Each School

Edwards School. As noted, the Edwards made math a school-wide priority, and Edwards students made exceptional gains in math. The proportion of students scoring proficient or above on the math MCAS at Edwards increased by 17 percentage points from 2006 to 2008; this was 11 percentage points more than the district average of all middle schools (i.e., schools serving grades 6-8 only), as shown in Exhibit 3.

Student test scores on the ELA MCAS at Edwards increased six percentage points from 2006 to 2008, exceeding the gain of three percentage points across all other Boston middle schools.

Exhibit 3
Math and ELA Proficiency at Edwards, Umana,
and All Other Boston Middle Schools, 2006 and 2008

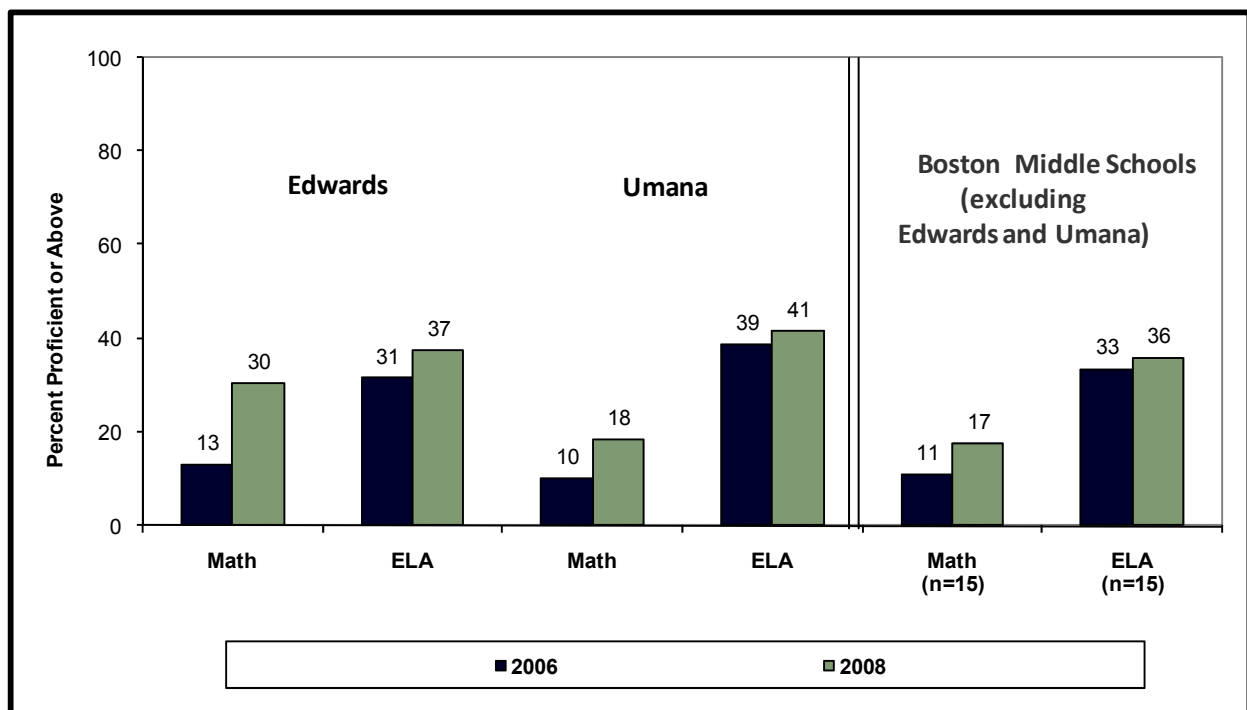


Exhibit reads: The proportion of students scoring proficient or above on the math MCAS increased 17 percentage points at Edwards from 2006 to 2008.

From 2006 to 2008, Edwards experienced large decreases in the percent of students performing at the warning/failing level on the math MCAS. Exhibit 4 summarizes math performance levels at Edwards School over the three years. The percent of Edwards students performing at the warning/failing level decreased from 54 percent in 2006 to 32 percent in 2008, a change of 22 percentage points. In comparison, the proportion of students performing at the warning/failing level on the math MCAS decreased four percentage points across all other Boston middle schools in the same period.

