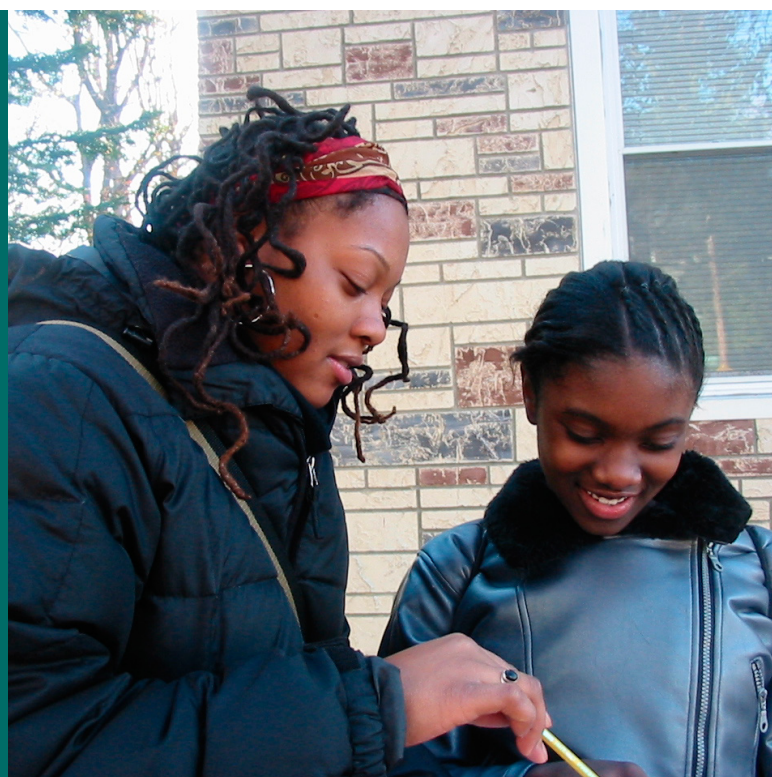


recruiting and training staff for out-of-school time programs



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DEDICATED AND EXPERT STAFF are the heart of Citizen Schools. “You need to recruit for talent, hire for attitude and beliefs, and train for skills,” insisted Ned Rimer, co-founder of Citizen Schools. Three types of staff work with students on campus. Teaching fellows are team leaders who engage students in various activities, including explorations and homework investment time; teaching associates assume similar duties, but part time. Citizen teachers are professionals in their field who volunteer to plan and conduct student apprenticeships. Campus directors tie everything together so that the pieces fit together for students.

Finding and Hiring the Right Staff

TO KEEP TALENT coming in, Citizen Schools has mounted an aggressive recruitment campaign. Staff share lessons they have learned from their experience.

Advertise in Many Venues

To find high-quality, diverse staff, Citizen Schools sets up tables at job fairs, posts flyers on college campuses, talks with counselors at career centers, places ads in community newspapers, and sponsors public service announcements on the radio. It also lists openings on web sites that specialize in nonprofit and volunteer recruitment, sometimes paying extra for its postings to appear near the top of a listing. Advertising in major daily newspapers has not been a cost-effective strategy, say staff, because one ad gets lost amidst the volume of other advertising.

Enlist Help from Staff and Volunteers

The best recruiters are often staff and volunteers who tell friends and relatives about their good experiences in Citizen Schools. A survey administered by Citizen Schools revealed that all citizen teachers surveyed would recommend that others volunteer in the program, and 97 percent indicated speaking positively to others about their experience. Seventy-five percent of teaching fellows said they would recommend working in Citizen Schools to friends.

Develop a Formal Hiring Process

Citizen Schools has formalized hiring so that each job applicant follows the same path. The human resources department accepts job applications, screens resumes, and conducts preliminary phone interviews. “Screening people on the phone saves time,” said Amy Amatangelo, director of human resources administration. “You don’t get all the data you need, but you can tell if applicants can handle themselves and if they’re comfortable talking with someone they don’t know.”

