



**PREPARING STUDENTS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES
TO SUCCEED IN HIGH SCHOOL**

Findings from Phase IV of the Citizen Schools Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Citizen Schools provides afterschool programs of educational enrichment, career exposure, and high school and college preparation for students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Citizen Schools enrolls students for the school year (approximately 400 hours) and offers an integrated program of skill-building, teamwork, and fun through daily academic support, a School Navigation curriculum, community explorations, leadership development, and hands-on apprenticeships. In apprenticeships, students work side by side with adult volunteers, called Citizen Teachers, to develop skills, explore career fields, and create products and presentations of professional quality. For example, students and Citizen Teachers have built and raced model solar cars, published children's books and community newspapers, worked with older adults to compile oral histories, conducted water-quality testing, launched web sites for nonprofit organizations, and conducted mock trials before real judges and juries of community leaders. These varied learning opportunities are intended to support participants in making successful transitions to high school and ultimately in achieving long-term academic and social success. As documented in other reports in this series, Citizen Schools participants are typically low-achieving students of color from low-income families. In order to measure the impact of its program, Citizen Schools has sponsored a multi-year longitudinal evaluation that has examined the middle-school experiences of Citizen Schools participants in Boston and has tracked former participants into high school.

A central finding of the current phase of the evaluation, which focused on students' transition to and progress in high school, is that former participants in 8th Grade Academy, the Citizen Schools program specifically designed for eighth-grade participants in Boston, selected high-quality high schools at a rate higher than expected had they not participated in Citizen Schools, as determined based on the high school selections of matched comparison students. This difference was large, with 65 percent of former 8th Grade Academy participants selecting highly rated high schools and 26 percent of matched nonparticipants selecting such schools.

Examination of the early high school experiences of former 8th Grade Academy participants overall indicates that their educational performance in ninth grade exceeded that of matched nonparticipants on key indicators of school engagement and academic achievement including attendance and English course grades. In addition, former 8th Grade Academy participants with high levels of exposure to Citizen Schools outperformed matched nonparticipants in on-time promotion to tenth grade and in lower rates of school suspension.

Participants' Performance on Ninth-Grade Success Measures, Compared with Matched Nonparticipants

Indicator	Former 8th Grade Academy Participants		
	All	High Exposure	Low Exposure
Selection of a high-quality high school	✓***	✓***	✓***
Ninth-grade attendance	✓*	✓	✓
Ninth-grade suspension	✓	✓*	
Ninth-grade third-marking period English course grade	✓*	✓*	✓
Ninth-grade third-marking period math course grade	✓	✓	✓
On-time promotion to tenth grade	✓	✓*	✓

- ✓ Finding is in the right direction, although not statistically significant
- ✓* Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .05$
- ✓** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .01$
- ✓*** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .001$

In the tenth grade, former 8th Grade Academy participants earned higher math course grades than did matched nonparticipants, receiving almost half of a grade point higher than they otherwise would have earned. This finding is especially noteworthy given a much higher proportion of former 8th Grade Academy participants chose to attend high-quality high schools, compared to matched nonparticipants. On other measures of educational performance in the tenth grade (i.e., English course grades and standardized test scores in English and math), differences between former 8th Grade Academy participants and matched nonparticipants were evident present and favored participants but were not statistically significant (probably due to small sample sizes). The only emerging trend among former participants that warrants concern is their tenth-grade suspension rate, which exceeded that of matched nonparticipants by seven percentage points.

Looking across the evaluation's Phase IV findings, it is clear that Citizen Schools is effectively supporting program participants in making positive transitions to high school and in achieving desired academic outcomes in the ninth grade, as compared to the high school transition patterns and academic outcomes of matched nonparticipants. The evaluation will continue to track former 8th Grade Academy participants as they progress through high school and will report at a later date on whether the early signals of positive academic progress in tenth

grade are confirmed and whether former participants fare better in eleventh and twelfth grades than had they not participated in Citizen Schools.

1. Evaluation Context

Citizen Schools is premised on a belief that an intensive two- to three-year Citizen Schools experience in middle school, when combined with transition to a high-quality high school, will put most students on a path toward academic and social success. Such success means that students master the New Basic Skills (i.e., writing and oral communication, using data to solve problems, working effectively on diverse teams, and using technology as a tool, as described by Levy & Murnane [1996]), complete high school successfully, complete college or intensive workforce training, and become lifelong civic and workforce leaders. Central to this premise is an emphasis on equipping students with the knowledge and skills that they will need to successfully transition to and progress through high school.

8th Grade Academy's Emphasis on Supporting Transitions

Transitions can be particularly stressful for youth. Large proportions of students fail to navigate the transition from the middle grades (grades 6-8) to high school successfully. In fact, 30 percent of entering ninth-graders leave school without a regular high school diploma (Sum & Harrington, 2003). More than half of dropouts leave school by the tenth grade (Focus Adolescent Services, 2000). For every 100 young people who enter ninth grade, only 67 graduate from high school, 38 enter college, 26 are still enrolled in college after their freshman year, and 18 graduate with an associate's or a bachelor's degree within three and six years, respectively (National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2000). Recent analyses of the graduation rates of Boston Public Schools (BPS) high school students, in particular, paint an even grimmer picture. Projected four-year dropout rates for BPS students generated by the Massachusetts Department of Education suggest that approximately one-third of the city's public high school students will not graduate from high school with a regular diploma (Sum, McLaughlin, & Motroni, 2005). Using alternative methodologies to calculate the graduation rates of BPS' Classes of 1998 to 2003, researchers have estimated the high school completion rates of BPS students as low as 51 percent for the Class of 2003 and as high as 64 percent for the Class of 2002 (Sum et al., 2005).

Citizen Schools works to improve the odds of high school success and completion for its participants, who are at even greater risk due to their demographic and educational characteristics (Fabiano, Pearson, & Williams, 2005). Successful transitions from the middle grades to high school are especially difficult for students from traditionally underserved backgrounds, as Citizen Schools participants are. Youth from poor families (Laird, DeBell, & Chapman, 2006), youth from urban school systems (Sum et al., 2003), and youth who are

low-achieving or held back before entering high school (Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2000; Kaufman & Bradby, 1992) are more likely to drop out of high school than are youth from families with higher incomes, youth who attend school in non-urban areas, and youth who achieve at higher levels academically.

In 2001-02, Citizen Schools launched its 8th Grade Academy program to prepare and support students as they embark on this crucial transition period. The 8th Grade Academy draws students from multiple schools, especially from those in which Citizen Schools has a school-year program serving sixth- and seventh-graders. Like the sixth- and seventh-grade program, 8th Grade Academy offers apprenticeships with adult volunteers and community explorations. It also helps participants apply to and succeed in high-quality high schools and to raise their aspirations for college. To do this, 8th Grade Academy holds high school fairs and hosts dinners and other events for parents and students, during which Citizen Schools staff provide families with information and resources about high schools in Boston and the high-school application process. One such resource is Citizen Schools' own *Guide to Boston High Schools*, which presents detailed information on, among other things, the characteristics of each high school's student body and teaching staff, the school's academic track record, and its graduation rates. Looking ahead to the transition to college, Citizen Schools takes 8th Grade Academy participants on college visits, including a three-day visit to the University of Vermont, where students visit classes, attend social events, and engage in other activities that provide a concrete awareness of college life. To help students develop their writing skills for high school and college-level success, 8th Grade Academy assigns each student a writing coach, who is typically a local lawyer volunteering every other week for two hours. 8th Grade Academy participants meet their lawyers at their respective law firms and receive coaching and support on becoming a strong writer.

