



**A path for every student.
A plan for every future.™**

Citizen Schools Receives \$750,000 Grant from American Student Assistance to Expand Professional Development for Career-Connected Project-Based Learning Opportunities for Middle School Teachers

BOSTON – July 8, 2021 – [Citizen Schools](#) announced today the organization received a \$750,000 grant from American Student Assistance® (ASA), a national nonprofit that helps to foster student understanding of post-secondary education and career pathways. This support enables Citizen Schools to provide professional development for educators to help students explore and connect to careers through Project-Based Learning (PBL) programs, such as [Catalyst](#), which helps educators to enhance their competency to develop hands-on learning experiences for their students.

The Catalyst program provides a rigorous professional development pathway that includes rich, standards-aligned curricular units, such as kinetic sculpture and climate science, combined with access to career mentors from related industry fields who support teachers in leveraging PBL experiences to connect students to careers. Overall, the goal of the program is to provide thousands of students across the country including the states of CA, MA, NC, NY, OH and TX, with increased access to hands-on learning experiences with mentors. Available to more than 80 teachers through the 2021-2022 school year, the program helps build academic, social and emotional skills and create relationships with caring adults to expand career-connected networks.

“We are honored to partner with Citizen Schools, as part of our shared commitment to provide middle school teachers with access to highly effective, career-focused professional development,” said Chief Strategy Officer Annabel Cellini, ASA.

“Our goal is to enable educators to better prepare students for long-term economic mobility early in their education journey. We see incredible value in pairing hands-on learning experiences that provide a wider exposure to careers with mentors who will help them navigate careers and workforce readiness.”

In addition, through after-school provider partnerships, Citizen Schools will develop a training program for educators on how to embed hands-on, real-world learning with

career mentors into their after-school program. Citizen Schools will adapt training modules with the goal of supporting measurement of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, academic motivation, building 21st century skills, STEM career interest, and content understanding.

“As the primary change agents for student learning outcomes, we understand that teachers need deeper support and coaching around the integration of hands-on projects and career mentors in their classrooms to be most effective,” said Executive Director Nadia Selby, Catalyst Program, Citizen Schools. “Thanks to the support of the ASA grant, our Catalyst program is designed to empower teachers to adjust any curriculum to be rooted in experiential learning practices with a career lens. Our goal is that teachers develop skills they will use over their entire career.”

About Citizen Schools

For over 25 years, Citizen Schools has been a pioneer in educational equity. They have provided hands-on learning experiences that ignite curiosity, build confidence, and expand horizons for over 50,000 middle school students in underrepresented communities. Together with their partners, including 25,000 career mentors, they have exposed students to new ideas and connections. To learn more, visit <https://www.citizenschools.org/>.

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 students in grades 6-12 to help them pursue their dreams. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-us.

Media Contacts:

Anna Yu
Chief Growth Officer
Citizen Schools
annayu@citizenschools.org

Sandy Dawkins
Director of PR/Communications
American Student Assistance
sdawkins@asa.org