Exhibit 4 Math MCAS Performance at Edwards, by Year

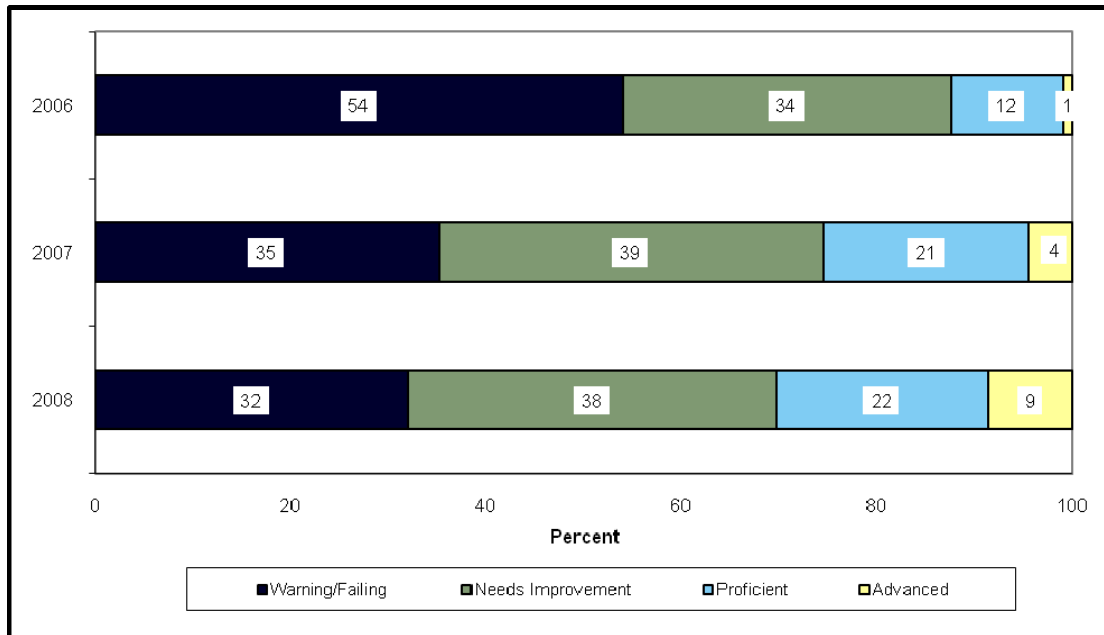


Exhibit reads: Fifty-four percent of Edwards’ students performed at the warning/failing level in 2006. The proportion of students scoring at the warning/failing level was 32 percent in 2008.

Umana Academy. Students scoring proficient or above on the math MCAS at Umana Academy increased by eight percentage points from 2006 to 2008, as shown in Exhibit 3. Sixth-grade math MCAS performance improved the most. The percentage of sixth-grade students scoring proficient or above in math rose 21 percentage points from 2006 to 2008. The proportion of students scoring proficient or above in ELA rose two percentage points from 2006 to 2008. Describing overall performance, one interview respondent said, “It’s the highest [increase] we have had.”

Salemwood School. The number of students scoring proficient or above on the math MCAS at Salemwood School increased by 18 percentage points from 2006 to 2008. Student performance on the math MCAS across all other middle-grades schools in the Malden district rose by the same amount, as illustrated in Exhibit 5. The proportion of Salemwood students scoring proficient or above in ELA increased 11 percentage points from 2006 to 2008. Across all other middle-grades schools in the Malden district, ELA MCAS proficiency rose by four percentage points.

Practices Contributing to Improved Learning

As the ELT initiative unfolded at the Edwards, Umana, and Salemwood schools, other reforms were also implemented simultaneously. This review does not allow us to link specific interventions or practices to the observed improvements in academic outcomes. However,

Exhibit 5
Math and ELA Proficiency at Salemwood and Malden Middle-Grades Schools, 2006 and 2008