In 2004, Citizen Schools launched its alumni program. This program is intended to support 8th Grade Academy graduates and their families during the high school transition period by: helping students to keep in touch with their writing coaches and fellow 8th Grade Academy classmates; providing students with additional resources on college, career, and enrichment opportunities; celebrating their achievements; and bringing them together with a supportive network of Citizen Schools alumni.

Evaluation Overview

Since 2001, Policy Studies Associates has conducted a multi-phase evaluation that assesses Citizen Schools' progress toward advancing the academic success of educationally at-risk middle school students and in supporting positive life trajectories for these youth. The evaluation relies on data provided by BPS and three Boston-area charter schools to measure students' educational engagement and academic achievement. To measure the program's impact on

participants, the evaluation uses a quasi-experimental design that relies on a matched-comparison group of similar BPS students not enrolled in Citizen Schools. Information available to evaluators on the comparison group consists of certain school-related experiences and demographic characteristics and does not include information on comparison-group members' after-school experiences. (See Appendix A for a more complete discussion of the evaluation's analytic approach.)

Findings from the first three years of the evaluation indicate that Citizen Schools attracts and retains educationally at-risk students who report a strong sense of connection to the program and who report that they experience positive relationships with adults and peers (Fabiano et al., 2005). Students also report feeling more confident in their public speaking skills as a result of program participation, and they report fairly frequent opportunities to participate in hands-on learning and take on leadership roles at Citizen Schools. In addition, while in middle school, participants are more engaged in school and perform better than they would have had they not participated in Citizen Schools. Specifically, following students' first year of participation in Citizen Schools, sixth- and seventh-grade program participants perform better than their matched nonparticipants with respect to school attendance, suspension rates, grade promotion, and the seventh-grade MCAS English Language Arts (ELA) test. Participants who attend Citizen Schools at high levels also outperform matched nonparticipants in their English and mathematics courses. Regardless of exposure levels, the evaluation found no improvements in participants' performance on the sixth-grade MCAS test in mathematics associated with Citizen Schools participation. As eighth-graders, 8th Grade Academy participants attend school more often, are more likely to be promoted, and earn higher scores on the eighth-grade MCAS Mathematics test than had they not participated in Citizen Schools. While eighth-grade suspension rates are lower and English and mathematics grades are higher among participants than they are among matched nonparticipants, participants and nonparticipants do not differ at statistically significant levels. (See Appendix B for summary tables of the Phase III middle-school results.)

In addition, analyses of high school choices made by three cohorts of former 8th Grade Academy participants revealed that, compared with a group of similar nonparticipants, Citizen Schools students select college-track high schools at a higher rate. Data on two cohorts of former 8th Grade Academy participants who progressed to ninth grade within the first three years of the evaluation showed that 8th Grade Academy students overall earn higher course grades in English and mathematics in ninth grade than do matched nonparticipants. In addition, the evaluation found that those students who participated at high levels of exposure (i.e., participation for two or more years at a rate of 60 percent or higher in each semester) attend school more and are suspended less than matched-comparison students.

Between the 2001-02 and 2004-05 school years (the school years that are covered by this report), 354 students participated in Citizen Schools 8th Grade Academy and had parental consent to be included in the evaluation, with 48 students participating in the 2001-02 class, 85 participating in the 2002-03 class, 118 participating in the 2003-04 class, and 103 participating in the 2004-05 class. Ninety-seven percent of former 8th Grade Academy participants were promoted to the ninth grade at the end of the year in which they participated in 8th Grade Academy. Promotion to ninth grade did not vary at a statistically significant level by 8th Grade Academy class year, nor did it differ between the group of 8th Grade Academy participants and the group of matched nonparticipants. Of the former 8th Grade Academy participants, 168 students (or 49 percent) participated in Citizen Schools for two or more years (including 8th Grade Academy) at an attendance rate of 60 percent or more each semester for all semesters. The evaluation considers these students to have experienced high levels of program exposure. Students who did not meet this participation criterion are considered to have low levels of program exposure.

To be included in any of the Phase IV analyses, students must have been promoted to the ninth grade at the end of the year in which they participated in 8th Grade Academy (i.e., students who participated in 8th Grade Academy but then repeated the eighth grade are not included in the analyses). In Phases I through III, the evaluation presented findings on students' engagement and achievement during and following their participation in Citizen Schools. For a detailed summary of these findings, see Fabiano et al., 2005. In contrast, the Phase IV analyses focus only on former 8th Grade Academy participants as they transition to high school and progress through the ninth- and tenth-grade years. The high school selection analysis in this report includes students from four 8th Grade Academy classes (the 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04, and 2004-05 classes). The ninth-grade analysis sample includes students from the 2001-02 through 2003-04 8th Grade Academy classes. The 2001-02 and 2002-03 8th Grade Academy classes constitute the sample for the analysis of tenth-grade engagement and achievement. The size of the analysis samples depends on the number of 8th Grade Academy classes that were eligible to be included in the analysis, given their grade in school, and the number of students for whom data on both the participant and matched nonparticipant were available for that outcome. (See Appendix C for more information on analysis sample sizes.)

This report presents analyses that compare the high school selection, school engagement (i.e., school attendance and suspension), and achievement (i.e., course grades, standardized test scores, and promotion to the next grade) of former 8th Grade Academy participants with the outcomes of a matched comparison group of nonparticipants. The specific measures included in the

analyses are: quality of high school in which the student enrolled¹; attendance and suspension rates; course grades in English and mathematics in ninth and tenth grades; on-time promotion to tenth grade; and tenth-grade scores on the state tests (i.e., MCAS tests in English Language Arts and mathematics, which students are required to pass in order to graduate from public high school) in those same subject areas. These findings are reported for the sample of participants overall and separately by program exposure levels, except for the tenth-grade analyses where sample sizes were too small to reliably report the data by exposure levels.

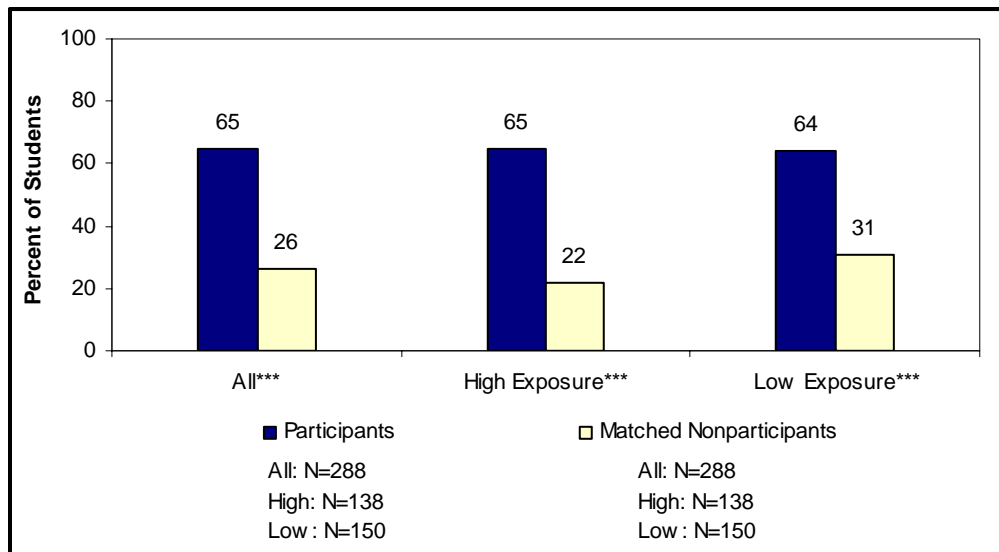
¹ Citizen Schools provided evaluators with ratings—high, middle, and low—for the high schools attended by participants and matched nonparticipants. According to these ratings, a high-quality high school was a school with a high level of educational culture, support, and achievement, as indicated by the qualitative and quantitative data available. Specific measures included MCAS passing rates, attendance rates, suspension rates, student achievement, promotion rates, drop-out rates, graduation rates, and college/career training enrollment. Measures used to determine ratings also included resources available at the school, external partnerships, school themes, and courses offered, especially high-level and college-preparation courses versus standard courses.

