



Seven Massachusetts Communities Receive \$647,000 for Middle School Exploration Programs

Nonprofit American Student Assistance funds innovative programs to facilitate awareness of diverse education and career possibilities

BOSTON, May 22, 2019 – American Student Assistance® ([ASA](#)), a national nonprofit, announced today it has awarded grants totaling \$647,000 to seven Massachusetts school districts to fund career and interest exploration programs for middle school students. The school communities, which will receive their funding over the course of three years, will begin implementing the programs in the 2019-2020 school year.

With a legacy of more than 60 years working directly with students, ASA® is focused on helping kids early in their education journey to put them on a path to meaningful learning and fulfilling jobs. The middle schools receiving grants will use their funding for programs that will expose students to different career pathways through experiential learning opportunities, allowing them to visualize themselves in different careers and educational pursuits.

“All of us at ASA firmly believe that if students have the opportunity to explore a range of courses and career options at an early age, they will be better prepared to find their unique paths and develop plans for after high school,” said **Jean Eddy, President and CEO**. “Schools in Massachusetts are doing some incredibly innovative things, and we are confident these grants will help energize and inspire young students to begin to set a course for their futures.”

“Providing students at all levels the opportunities to explore careers and learn hard and soft skills will help prepare them for success throughout their lives,” said **Massachusetts Lt. Governor Karyn Polito**. “Our administration looks forward to the work these Massachusetts schools will do with ASA’s support to offer important resources and tools to students across the Commonwealth.”

Following are the 2019 ASA Massachusetts grant recipients:

1. **Barnstable Intermediate School**: Align middle school learning to high school career pathways by developing an integrated curriculum that explores careers and makes connections to industry partners as early as grade 6.

“We are excited to work with ASA to bring to life our vision of hands-on, real-world career explorations at the middle school level,” said Kristen Harmon, assistant superintendent. “This will serve as an introduction to our high school career pathways and develop student awareness of the wide range of industries available within our region. Our hope is that through this work students will be able to envision their future selves in one of the many career opportunities that exist on Cape Cod.”

- 2. Douglas Middle School:** Integrate a dedicated STEM curriculum for grades 6-8 that engages every student and plants the seeds of curiosity and understanding in the fields of technology and engineering. Students will collaborate, plan, construct, test, break, assess, re-test and evaluate engineering and technology principles with daily hands-on projects.

“DMS is tasked with giving our students access to great 21st-century learning skills that will be required for career advancement upon their graduation from post-secondary education. This grant will fund the physical resources students will use in their project-based learning,” said Brian Delaney, principal. “We believe in earnest that hands-on technology integration and engineering-centric projects will have the greatest impact to our community of learners in this post-industrial region of the Blackstone Valley.”

- 3. Mendon Upton Regional School District:** Establish an “Inspired Innovation Center” and make space course at Miscoe Hill Middle School that will create a structured yet flexible learning environment to foster career exploration, creativity, and an entrepreneurial spirit.

“We’re thrilled to partner with American Student Assistance to bring our Inspired Innovation Center to fruition,” said Dr. Joseph P. Maruszczak, Mendon-Upton Regional School District superintendent. “This partnership furthers our mission to empower all learners to thrive by creating programs, practices and partnerships that value the whole child and yield deep, meaningful learning experiences.”

- 4. Monson Public Schools:** Launch the “Careers in the Middle” program that will provide students in grades 6-8 with classroom lessons, fieldtrips and events that will expose them to career awareness opportunities.

“Monson is thrilled to be chosen by ASA to partner to provide additional resources that focus on our middle grades,” said Robert Bardwell, director of school counseling and school-to-career Coordinator. “This grant will give us the opportunity to do more for our middle level students and collect data that tells us which activities are best to facilitate and encourage career development early on.”

- 5. Springfield STEM Academy:** Enhance and expand the Tech/Engineering Exploration program to expose students to new fields such as bioengineering, solar and wind engineering, electrical engineering and mechanical engineering.

“Exposing students to biological, solar, wind, electrical and mechanical engineering at a young age is a potential game changer for their rest of their lives,” said superintendent Daniel Warwick. “It allows them to think about the wide array of STEM careers in real ways and opens the door to unlimited possibilities in this burgeoning field. We are extremely grateful that this ASA grant will help us provide this opportunity for our students.”

- 6. Sutton Middle School:** Expand STEM offerings by introducing course choices in 3D modeling and printing, sports engineering and helper engineering. These STEM courses will align with the *Project Lead the Way* engineering programming at the high school.

“We are excited to give our students an opportunity to explore some new real-world, project-based engineering courses that could potentially lead to an engineering career in their future,” said Vanessa Haerle, STEM teacher.

- 7. Taunton Public Schools:** Implement a career exploration program at the Benjamin A. Friedman Middle School and the Joseph H. Martin Middle School to provide students with hands-on

learning experiences in fields such as automation, robotics, app creation, flight and space, and energy and the environment.

“Having the opportunity to provide career exploration opportunities at the middle school level will truly engage our students – allowing them to discern not what they have to do but, what they can do!” said Danielle Coute, principal, Benjamin Friedman Middle School.

About American Student Assistance® (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit committed to helping kids know themselves, know their options, and make informed choices to achieve their education and career goals. ASA® has a 60-year legacy of working directly with students to increase their access to higher education through loans and financial education. ASA has turned its experience into impactful solutions for kids in middle, high school, and beyond to help them pursue their dreams. To learn more about ASA, visit <https://www.asa.org/about-us/>.