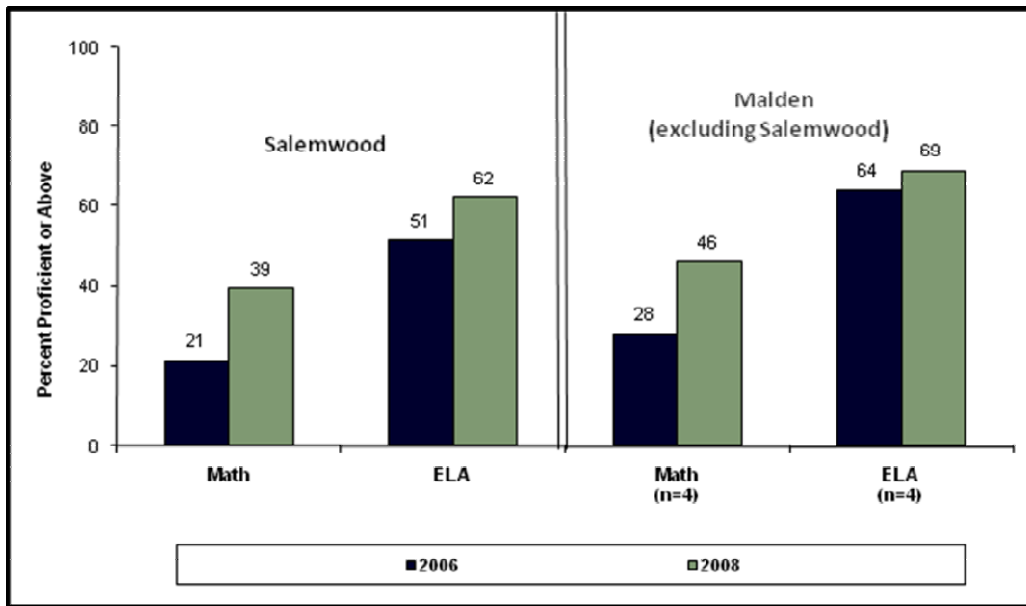


Exhibit reads: Math proficiency increased 18 percentage points at Salemwood and also by 18 percentage points across all other Malden middle-grades schools from 2006 to 2008.

interview data shed light on the policies and practices that have helped make the first two years of the ELT initiative successful at these three schools.

School administrators and Citizen Schools campus directors interviewed for this study identified program elements that were responsible for improved learning in their schools. In general, they pointed to widespread reform efforts throughout each school and district. They also attributed much of their success to the partnerships linking the schools and the external organizations and the steps that school and program staff took to make the initiative a success.

School and Partner Adaptations for Successful Collaboration

School administrators, teachers, and Citizen Schools staff had to negotiate new routines and policies in order to collaborate effectively. Each school and its partners took significant steps to foster meaningful, productive collaboration by, for example, integrating training and staff development across schools and provider organizations, blending academic instruction and Citizen Schools programming, and adapting the Citizen Schools model to the special conditions of the ELT initiative.

Integration of training and staff development. Participation in the ELT initiative allowed Citizen Schools staff to participate in teacher professional development and common planning time at the three schools. Staff had access to training on a variety of issues, such as handling cultural and background differences among students and managing classroom behavior.

Additionally, they received support from school staff in the delivery of academic instruction. At Edwards and Umana, ELT coordinators worked with Citizen Schools campus directors regularly to troubleshoot problems, keep each other informed, and communicate upcoming professional development opportunities.

For the Citizen Schools staff, they attend all of our staff trainings. They have frequent contact with parents. They go to our events. They utilize our data—MCAS, report cards, progress reports—which I think is a huge piece for an after-school program. It's unusual in a good way.

We are training the teachers in Citizen Schools and outside providers on how to handle cultural and background differences, as well as behavior... We are providing more support. More training in academics, in math.

Participating in professional development opportunities helped Citizen Schools staff become more connected to the school and helped them develop closer relationships with teachers. One campus director described staff development as contributing directly to change in student learning. Describing the experience, the campus director reported, “Before, everyone felt like they were on their own. Now, everyone is coming up with unified solutions to problems. Styles are rubbing off on each other.” Another campus director reported ways in which integrated professional development opportunities had been helpful at that campus:

The staff reach out to us more. It's not just us reaching out to them. This year, the staff [is] paired by grade level, they're just formalizing it. If there is a grade-level need, if they need an additional staff member there, they will ask Citizen Schools. If someone has to attend a meeting or run a fundraiser, they are more likely to go to a Citizen Schools staff member to cover class.

