



Citizen Schools: Expanding Learning Opportunities to Prepare Middle School Students for High School Success

12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Friday, March 20, 2009

- The term “expanded learning opportunity” (ELO) is used to describe the range of programs and activities available to young people that occur beyond regular school hours. ELOs include traditional afterschool activities with an academic focus, but also incorporate activities such as internships with employers, independent study in alternative settings, classes on college campuses for high school students, and wraparound support services.
- Citizen Schools (CS) is a growing national network of after-school education programs for students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Citizen Schools partners with middle schools to expand the learning day for low-income children across the country. CS programs complement classroom learning by engaging students in hands-on learning projects led by adult volunteers after school and supported by a staff of professional educators. Since 1995, students at Citizen Schools have developed the academic and leadership skills they need to succeed in high school, college, the workplace, and civic life.

Increasingly, policymakers and practitioners are interested in ELOs for various reasons. ELOs provide positive youth development experiences and increased support for academic learning, and they can play a part in restructuring the learning environment for older youth, who live with more complex and demanding schedules. ELOs provide time to supplement the learning that takes place during the regular school day and provide enrichment across many domains. ELOs can also provide wrap-around support services (health and mental health or mentoring, for example) to youth who may have special needs or few supports of their own. At the same time, ELOs leverage existing resources and contribute additional resources (including significant numbers of adult volunteers) to augment K-12 and community-based funding streams.

What does the research on Citizen Schools demonstrate?

- The Policy Studies Associates (PSA) evaluation of the Citizen Schools program demonstrates that the program is increasing academic engagement and achievement of students in Boston,
- Former participants selected high-quality high schools at a higher rate than nonparticipants,
- former participants had higher school attendance rates than nonparticipants and were more likely to pass their English and math courses,
- Former participants were more likely to pass the high stakes standardized English exam and to score proficient or advanced,
- Former participants were more likely than matched nonparticipants to be on-track to graduate from high school on time.

21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC): This Federal program supports the creation and implementation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during hours outside of school for children, most significantly for students who attend low-income, low-performing schools. The 21st CCLC program is the largest source of Federal funding for after-school programming.

21st Century Skills: Represent the necessary students outcomes for the 21st Century, including Learning and Innovations skills (creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving), Information, Media and Technology skills; Core Subjects; 21st Century Themes (global awareness, financial literacy, etc.); and Life and Career skills (initiative and self-direction, among others).

A forum brief with this and more information will be posted shortly at www.aypf.org.