2. High School Selection

This section first presents findings on the rated quality of high schools selected by former 8th Grade Academy participants, compared with the quality of high schools selected by matched nonparticipants, to assess Citizen Schools' effect on high school selection. Next, Phase IV findings are compared with Phase III findings in this regard. Lastly, the section presents data on student characteristics that are associated with enrollment in a high-quality high school among former 8th Grade Academy participants.

Following their participation in 8th Grade Academy, students selected high-quality high schools at a rate higher than had they not participated in Citizen Schools. This was particularly true among high-exposure participants. Among former 8th Grade Academy participants (N=288), 65 percent of students and 26 percent of matched nonparticipants (N=288) selected high quality high schools (see Exhibit 1). Former 8th Grade Academy participants with high levels of program exposure also differed from their matched nonparticipants, with 65 percent of high-exposure participants selecting high quality high schools, compared with 22 percent of nonparticipants. Among former 8th Grade Academy participants with low levels of exposure, 64 percent selected high quality high schools, compared with 31 percent of nonparticipants, a somewhat smaller difference between participants and matched nonparticipants than that found for participants with high levels of exposure.

Exhibit 1
Percent of Former 8th Grade Academy Participants Selecting High-Quality High Schools, Compared with Matched Nonparticipants



* Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .05$

** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .01$

*** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .001$

Overall, the Phase IV findings on high school selection were consistent with those in Phase III. As in Phase III, compared with matched nonparticipants, higher proportions of participants enrolled in high-quality high schools. In addition, the amount by which participants outperformed matched nonparticipants was similar in both phases. That is, in both phases, the evaluation found a difference of 39 percentage points between participants overall and matched nonparticipants (i.e., 72 percent versus 33 percent in Phase III and 65 percent versus 26 percent in Phase IV); a difference of 43 percentage points between high-exposure participants and matched nonparticipants; and a difference of 36 percentage points between low-exposure participants and matched nonparticipants in Phase III and 33 percentage points in Phase IV. (See Appendix D for a table that presents Phase IV and Phase III results side by side.)

Looking just at the data on participants, the evaluation found that the addition of the 2004-05 8th Grade Academy class resulted in a seven-point decrease in the percentage of former 8th Grade Academy participants who selected high-quality high schools (i.e., from 72 percent to 65 percent). The 2004-05 8th Grade Academy class was comprised of 89 students, 56 percent of whom selected high-quality high schools.

While achievement levels (as measured by baseline course grades and standardized test scores) were very low among former 8th Grade Academy participants who went on to select high schools that received Citizen Schools' highest rating, these former participants were not as educationally at-risk as those former 8th Grade Academy participants who did not select high-quality schools. Evaluators conducted an exploratory analysis to assess whether particular student characteristics were associated with the selection of high school that received Citizen Schools' highest rating. It is important to note that this analysis differs from the impact analysis on which the findings presented earlier in this chapter were based, in that it does *not* assess whether former 8th Grade Academy participants selected better high schools than had they not participated in Citizen Schools, as compared with matched nonparticipants. Rather, this analysis is limited to the group of former 8th Grade Academy participants, and it examines whether characteristics differ between those participants who attended high schools receiving Citizen Schools' highest rating and those who did not. The purpose of this analysis is to add to Citizen Schools' understanding of the student-level factors that are associated with the quality of the high school in which a student enrolls and to help Citizen Schools consider whether program refinements can be made to help particular types of students enroll in the most highly rated schools, keeping in mind that there are factors related to the high school enrollment process in BPS that are beyond Citizen Schools' influence (e.g., the case of lotteries to select students from a pool of applicants; admission requirements set by schools including entry exams).

Data from this analysis indicate that, compared with former 8th Grade Academy participants who did *not* select high schools with the highest rating, former participants who *did* select these high schools were not as likely to have received Special Education services (19 percent, compared to 32 percent) or to have scored in the bottom proficiency level of the MCAS English Language Arts or mathematics tests (42 percent compared to 60 percent in English Language Arts, and 33 percent compared to versus 42 percent in mathematics). In addition, baseline grades in English and math of former 8th Grade Academy participants who selected highly rated high schools were higher than the grades of participants who did not select such schools (2.19 compared to 1.79 in English Language Arts, and 1.92 compared to 1.50 in mathematics). With respect to suspension, former participants who enrolled in high schools receiving Citizen Schools' highest rating were suspended at a lower rate than were former participants who did not enroll in these high schools (4 percent compared to 15 percent).

3. Ninth-Grade School Engagement and Academic Achievement

As stated in Chapter 2 of this report, Citizen Schools has helped large proportions of its participants enroll in high schools with high levels of educational culture, support, and achievement, as marked by MCAS passing rates, college-prep course offerings, and graduation rates. In addition, evidence from Phases I through III indicates that, while Citizen Schools positively affected student achievement in English and math in the middle school years, these students were still achieving at very low levels at the end of the eighth-grade year (Fabiano et al., 2005). On average, they earned between a C- and a C in their English and math courses. With such low achievement in middle school, one would expect that former 8th Grade Academy participants would struggle in the ninth-grade year and that this would be especially true for the great proportion of former Citizen Schools participants who enrolled in high-quality high schools. In fact, it would not be surprising if these former participants fared worse or the same as the matched nonparticipants, especially given the fact that participants tended to attend higher quality high schools than nonparticipants, as reported in Chapter 2. The findings presented in Exhibit 2 and discussed in this chapter, however, show that this was not the case.

Exhibit 2
Summary of Differences Between Former 8th Grade Academy Participants and Matched Nonparticipants in Ninth Grade

Indicator	All		High Exposure		Low Exposure	
	N	Difference Between Participants and Matched Nonparticipants	N	Difference Between Participants and Matched Nonparticipants	N	Difference Between Participants and Matched Nonparticipants
School attendance	170 ^a	5*	71	4	99	5
School suspension	170	-4	72	-9**	98	0
English course grade	114	.34*	46	.60*	68	.17
Mathematics course grade	99	.29	40	.46	59	.18
On-time promotion to tenth grade	237 ^b	4	100	11*	137	0

^a The Ns reported here represent the number of participants in each analysis. The evaluation measures impact by comparing each participant to a similar nonparticipating student (or “matched nonparticipant”). The number of matched nonparticipants included in an analysis always equals the number of participants in that analysis.