Blending of instruction and programming. At each of the three ELT schools, classroom staff and external partner staff began working more closely together and sharing strengths and expertise with one another. Interviewees reported that Citizen Schools staff and school-day staff became more familiar with each other's instructional content and shared their skills and expertise with one another, applying those skills to their own work.

There was a [Citizen Schools] staff member who had technological expertise. He had worked with the librarian and helped her bring technology into the lessons. Other staff members have worked in theater and, last year, they created a play. In past years, they didn't have one. One brought recycling into the schools.

[We are learning] lessons and techniques we can do with our kids... If they are mentally depressed, how do we deal with that? We are learning techniques to teach and other skills.

At the Edwards School, classroom teachers and math coaches worked with Citizen Schools staff in developing curriculum and lesson plans for sixth-grade Math League. They also worked with Citizen Schools staff in the math All-Stars and ELA All-Stars apprenticeships,

which are new Citizen Schools initiatives designed for students needing academic support in those subject areas. Additionally, the Citizen Schools program at Edwards integrated the school's violence-prevention curriculum into the Citizen Schools program model. Some school-day teachers even developed apprenticeships based on the Citizen Schools model as electives for their seventh- and eighth-grade students.

At the Umana Academy, Citizen Schools staff members were part of an integrated system of support. One interviewee said of the Citizen Schools program at Umana, "They are more involved in the school. They come to professional development. Now they are part of the direct training over the summer. They have changed a lot. They had to adapt to the teaching we use. They have to adapt to the content. They support the AVID [another special initiative], and they serve as tutors. We wanted to integrate them into the running of the building as much as possible."

At Salemwood, four Citizen Schools staff members worked daily alongside teachers in classrooms on year-long projects. Projects included the production of a play, working with English Language Learners in the school's Sheltered Immersion Program, and assisting teachers with instruction.

Citizen Schools' adaptation of its after-school model. Citizen Schools programs at the ELT schools had to make changes to their usual programming to help the schools meet their goals of delivering more academic instruction and enrichment. One administrator said of Citizen Schools, "If they did not adapt, the initiative would not have worked." Citizen Schools programming was adjusted at all three schools to align more fully with regular-day instruction. For example, the Edwards and Umana programs both eliminated the Citizen Schools homework hour. Edwards replaced the homework hour with Math League. The Umana program added an optional homework hour to the end of the school day for students wanting additional support. The Salemwood program divided one day of Citizen Schools program content across two days. Campus directors reported that the programming changes were gradual and responsive to the needs of partner schools and the students.

Last year, the way the model was structured, elements, timing—time blocks— were not matching up with the school. There were logistical issues. Little things added up more and more—not friction, everyone was trying to make it fit, to make it make sense in the school. We had an entire year of making changes. The schedule now really matches with the school day.

Additionally, interviewees reported that Citizen Schools programs had to align policies and program content with the school. Some programs had to adopt school behavior policies, and some had to focus more on academic content. One administrator reported that Citizen Schools staff incorporated district mandates and adopted the student code of conduct. Another administrator said, "We told them that we wanted to concentrate on mathematics. We had to take some kids from Citizen Schools because they were not doing well. We asked them to really look at their academic piece—especially math." One campus director reported, "The schools saw Citizen Schools as a valid program to offer exposure. We could handle the social side of things. We were also asked to handle the academic side of things."

Citizen Schools' Direct Contributions to Student Learning Improvements

A New Day for Learning, a report from the Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force of the C.S. Mott Foundation (2007), calls for reinvention of the school day to provide children with a seamless learning experience that encompasses multiple ways of learning, anchored to high standards, and aligned to educational resources throughout a community. Through the ELT initiative, students at the Edwards, Umana and Salemwood schools are now benefiting from such a learning experience. Interviewees reported that Citizen Schools made important contributions to improving the learning experience for students in the three schools, particularly by (1) extending academic instruction through opportunities to apply new skills and experience new ways of learning, (2) fostering students' social development and academic motivation, and (3) connecting the school with families and with the community.