Candidates are further screened by a panel of staff specifically selected to evaluate the candidate’s qualifications from different perspectives. Those who make the short list then move on to interviews with campus directors. Finally, successful candidates are invited back to headquarters, where they are extended a job offer.

Conduct Authentic Interviews

Interviews are structured to be as lifelike as possible. Potential teaching fellows may be asked to respond to various scenarios, mock teach, produce a writing sample, or to create a curriculum. The acceptance rate for teaching fellows is between 10 and 15 percent, estimated Sarah Bailin, deputy director of the national teaching fellowship department.

Seek Diversity and Flexibility

Diversity and flexibility are standards at Citizen Schools. The program seeks a workforce that is diverse demographically and professionally and that reflects students' ethnic and racial backgrounds. Bilingual staff help Citizen Schools connect with more families. In addition to English, teaching associates most frequently report speaking French, Spanish, or Haitian Creole.

Staff involved in hiring say they look for personal traits such as belief, energy, passion, idealism, and commitment. But flexibility is the consummate skill. "Citizen Schools is never the place where you can say, 'This is my plan for the day,' and follow through with that. Things change all of the time, especially with kids," said Amatangelo. ■

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Staff Report High Satisfaction

In a survey administered by PSA, staff reported high levels of satisfaction with the training and support provided them by Citizen Schools. Training activities were a good use of time and appropriate to staff's existing knowledge and skills. On a survey item asking citizen teachers to report the extent to which they agreed that "I enjoyed my job/work as a Citizen Schools volunteer," mean responses were 3.6 on a scale of one to four, with four being the highest possible response.

Developing Professional Skills

CITIZEN SCHOOLS is becoming a learning organization that offers a variety of professional development experiences, said Edith Buhs, director of organizational learning and human potential. These experiences, in turn, have produced the following lessons.

Begin Team-Building Early

All teaching fellows and associates attend a week of half-day preservice sessions in the fall. After an initial day of tasks such as getting on the payroll and scheduling, novices and veterans begin team-building by training together at headquarters. Headquarters and campus staff set out procedures for engaging students, working with citizen teachers, safety, and basics in the art of teaching. Then teams adjourn to their respective campuses for more individualized training. Citizen Schools repeats the same content, but on a smaller scale, for new hires in January.

Follow Through All Year

During the year, professional development takes place in two ways. Half-day Friday inservice sessions take place once or twice a month, although these may be supplemented by external resources from Boston Public Schools for such specialized topics as teaching students with disabilities or English Language Learners. Citizen Schools staff who have been with Citizen Schools for one year or longer can also take advantage of a \$1,000 set-aside for external professional development.

In addition, teaching fellows study in a two-year program developed and taught by Lesley University and Citizen Schools. Those who complete it earn a master's degree in education, with a focus on curriculum and instruction and a further specialization in out-of-school time. Courses are scheduled during the summer and school vacations, and on Fridays.

Train for the Job

A three-phase training program extends over six hours for citizen teachers who are new to the program. This training program does double-duty as part of Citizen Schools' teacher selection process, because only after its second phase do decisions about whether or not to enlist a volunteer actually get made.

Each training cycle begins with a 90-minute introduction to the history of Citizen Schools and its place in the out-of-school time movement. Trainees are also introduced to concepts such as modeling, coaching, and making learning hands-on. The second phase comprises curriculum training. In this three-hour session, volunteers learn how to design lesson plans.

Finally, in a one-on-one meeting, volunteers devise the apprenticeship they will offer students. Although expensive and time-consuming, the one-on-one sessions pay dividends almost immediately, explained Kristy Krugh, who manages volunteers at Citizen Schools. "Quality goes up 10 notches when we meet one-on-one," she said.

Close Gaps in Individual Skills

Targeting training for campus directors is relatively new at Citizen Schools. Dan Blocker, a first-year campus director, welcomes the effort. He attributed his success so far to the fact that his predecessor is still at Citizen Schools. “She’s been a resource guide. It’s not a supervisory relationship, but more like having a mentor or buddy who can tell you what’s worked in the past.”