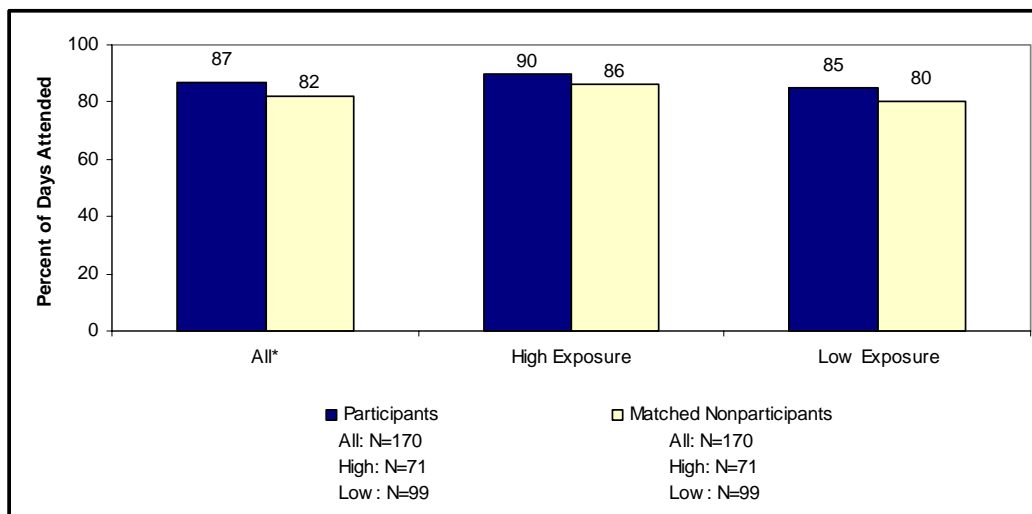
^b Note: The number of students included in the analysis of on-time promotion to tenth grade is higher than the number of students included in the other ninth-grade analyses. This is the case because a student was included in the analysis of on-time promotion to tenth grade as long as s/he was in the ninth grade in the year following participation in 8th Grade Academy and in the tenth grade two years following participation in the 8th Grade Academy. It was possible, therefore, for a student to be included in the analysis of on-time promotion to tenth grade even if that student was missing data on all other ninth-grade variables. For more information, see Appendix C.

Indeed, for former Citizen Schools participants (most of whom went on to attend high-quality high schools) participation in Citizen Schools in the middle-school years was associated with higher school attendance rates and English course grades in ninth grade, as compared with matched nonparticipants. In addition, former 8th Grade Academy participants with high levels of exposure outperformed matched nonparticipants with respect to school suspension, on-time promotion to tenth grade, and English, but not math, course grades. Although the magnitude of the differences between participants and matched nonparticipants tended to be smaller on most measures in Phase IV than in Phase III, the pattern was consistent across phases (see Appendix D).

Looking at former 8th Grade Academy participants during the ninth-grade year, the evaluation found the following:

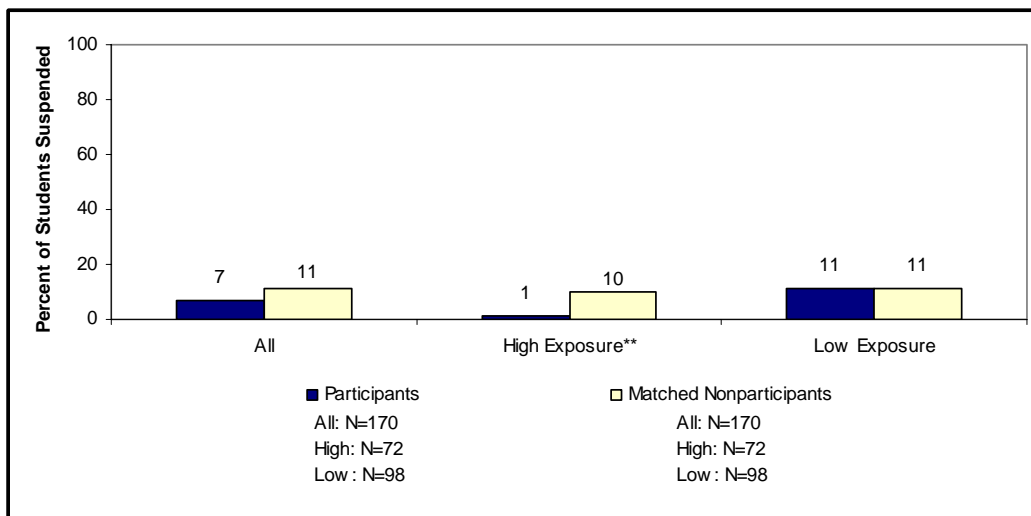
- School attendance.** Compared with matched nonparticipants, former 8th Grade Academy participants attended school at a higher rate. That is, participants attended school 87 percent of the time, whereas nonparticipants attended 82 percent of the time, for a difference of 5 percentage points or approximately nine days of school (see Exhibit 3). The evaluation found similar gaps between participants and nonparticipants in analyses that grouped participants by exposure levels, but these differences were not statistically significant.

Exhibit 3
Ninth-Grade School Attendance Rate of Former 8th Grade Academy Participants, Compared with Matched Nonparticipants



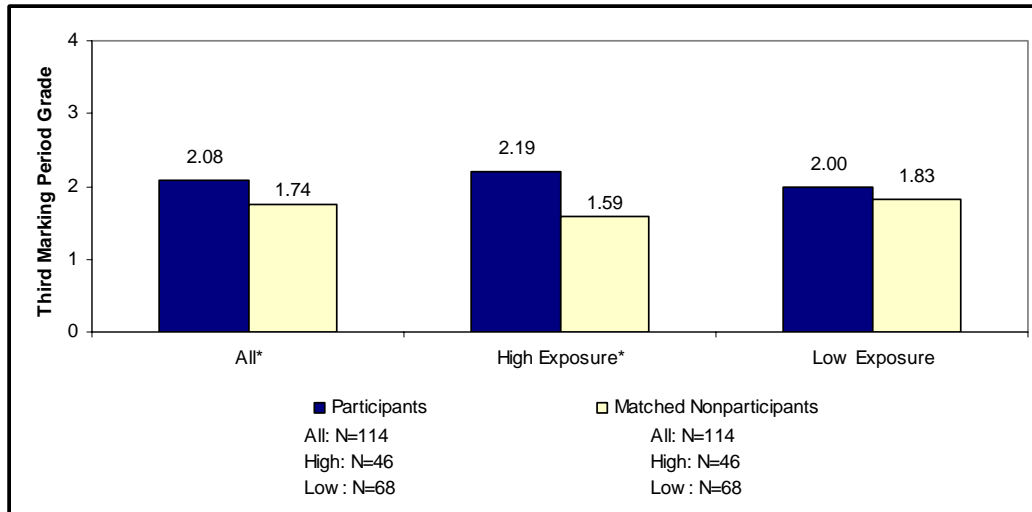
- School suspension.** The school suspension rate among former 8th Grade Academy participants with high levels of exposure was 9 percentage points lower than it was among matched nonparticipants (1 percent versus 10 percent), as shown in Exhibit 4. No statistically significant differences were found for the group of former 8th Grade Academy participants overall or for the group of former participants with low levels of exposure.

Exhibit 4
Ninth-Grade Suspension Rate of Former 8th Grade Academy Participants, Compared with Matched Nonparticipants



- English course grades.** In ninth-grade English courses, former 8th Grade Academy participants overall and those with high levels of exposure outperformed matched nonparticipants (2.08 compared to 1.74, and 2.19 compared to 1.59, respectively) (see Exhibit 5) at statistically significant levels. Students with low levels of exposure earned an average English grade of 2.00 while matched nonparticipants earned an average of 1.83, but this difference was not statistically significant. Even with the gains they experienced, former participants overall continued to achieve at low levels, earning an average grade between a C and C+ in English.