Extension of academic instruction. Citizen Schools' trained staff extended the work of classroom teachers by providing opportunities for students to apply emerging academic skills and reinforce learning through exposure to real-world settings. During Math League at the Edwards School, staff incorporated math concepts into games to provide opportunities for students to practice math skills, reinforcing key concepts from regular-day lessons. In the second year of the Edwards program, Citizen Schools staff also developed a student leadership council that provided additional opportunities for the application and development of new skills. Veteran Citizen Schools staff worked with seventh-graders on the council to provide mentoring and guidance and to stimulate discussion of issues such as poverty, education, and the cultural context of schools. These students in turn served as mentors to sixth-grade Citizen Schools participants.

At all three Citizen Schools partner sites, the application of emerging academic skills occurred primarily within the apprenticeship program. Citizen Schools apprenticeships provided students in all three schools with opportunities to meet with experts from fields such as astronomy, law, marketing, and culinary arts once or twice a week and to explore career opportunities in these fields. Administrators and campus directors described how the apprenticeship experience reinforced academic instruction and extended learning:

[Having a variety of different partners] provides students with different modes of understanding. For me, a child in Citizen Schools is learning a lot when he talks to a lawyer [serving as a Citizen Schools volunteer] or is learning tennis or whatever. We should have schools that provide as many opportunities to learn as possible.

The apprenticeship model opens new doors, jobs for the future, exposure to career fields. That's not offered a lot in schools. We've had an array of people come in and be in contact with kids. We stress that this is the time to make a jump to be successful... We try to teach life lessons they don't get in classes and take classroom learning into real-world situations.

Social development and academic motivation. Interviewees reported that Citizen Schools contributed to student learning by helping students develop social skills that build confidence and facilitate positive interaction with peers and teachers.

We have control over confidence building. It transfers over to what happens in the classroom. Students lack the social skills they need to be successful in class on top of math and ELA skills. They need social skills, confidence, [instruction on how to] communicate struggles, and to advocate for themselves. Our kids are making a big jump [in terms of] how teachers view them individually.

One Citizen Schools campus director explained that apprenticeships provide students with life experiences like those that they will encounter after high school and that program staff emphasize the skills that youth will need in life, such as how to ask questions, how to organize, how to negotiate conflicts, and how to talk to peers and adults. One administrator said, “Citizen Schools provides one of the things that we are missing because of time and space. They promote a very strong culture of just belonging to an organization.” The administrator said that the students become part of something larger, and “it makes a difference.”

School administrators and campus directors agreed that Citizen Schools also contributed by motivating students to care about school. When asked to discuss any differences they see in the school, one administrator said, “With respect to student interest and motivation, from what I’m hearing from the staff, it’s a different place.” Another administrator said, “Citizen Schools has been helpful in covering the basics. They use lots of games for teaching. I think that motivates the kids to be able to not only want to do the games, but also to try more in the classroom.” One campus director said, “[The apprenticeships] really tie into subject matter and to student aspirations. Whatever their goal or dream is, we can tie it in. No doubt that has had the biggest effect on student learning. We teach them what needs to happen in school in order to get there.”

Campus directors reported that motivating and engaging students was a strength of the Citizen Schools program. One interviewee said, “We have more influence in encouraging kids to try their hardest . . . building the ability to do the work and empowering students.” Another campus director said, “Behavior is the one place we concentrate. It’s a long day. We try to curb that by concentrating on other things: how to get involved in class, getting organized, getting them comfortable. Every time they get a warning notice we look at why, talk about it, and put goals and steps on paper—goals for the upcoming term.”

Connections among school, family, and community. The Citizen Schools program also supported learning in the ELT schools by fostering relationships among schools, families, and community members. Citizen Schools staff typically made weekly or biweekly phone calls home to parents of participating students, and schools benefited from this outreach in a variety of ways. Citizen Schools staff provided schools with updated parent contact information, facilitated communication between classroom teachers and parents, and personalized communication between schools and families.

I know that we, as part of our program, we already call the parents. We have information on parents and family that schools don't have. We bring in families. We have potlucks, too. It helps the schools because it brings parents in quite a bit. The teachers and administrators are also there quite a bit. I don't know if the number of parent visits increased due to the program, but it's a bigger part of their life.