Training for campus directors fills gaps in individual skills. The organization steers directors to many external training programs, such as Facilitated Leadership and Coaching Edge, offered by Interaction Institute for Social Change in Cambridge. The intent is to plan a professional development track for each campus director, according to Buhs.

Listen to Staff

Citizen Schools asks for staff opinions and responds when it gets them. Participants complete an assessment form at the end of a professional development experience. According to Sarah Holden, a program manager, “We have a one-page evaluation sheet. We take outcomes and objectives of training and we create a ranking survey. We ask them how useful it was.”

Staff also have a say in planning professional development. “What we did in planning spring training was to send lists of professional development [opportunities] to teaching fellows, teaching associates, and campus directors and ask them to prioritize topics that we heard them

talk about. Different groups ranked differently based on experience. We saw what rose to the top. We shared with them again what we learned and asked them to add more stuff. Based on that data, we decided on five or six contents and placed them in the dates we had selected,” Holden recounted.

Teaching fellows may also join a recruitment committee or a teaching fellow advisory committee. As members of these committees, they help shape recruitment and support strategies for other teaching fellows in Boston and elsewhere.

Build Networks

Professional networking where staff with similar responsibilities can talk candidly about what’s working and what’s not becomes even more powerful when staff can visit other campuses to see what they do. “This is a great time to spend with other directors outside of meetings,” said Blocker. “There’s always a treasure chest of what we talk about. The things that have been really successful are the most useful,” Blocker noted.

Citizen Schools seeks similar networking opportunities for other staff. For example, a mid-semester lunch, dubbed “chill n’ spill,” tagged as such for its ice cream dessert as much as for its keen conversation, pulls together past and present volunteers to swap stories and learn from each other.

Create Routes to Advancement

Professional advancement is key to retaining experience. Human resources

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circulates all job openings to present staff before posting them externally. Citizen Schools has no set track for advancement. Teaching associates have become headquarters staff, and campus directors have become program staff.

“Our mission for the Teaching Fellowship is to create new leaders for the out-of-school time field,” said Bailin. To this end, rather than expecting all newly minted master’s degree holders to continue their careers with Citizen Schools, the program has made developing new leaders for the broader out-of-school time movement part of its mission.

Say Thank You

“Thank you” is an important phrase at Citizen Schools, and the organization encourages staff to use it often and in many ways. Some of these ways include treating teaching associates to lunch, or presenting staff with small gift cards. Citizen Schools also extended its appreciation to citizen teachers by listing them by name in a Boston Globe advertisement. The ad also told readers where to get more information about Citizen Schools.

Share Effective Strategies

Citizen Schools has identified and documented effective professional development strategies, making them accessible to future generations of staff. A series of guides, including Past Apprenticeships, Ideas for Working with Kids, and Getting to Wow, are available on the Citizen Schools website at www.citizenschools.org.

The effective recruiting and training practices listed in this Resource Brief are sure to grow as Citizen Schools expands. In the meantime, when asked for advice he might offer to other organizations with a similar pursuit, Rimer said, “Play to your strengths. You’ll never stop getting better at what you’re doing. Stay focused. Stick to your niche. Find out what you’re good at and get better at it.” At Citizen Schools, that’s what recruiting and professional development are all about. ■

For Additional Information

Afterschool Alliance
www.afterschoolalliance.org

Citizen Schools
www.citizenschools.org

Citizen Schools University
www.citizenschools.org/CSU/index.cfm

National Institute on Out-of-School Time
www.niost.org

National Afterschool Association
www.naaweb.org

Partnership for After-School Education
www.pasesetter.com

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Citizen Schools is a leading national provider of after-school education programs for students in the middle grades. We uniquely mobilize thousands of caring adults of all pursuits and professions to be full partners in education. Seizing the opportunity of time outside school – 80 percent of a child’s waking hours – our adult volunteers tap their expertise to teach hands-on apprenticeships that have real-world relevance and emphasize practical and marketable skills. Our programs blend these experiential learning projects with activities that build academic, leadership, and study skills, preparing adolescents for achievement in high school, college, the workforce and civic life.