Exhibit 5
Ninth-Grade Average English Grade of
Former 8th Grade Academy Participants in Third Marking Period,
Compared with Matched Nonparticipants



- ***Mathematics course grades.*** The ninth-grade average mathematics course grade among former 8th Grade Academy participants was higher than that of matched nonparticipants (see Exhibit 6), but this difference was not statistically significant. Differences among the high and low exposure groups also favored the participants but were not statistically significant. While the evidence suggests that former participants improved, it is important to note that these students continue to achieve at low levels earning an average grade of C- in mathematics.
- ***On-time promotion to the tenth grade.*** Eighty-eight percent of former 8th Grade Academy participants overall were promoted to tenth grade on time (i.e., they were in tenth grade two years after their participation in the 8th Grade Academy), compared with 84 percent of matched nonparticipants, but this difference was not statistically significant. Former 8th Grade Academy participants with high exposure, however, did outperform matched nonparticipants at a statistically significant level. These students were promoted on-time to the tenth grade at a higher rate (92 percent compared to 81 percent) (see Exhibit 7).

Exhibit 6
Ninth-Grade Average Mathematics Grade of
Former 8th Grade Academy Participants in Third Marking Period,
Compared with Matched Nonparticipants

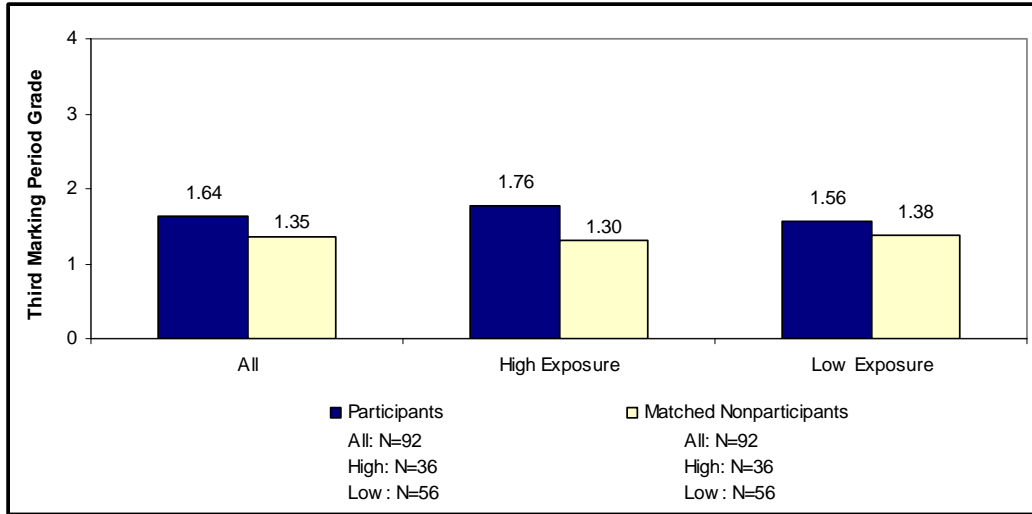
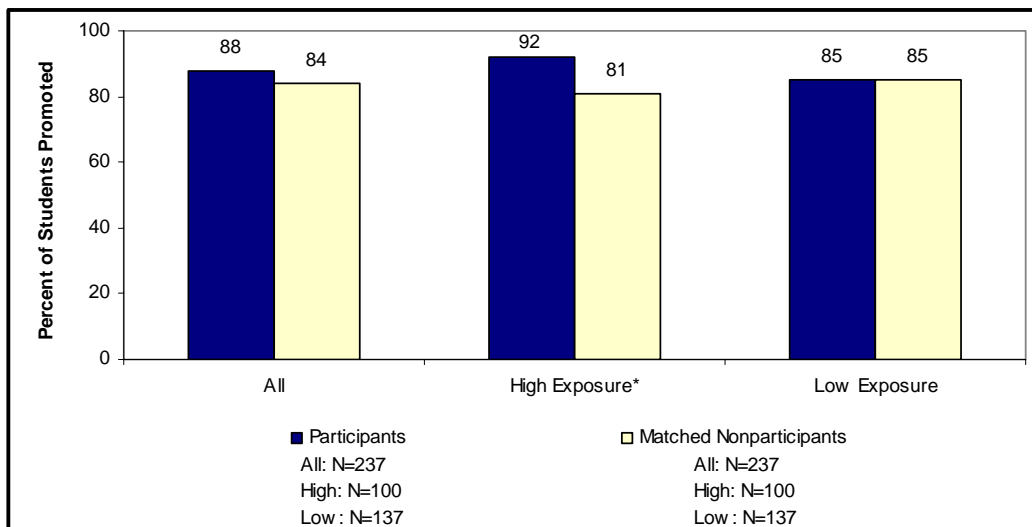


Exhibit 7
On-Time Promotion to the Tenth Grade of Former 8th Grade
Academy Participants, Compared with Matched Nonparticipants



As noted earlier in this chapter, the fact that former 8th Grade Academy participants outperformed matched nonparticipants in ninth grade is especially noteworthy given that former participants were more likely to be enrolled in high-quality high schools. This raises the question of whether participation in Citizen Schools has an effect on the ninth-grade performance of former participants that is separate from the benefits associated with attending high-quality high schools. To test this theory further, evaluators conducted a separate analysis that was restricted to ninth-grade data on participants and nonparticipants who attended high-quality high schools, removing the evaluation requirement that both the participants and his/her individual match be included in an analysis.² The demographic and prior achievement data showed that 8th Grade Academy participants in this analysis were more educationally at-risk than the nonparticipant group. Participants were more likely to receive free or reduced-price lunch (88 percent, compared with 80 percent of matched nonparticipants) and Special Education services (19 percent, compared with 13 percent of matched nonparticipants) before entering Citizen Schools, and score at the warning level on the fourth-grade MCAS tests (41 percent, compared with 28 percent of matched nonparticipants). Despite these characteristics, former participants in high-quality high schools attended school more, were suspended less, and earned higher grades in ninth grade than did students in the nonparticipant group (see Exhibit 8), although not at statistically significant levels. While not statistically significant, these differences suggest that participating in Citizen Schools may have a positive effect on high school performance that is separate from the quality of the high schools attended by the students.

Exhibit 8
Summary of Differences Between
Former 8th Grade Academy Participants and Nonparticipants
Who Attended High-Quality High Schools in Ninth Grade

Indicator	<i>N</i>	Participants in High-Quality High Schools	<i>N</i>	Matched Nonparticipants in High-Quality High Schools	Difference Between Participants and Matched Nonparticipants
School attendance rate	106	92%	67	90%	2
School suspension rate	106	2%	67	4%	-2
English course grade	99	2.18	54	1.88	.30
Mathematics course grade	84	1.91	51	1.72	.19
On-time promotion to tenth grade	157	88%	67	84%	4

² Requiring that the comparison group be comprised of an individual match for each participant, as is done in the rest of the evaluation's analyses, would result in a very low N for this analysis. Therefore, the evaluators included in this analysis all participants and nonparticipants who attended high-quality schools.

4. Tenth-Grade School Engagement and Academic Achievement

Former Citizen Schools participants earned higher mathematics course grades than matched nonparticipants but did not outperform the comparison group at statistically significant levels on other measures of engagement and achievement in the tenth grade (see Exhibit 9). One reason for this result could be that small sample sizes require that differences be quite large in order to be statistically significant. Indeed, the tenth-grade analysis sample was too small to reliably report data separately by program exposure level. While it is inappropriate to draw conclusions based on this small sample, noting the direction and size of differences can help to determine whether a pattern exists. As additional cohorts are added to the tenth-grade analysis, it will be possible to determine whether the patterns observed in Phase IV persist and/or whether apparent differences achieve statistical significance.