Citizen Schools program events provided opportunities for students, parents, community members, and school staff to meet and share in the Citizen Schools experience. Every semester, each Citizen Schools campus holds a WOW! event where parents, school staff, and community members are invited to see students present what they have learned in their apprenticeships. A campus director explained that, at WOW! events, “parents respond to the activities and the tangible products they [students] have to show. It makes them want to be in the building. It’s generating excitement.” Another campus director said that other community members also come in to see the WOW! events. “There are many people donating, coming in to see the WOW!s, and trying to get to know what is happening in the schools. We’re teaching them to be a greater part of society. We can bring people in to show them that things are different in the school.”

Citizen Schools also fosters new partnerships between the host school and other community partners. For example, Citizen Schools develops partnerships with local public and private organizations to recruit volunteers who serve as Citizen Teachers in the apprenticeship program. The involvement of community partners in the apprenticeship program can be a catalyst for the development of community relationships with the host school. A campus director gave an example of a connection made through the Citizen Schools program: “The television station—they have done ten apprenticeships. Now they work with the school. They videotape different programming, and we have been able to help with that.”

Creating Conditions for Successful Partnership

In *Time for Change: The Promise of Extended-Time Schools for Promoting Student Achievement* (2005), Farbman and Kaplan found that partnerships with experienced external organizations can broaden the types of enrichment opportunities that schools offer and can contribute to a well-rounded education; however, they cautioned that these partnerships require management and coordination. In collaboration with Citizen Schools, the Edwards, Umana, and Salemwood schools forged successful instructional partnerships to expand and enrich student learning time. The negotiations and contributions that they made in the first two years of the ELT initiative demonstrate the level of commitment needed to make an instructional partnership work.

A recent literature review examining inter-organizational work in schools found that effective school-level partnerships require the negotiation of rules and structures governing relationships and decision-making, an exchange of resources, aligned operations, clear and attainable goals, active leadership, professional development, and embedded self-evaluation (Foley et al., 2008). ELT participants interviewed for this study arrived at many of the same ideas about what it takes to create a successful instructional partnership.

When asked to reflect on their experience with the ELT initiative and the conditions necessary for successful partnership, particularly for students in the middle grades, interviewees emphasized the need for: flexibility and creativity; strong communication and clear expectations; meaningful collaboration and common goals; and commitment and buy-in from school leaders, teachers, and external partners.

Flexibility and creativity. Schools and external partners need to be flexible and innovative. One administrator said that all parties need to be creative with the extra time and to ensure that the expanded school day is not just more of the same. A campus director reported, “The campus director has to have a free-thinking mind. They need to be able to adapt, think on their feet, have Citizen Schools experience, and try to find the balance between what can work and what can’t work.” Another director explained, “Both sides have to be flexible. You can’t go in and run a program as is. You need to find innovations that directly address students’ needs.”

Communication and clear expectations. Participants voiced the need for clear expectations. One interviewee said, “There needs to be a blanket statement of what the non-negotiables are.” Another said, “The principal needs to be open, and staff need to know what the program is offering. . . . Staff need to understand what the partners bring to the table.”

All agreed that strong communication early and often was absolutely necessary. One administrator said that it was important to have frequent check-in’s as an opportunity to voice what was working and not working, and then for participants to receive support based on this input. One campus director noted, “The first year we didn’t have communication. There was some animosity in how the classroom was going to be run while the teacher was away—how discipline was going to be handled. A lot of that is cut out now. Our staff [is] welcome in professional development. That makes a difference.” Another said, “We learned through communication what needs to get done when. It [the ELT partnership] allowed the school overall to have more communication. Teachers are more receptive and understanding. They are starting to see the outcomes.”

Collaboration and common goals. In all three schools, school and partner personnel took steps to work together toward the same educational philosophy. Administrators and Citizen School staff agreed on the need for clear, well-aligned goals.

In general, because our organization has a similar mission to the school—serving kids and communities—I think that that has allowed us to form a strong collaboration throughout everything. It has made our program. It has brought more kids into the after-school program because they are familiar with the staff during the day. We are more efficient because the Citizen Schools staff [is] familiar with the school-day content. The school staff [is] also more comfortable referring students to us, and they do.