**Exhibit 9
Summary of Differences Between
Former 8th Grade Academy Participants
and Matched Nonparticipants in Tenth Grade**

Indicator	N	Participants	Matched Nonparticipants	Difference Between Participants and Matched Nonparticipants
School attendance rate	72	87%	86%	1
School suspension rate	72	13%	6%	7
English course grade	55	2.06	1.80	.26
Mathematics course grade	54	2.13	1.66	.47*
MCAS English/Language Arts mean scaled score	65	237	234	3
MCAS Mathematics mean scaled score	65	236	234	2

One pattern that warrants further investigation is that across the four academic indicators – English course grade, MCAS English/Language Arts, mathematics course grade, and MCAS mathematics – differences favor participants. In the case of course grades, the magnitude of the differences between participants and matched nonparticipants on tenth-grade course grades (i.e., .26 in English and .47 in math) is similar in English and greater in math than that observed in the ninth-grade analysis (i.e., .34 in English and .29 in math).

Also consistent with the ninth-grade analysis is the small difference among tenth-graders between participants and matched nonparticipants on attendance (see Exhibits 2 and 9). An outlier that emerged among the tenth-grade findings was the substantially higher suspension rate of former 8th Grade Academy participants, with 13 percent of participants suspended in tenth grade compared with 6 percent of matched nonparticipants.³ This difference in suspension was inconsistent with the ninth-grade finding, which showed that former participants were suspended at a rate that was slightly lower, although again not significantly so, than that of matched nonparticipants.

³ The evaluators conducted analyses to determine whether the higher suspension rate among participants was associated with the quality of the high schools they attended, since one might expect higher-quality schools to have stricter behavior policies. The findings from those analyses, however, indicated that participants who were suspended were evenly spread among high schools that received Citizen Schools' "middle" and "low" ratings, with none of the participants who attended schools rated as "high" being suspended.

5. Conclusions and Next Steps

Findings from Phase IV of the evaluation demonstrate that Citizen Schools is making progress in achieving the goals of advancing the academic success of educationally at-risk students and of supporting positive life trajectories for them. As shown in Exhibit 10, participation in Citizen Schools during the middle-school years was associated with increased levels of student engagement and achievement in high school. In particular, former 8th Grade Academy participants at all levels of program exposure enrolled in high-quality high schools at about twice the rate of matched nonparticipants. During their ninth-grade year, former participants overall earned higher grades than matched nonparticipants in English courses. Participants with high levels of program exposure were suspended less often than matched nonparticipants and were promoted on time to the tenth grade at higher rates than matched nonparticipants. On most of the measures where the evaluation did not find statistically significant differences between participants and matched nonparticipants in the ninth grade, findings favored participants.

Exhibit 10
Participants' Performance on Ninth-Grade Success Measures,
Compared with Matched Nonparticipants

Indicator	Former 8th Grade Academy Participants		
	All	High Exposure	Low Exposure
Selection of a high-quality high school	✓***	✓***	✓***
Ninth-grade attendance	✓*	✓	✓
Ninth-grade suspension	✓	✓**	
Ninth-grade third-marking period English course grade	✓*	✓*	✓
Ninth-grade third-marking period math course grade	✓	✓	✓
On-time promotion to tenth grade	✓	✓*	✓

- ✓ Finding is in the right direction, although not statistically significant
- ✓* Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .05$
- ✓** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .01$
- ✓*** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, $p < .001$

Given the small number of students included in the tenth-grade analysis, it is too early to draw a link between participation in Citizen Schools and tenth-grade engagement and achievement for former participants. The data on school engagement point to tenth-grade suspension as an area for further exploration, due to the fact that former participants had high suspension rates compared with tenth-grade suspension rates of matched nonparticipants and with ninth-grade suspension rates of former participants. Looking at the data on academic achievement in the tenth grade among former 8th Grade Academy participants, one sees a pattern that is positive and consistent with the ninth-grade findings. That is, differences in English and math achievement favored former participants (at a statistically significant level, in the case of math).

As the evaluation moves into its final phase, which will include data through the 2007-08 school year, it will add two more cohorts of students to the tenth-grade analyses (for a total of four cohorts of students in this analysis) and will likely result in sample sizes that are large enough to achieve statistical significance for differences similar in magnitude to those presented in this report. In addition, by the end of its final phase, the evaluation will have tracked three cohorts of former 8th Grade Academy participants to the end of the twelfth grade and four cohorts to the end of the eleventh grade (assuming on-time promotion in both cases). Also, as the evaluation sample increases, the evaluators plan to compare findings for sub-groups of students (e.g., students who scored at the lowest level on the MCAS tests in comparison to those who did not) to determine whether Citizen Schools has an impact on all of the students it serves, and if so, whether the degree of this impact varies by student characteristics. In addition, evaluators plan to delve more deeply into the relationship between the quality of the high school attended by students and students' engagement and achievement in the ninth and tenth grades.

Taken altogether, data from the full longitudinal evaluation will span seven school years and provide a complete picture of the impact of Citizen Schools on students' engagement and achievement in middle school and on students' transition to and progress through high school. In addition, building on the Boston study, Citizen Schools plans to expand its external evaluation efforts to include a study of non-Boston sites, in hopes of demonstrating that the improvements demonstrated by Boston Citizen Schools participants are experienced by students in the larger network of Citizen Schools programs across the country.

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Appendix A

Analytic Approach

Measuring Impact

To analyze program impact over time, the evaluation employs a quasi-experimental design that compares the school engagement and academic achievement of Citizen Schools participants to a group of similar students who do not participate in the after-school program. Given the benefits of individual matching, the evaluation employs a one-to-one matching technique whereby matched nonparticipants are selected based on their similarity to an individual Citizen Schools participant. The records that the evaluators receive on matched nonparticipants are stripped of individual identifiers, but include a scrambled identification number to link nonparticipant records from year to year. To analyze the impact of Citizen Schools participation on school engagement and academic achievement, participants are compared to matched nonparticipants using paired samples t-tests with a one-tailed test of significance (i.e., the evaluation tests whether participants outperform matched nonparticipants and not vice versa). Both the participant and his/her individually matched nonparticipant must have valid data on a measure to be included in the analysis for that measure.

Identifying a Pool of Potential Comparison Students

Many factors are statistically associated with students' school engagement and academic achievement, including family income, gender, race, and eligibility for specialized educational services, such as special education and bilingual education. Therefore, to measure the impact of Citizen Schools participation, analyses must compare participants and nonparticipants who are similar in terms of these and other characteristics. To select the matches, PSA and Citizen Schools identified and ranked a set of characteristics to serve as the matching criteria. In consultation, a programmer in the BPS Office of Information Services selected the matched nonparticipants based on these matching criteria and prepared the data files of participants and nonparticipants that the evaluators analyzed and present in this report. Given the high rate of student mobility in the BPS system and the fact that the evaluation would not be able to follow-up with nonparticipants, the programmer was asked to identify three matched nonparticipants for every one participant.

The matching criteria included the following characteristics: gender, race, grade in school, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, student test scores on the fourth-grade MCAS tests in mathematics and English Language Arts, school attended, bilingual education status, and special education status. With the exception of constants like gender, race, and students' scores on the fourth-grade MCAS tests, these data were to be based on the year prior to a student's participation in the evaluation. Five of the characteristics—gender, race, grade in school, free or reduced-price lunch eligibility, and MCAS test scores—were to serve as the core matching variables. Ideally, a nonparticipant would match a participant exactly on each of these variables. The remaining characteristics were

then to be considered in the following order of priority: school and then bilingual status and special education status.

Comparing Participants with Matched Nonparticipants Over Time

The availability of three matched participants mitigates the effect of attrition and allows the evaluation to continue to compare participants against a statistically similar comparison group of the same size. The evaluation ranks each participant's three nonparticipant matches based on how similar they are to the participant on the matching criteria detailed above.⁴ Whenever possible, participants are compared to their most similar nonparticipant. Over the course of the evaluation, as students progress through the BPS system, it sometimes becomes necessary to compare a participant to his/her second or third most similar nonparticipant. This replacement occurs if a matched nonparticipant leaves the BPS system or is not promoted on schedule. This means that a participant's matched nonparticipant may change from year to year (i.e., they are compared to a different nonparticipant in the ninth-grade and tenth-grade analyses) but not within a year (i.e., a participant is assigned the same match for the analysis of ninth-grade suspension and ninth-grade course grades). The evaluation is unable to track nonparticipants once they leave the BPS system and does not obtain accurate information on these students' reasons for leaving BPS. Therefore, it is unknown whether a participant's original matched nonparticipant fares worse (e.g., because he or she dropped out of school) or better (e.g., because he or she transferred to high-quality private school), compared with the replacement matched nonparticipant. The evaluation may be under- or over-estimating the impact of Citizen Schools on academic performance and engagement as a result of this aspect of the evaluation design.

As shown in Exhibit A-1, the groups of matched nonparticipants and participants included in the ninth-grade analyses are similar on all matching and ranking criteria. Among both groups, 78 percent are African American, 17 percent are Hispanic, and the remaining 6 percent are either Asian, Native American, or white. Slightly more than half (53 percent) of participants and matched nonparticipants are female. Ninety percent of participants in the ninth-grade analyses were eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch, 21 percent were enrolled in special education, and 3 percent were enrolled in bilingual education, compared to 92 percent, 18 percent, and 3 percent of matched nonparticipants, respectively. Participants and matched nonparticipants scored within one point of each other on their fourth-grade MCAS English Language Arts and mathematics exams and earned course grades within .20 points of each other in both English

⁴ In addition to the matching criteria, students without fourth-grade MCAS scores were ranked using course grades from the first marking period in the year prior to participation in the evaluation.

and mathematics in the year prior to the evaluation. Similar patterns emerged among the group of participants and matched nonparticipants included in the tenth-grade analyses. No statistically significant differences between participants and matched nonparticipants were found in either analysis group.

Exhibit A-1 Demographics and Prior Achievement of Participants and Matched Nonparticipants

Characteristic	Ninth-Grade Analyses		Tenth-Grade Analyses	
	Citizen Schools Participants	Matched Nonparticipants	Citizen Schools Participants	Matched Nonparticipants
Race/Ethnicity	<i>N</i> =326 ⁵	<i>N</i> =326	<i>N</i> =88	<i>N</i> =88
African American	78%	78%	77%	77%
Asian	2%	2%	1%	1%
Hispanic	17%	17%	16%	16%
Native American	1%	1%	1%	1%
White	3%	3%	5%	5%
Gender	<i>N</i> =326	<i>N</i> =326	<i>N</i> =88	<i>N</i> =88
Female	53%	53%	60%	60%
Male	47%	47%	40%	40%
Free- or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligibility	<i>N</i> =284 ⁷	<i>N</i> =283	<i>N</i> =72	<i>N</i> =72
Eligible for FRPL in year prior ⁶	90%	92%	88%	88%
Special Education Status	<i>N</i> =326	<i>N</i> =326	<i>N</i> =88	<i>N</i> =88
Enrolled in special education in year prior	21%	18%	22%	18%
Bilingual Education Program Status	<i>N</i> =326	<i>N</i> =326	<i>N</i> =88	<i>N</i> =88
Enrolled in bilingual education in year prior	3%	3%	1%	1%
Fourth-Grade MCAS ELA	<i>N</i> =245	<i>N</i> =271	<i>N</i> =72	<i>N</i> =79
<i>Mean Scaled Score</i>	224	223	224	224
English Course Grade	<i>N</i> =275	<i>N</i> =277	<i>N</i> =77	<i>N</i> =79
Average course grade in first marking period in year prior	2.05	2.00	2.07	2.01
Fourth-Grade MCAS Mathematics	<i>N</i> =250	<i>N</i> =273	<i>N</i> =72	<i>N</i> =79
<i>Mean Scaled Score</i>	221	220	223	222
Mathematics Course Grade	<i>N</i> =273	<i>N</i> =277	<i>N</i> =77	<i>N</i> =77
Average course grade in first marking period in year prior	1.88	1.69	2.06	2.01

⁵ In total, 326 participants and 326 matched nonparticipants were included in at least one of the evaluation's analyses of ninth-grade data and 88 participants and 88 nonparticipants were included in at least one of the evaluation's analyses of tenth-grade data. This total exceeds the number of students reported for any one individual analysis because a student may have been included in the analysis of one measure but not another, based on the availability of data.

⁶ Data on free- or reduced-price lunch, special education, bilingual education and course grades are from the year prior to a student's participation in the evaluation. In some cases the year prior to when a student was picked up in the evaluation is consistent with the year prior to participation in Citizen Schools, while in other cases it is not.

⁷ On several of the demographic and prior achievement characteristics, the availability of data was higher or lower for matched nonparticipants than it was for participants and as a result the *N*s of the two groups vary slightly.

Appendix B
Summary of Phase III Middle School Results

Exhibit B-1
Participants' Performance on Phase III Middle-School Success
Measures, Compared with Matched Nonparticipants

		Indicators						
		School Attendance	School Suspension	Promotion to Next Grade	English Course Grade	Math Course Grade	MCAS ELA	MCAS Mathematics
Sixth- and Seventh-Grade Participants During First Year	All	✓***	✓***	✓*	✓		✓*	
	High Exposure	✓***	✓***	✓**	✓***	✓*	✓**	
	Low Exposure						✓	
Seventh-Grade Participants in Their Second Year	All	✓	✓	✓		✓**		N/A
	High Exposure	✓*	✓			✓*		N/A
	Low Exposure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A
8th Grade Academy Participants	All	✓**	✓	✓**	✓	✓	N/A	✓**
	High Exposure	✓**		✓**	✓	✓	N/A	✓*
	Low Exposure	✓	✓	✓	✓		N/A	✓*

- ✓ Finding is in the right direction, although not statistically significant
- ✓* Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, p<.05
- ✓** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, p<.01
- ✓*** Participants outperformed matched nonparticipants, p<.001

Appendix C
Analysis Sample Sizes

The evaluation was designed to track participants in each 8th Grade Academy class through high school, starting with the inaugural 8th Grade Academy class in 2001-02 and continuing through the 2004-05 class (as of the timing of this report). The evaluation has received data from BPS on all measures through the 2004-05 school year as well as preliminary data on school attended in the 2005-06 school year. In general, the size of the analysis sample for each measure within this report depends on the number of 8th Grade Academy annual classes that were eligible to be included in the analysis, given their grade in school (see Exhibit C-1) and the number of students for whom data on both the participant and matched nonparticipant were available for that outcome. For example, the evaluation has not yet received ninth-grade data (i.e., from the 2005-06 school year) for students added to the evaluation sample from the 2004-05 8th Grade Academy class. However, evaluators do have information on the high schools selected by this group of students. As a result, members of the 2004-05 8th Grade Academy class and their matched nonparticipants are eligible for inclusion in the analysis of high school selection but not for other ninth-grade analyses, including on-time promotion to the tenth grade, and not for the analysis of tenth-grade school engagement and academic achievement. Additional details on the sample sizes for each analysis are presented below.