Although negotiating structures is an ongoing task, the schools and Citizen Schools programs committed to the goal of doing what was best for students. As one administrator put it, there was a feeling that “they are all there for the sake of the kids.” One campus director noted, “The organization that the school is partnering with needs to have the same goals, otherwise lots of little things can get in the way.”

Commitment and buy-in. Commitment and buy-in from school leadership, teachers, and external partner staff were conditions that many described as essential for successful partnership. Allowing teachers and staff to participate actively in decision-making and being respectful of each other’s programming were both important to administrators and Citizen Schools staff. One administrator said, “You need good leadership and [also] participation in the decision-making process. Teachers need to be part of decision-making. You cannot impose this on teachers.” A campus director said, “The school has to buy into it and support it.” Another said, “Buy-in from the principal has to be key.” As one respondent said, “What really drives the school is the level of commitment. All in all, in the first year, very few [school-day] teachers were involved in staying late. What we’re seeing [now] is teachers wanting to stay, to teach new classes, seeing everyone in the building working together to make things work.”

Looking Ahead

ELT implementation at the Edwards, Umana, and Salemwood schools is a work in progress. The integration of instruction and programming with external partners is continually being refined. School leaders and Citizen Schools leaders are steadily improving collaboration and developing effective practices. The dedication and efforts of leaders and staff are improving student outcomes on state standardized tests. Families are noticing and are encouraging their children to participate in the Citizen Schools activities at their schools. At Edwards, enrollment has reversed a years-long decline, with sixth-grade enrollment more than doubling from 2007-08 to 2008-09. Further, partners are committed to making the initiative work and are focused on achieving the same result—student educational success and well-being. When asked to share any final thoughts on the ELT experience, one administrator responded, “It’s the best thing I’ve ever done.”

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Appendix

Study Design and Analysis Approach

To answer the questions posed for this review, PSA staff reviewed relevant prior research, collected and analyzed performance data, and conducted interviews with administrators and Citizen Schools campus directors in each of the three schools. Performance data consisted of school-wide average scores in math and ELA on the state standardized achievement test, the MCAS. The combined scores of Edwards, Umana and Salemwood schools were compared with the corresponding mean scores of three groups: the other four Cohort I ELT schools serving middle-grades schools, all middle-grades schools in Massachusetts, and all middle-grades schools in Massachusetts that were eligible to receive Supplemental Educational Services (SES) in either 2007 or 2008. SES eligible schools were identified as an appropriate comparison group because Edwards, Umana, and Salemwood have all been categorized as “in need of improvement” under the No Child Left Behind Act and are therefore eligible for SES. For the purpose of this study, middle-grades schools refer to all schools serving youth in grades 6-8, including K-8 schools and 6-12 schools. Comparisons of Edwards and Umana performance to other Boston schools (Exhibit 3) are limited to other Boston middle schools (grades 6-8 only) only, not all schools serving these grades plus other grades.

Two PSA researchers conducted interviews with school administrators and Citizen Schools campus directors in December 2008. Researchers took detailed notes during the interviews, debriefed after each interview, and cleaned their notes immediately, culling them for relevant information. Interview data were organized and coded by respondent position, by school, and by research question.

Statistical tests comparing means among the cluster of Citizen Schools partner schools and statewide comparison groups of schools did not yield statistically significant differences. Tests of significance comparing individual Citizen Schools partner schools and district-level groups of schools were not performed because performance data were only available at the school level, and hence evaluators had no measure of variation within the possible distribution of scores among students at a school. Tests of statistical significance comparing means without a distribution of scores are unnecessary because the observed difference in means is absolute. For this analysis, evaluators assumed the means for individual schools were the actual population mean of that school. When data are gathered from the entire population, sampling error is eliminated and thus eliminates the need for statistical significance testing.

This was a small-scale study and, therefore, has several limitations:

- Small interview sample: The interview sample provided only two perspectives from each site, from a Citizen Schools staff member and a school administrator.
- Use of secondary performance data: Performance data were only available at the school level. Student-level data were not available for these analyses.
- Changing implementation of the ELT initiative and influences of unrelated issues and conditions: The ELT initiative has been in place for less than three years, and the model at each school has not yet matured. Further, other external providers and reform efforts are present in the schools. With the data available, performance gains cannot be linked to specific interventions.