Exhibit C-1
Grade Levels of Participants, by 8th Grade Academy Class (N=354)

8th Grade Academy Class	N	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06*
2001-02 class ^{abc}	48	8	9	10	11	12
2002-03 class ^{abc}	85		8	9	10	11
2003-04 class ^{ab}	118			8	9	10
2004-05 class ^a	103				8	9

* Data from BPS in the 2005-06 school year are limited to preliminary information on school attended.

^a Included in analysis of high school selection

^b Included in analysis of ninth-grade attendance, suspension, course grades, and promotion to tenth grade

^c Included in analysis of tenth-grade attendance, suspension, course grades, and MCAS scores

Ninth-Grade Sample Sizes

Exhibit C-2 presents the sample sizes for the analysis of high school selection; ninth-grade attendance, suspension, and course grades; and promotion to the tenth grade. The following sections describe the students eligible for inclusion in each analysis and explain why the sample sizes vary by measure.

Exhibit C-2
Sample Sizes in Phase IV Report, by Ninth-Grade Measure

	High School Selection	School Attendance	Suspension	English Grade	Math Grade	Promotion to Tenth Grade
Sample size	288	170	170	114	99	237

High School Selection

As shown in Exhibit C-1, 354 participants attended 8th Grade Academy at some point between 2001-02 and 2004-05. To be eligible for inclusion in the analysis of high school selection, participants must have enrolled as a ninth-grader in a Boston-area high school in the year following their 8th Grade Academy participation and been matched to a nonparticipant also in the ninth grade. Three hundred participants met these criteria, and 288 of them were included in the analysis of high school selection because they and their matched nonparticipant attended a high school rated by Citizen Schools.

Ninth-Grade Attendance, Suspension, and Course Grades

Participants who attended 8th Grade Academy between 2001-02 and 2003-04 (N=251) were eligible to be included in the analysis of ninth-grade attendance, suspension, and course grades. About 85 percent (i.e., 213 out of 251) went on to attend ninth grade in the year following 8th Grade Academy. Of these, 207 participants were matched to a nonparticipant who also attended ninth grade in the same year. The sample sizes presented in Exhibit C-2 represent the number of these 207 participant- and matched nonparticipant-pairs who had valid data on each measure and are included in the Phase IV report analyses.

Citizen Schools was able to obtain data on participants' ninth-grade course grades from three Boston-area charter schools, but could not obtain attendance and suspension information from these schools for most students. Thirty-seven participants with missing attendance and suspension information who attended these charter schools, along with their matched nonparticipants, were excluded from the analyses of ninth-grade attendance and suspension, despite the fact that their matched nonparticipants had valid data on these measures.

In the files that the evaluation receives from BPS, course grades are often missing for many students who have valid data on other evaluation measures. Because of the high rate of missing data for these measures, analyses of course grade data have the smallest sample sizes.

Promotion to the Tenth Grade

Participants who attended 8th Grade Academy between 2001-02 and 2003-04 (N=251) were eligible to be included in the analysis of promotion to the tenth grade. Of these, 237 had valid promotion data to the tenth grade and were matched to a nonparticipant with valid promotion data. The number of students included in the analysis of on-time promotion to tenth grade is higher than the number of students included in the other ninth-grade analyses. This is the case because a student was included in on-time promotion to tenth grade as long as s/he was in the ninth grade in the year following participation in 8th Grade Academy and in the tenth grade two years following participation in the 8th Grade Academy. It was possible, therefore, for a student to be included in the analysis of on-time promotion to tenth grade even if that student was missing data on all other ninth-grade variables.

Tenth-Grade Sample Sizes

Participants who attended 8th Grade Academy in 2001-02 or 2002-03 (N=133) were eligible to be included in the analysis of tenth-grade attendance, suspension, course grades, and MCAS scores. Only 88 of them went on to attend tenth grade two years following 8th Grade Academy. Of these, 84 were matched to a nonparticipant who also attended tenth grade in the same year. The sample sizes presented in Exhibit C-3 represent the number of these 84 participant and nonparticipant pairs who had valid data on each measure and are included in the Phase IV report analysis for each measure. As was the case for the ninth-grade analyses, missing data for participants on school attendance and suspension from charter schools, as well as incomplete course grade data on participants and nonparticipants from BPS explain the varying sample sizes. Also, Citizen Schools was unable to obtain tenth-grade MCAS scores for participants attending charter schools.

Exhibit C-3
Sample Sizes in Phase IV Report, by Tenth-Grade Measure

	School Attendance	Suspension	English Grade	Math Grade	English MCAS	Math MCAS
Sample size	72	72	55	54	65	65

Appendix D
High School Selection and Ninth-Grade Analyses
Phases III and IV

Exhibit D-1
Summary Table of High School Selection and Ninth-Grade Findings,
by Evaluation Phase

	Phase IV				Phase III ⁸			
	N ⁹	Citizen Schools Participants	Matched Non-participants	Difference	N	Citizen Schools Participants	Matched Non-participants	Difference
High School Selection								
All	288	65%	26%	39***	178	72%	33%	39***
High Exposure	138	65%	22%	43***	77	74%	31%	43***
Low Exposure	150	64%	31%	33***	101	70%	34%	36***
School Attendance								
All	170	87%	82%	5*	89	89%	86%	3
High Exposure	71	90%	86%	4	40	94%	88%	6*
Low Exposure	99	85%	80%	5	49	85%	85%	0
School Suspension								
All	170	7%	11%	-4	88	6%	11%	-5
High Exposure	72	1%	10%	-9**	40	3%	10%	-7*
Low Exposure	98	11%	11%	0	48	8%	13%	-5
English Course Grade								
All	114	2.08	1.74	0.34*	55	2.20	1.79	0.41*
High Exposure	46	2.19	1.59	0.60*	25	2.51	1.59	0.92**
Low Exposure	68	2.00	1.83	0.17	30	1.95	1.96	-0.01
Math Course Grade								
All	99	1.64	1.35	0.29	45	2.04	1.48	0.56*
High Exposure	40	1.76	1.30	0.46	20	2.14	1.61	0.53
Low Exposure	59	1.56	1.38	0.18	25	1.96	1.37	0.59*
Promotion to Tenth Grade								
All	237	88%	84%	4	123	88%	87%	1
High Exposure	100	92%	81%	11*	54	89%	83%	6
Low Exposure	137	85%	85%	0	69	87%	90%	-3

⁸ The analysis presented in this table requires that all participants and matched nonparticipants be in the ninth grade in the year after participating in 8th Grade Academy. This restriction was not used in Phase III, and therefore numbers presented here may differ slightly from those presented in the Phase III evaluation report.

⁹ The Ns reported here represent the number of participants in each analysis. The evaluation measures impact by comparing each participant to a similar nonparticipating student (or “matched nonparticipant”) and thus the number of matched nonparticipants included in an analysis always equals the number of participants in that analysis.