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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City Connects Expands: Six Springfield, Mass., Turnaround Elementary Schools to Implement Optimized Student Support Model

Expansion marks City Connects' first growth outside of Boston

CHESTNUT HILL & SPRINGFIELD, MASS.—Aug. 29, 2011—[City Connects](#), a model of optimized student support working to ensure that all children come to school ready to learn and thrive, is expanding to six schools in Springfield, Mass., for the 2011-12 academic year. This marks City Connects' first expansion outside of Boston since its inception a decade ago. Through its [Race to the Top](#) allocation, [Springfield Public Schools](#) chose City Connects as a partner to provide student support in its transformation elementary and K-8 schools.

City Connects collaborates with teachers to identify the strengths and needs of every child in a school across four domains: academic, social/emotional/behavioral, family, and health. Students are then connected to the prevention, intervention, and enrichment services in the community that match their unique strengths and needs. [Analysis](#) of 10 years of work in [Boston Public Schools](#) has shown that City Connects' model of optimized student support significantly improves student achievement and thriving, especially for students most at risk.

“Children living in high-poverty urban settings face countless challenges outside of school that impact learning and healthy development. We know that out-of-school factors are responsible for two-thirds of the achievement gap, and consequently, schools cannot be expected to close the achievement gap alone,” said [Mary E. Walsh](#), PhD, executive director of City Connects and the Daniel Kearns Professor in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. “We are pleased to partner with Springfield Public Schools in their efforts to improve student achievement and will work closely with teachers, school staff, and community partners to ensure that every student comes to school able to learn and thrive.”

Recognizing the profound impact of out-of-school factors on learning and thriving, Springfield Public Schools chose to fund this initiative through the state's Race to the Top program. They selected City Connects, a [priority partner](#) of the state, as their partner to provide student support in their transformation (turnaround) elementary and K-8 schools. A planning year in 2010-11 allowed City Connects to build infrastructure and perform a community scan to identify potential service providers. In addition, City Connects gained insight into the current state of student support through a needs assessment, in which teachers, principals, community organizations, and families/caregivers of students were surveyed. The needs assessment catalogued areas of strength in schools and the community where services were readily available for students and illuminated gaps that City Connects will work to eliminate.



“We selected City Connects as a partner through Race to the Top because of their record of successfully improving student achievement and thriving. Their model fosters close collaboration between community partners and schools, which benefits students and allows them to better access existing resources,” said Azell Cavaan, spokeswoman for the Springfield Public Schools. “We look forward to working together over the next two years to support all of our students’ unique strengths and needs.”

City Connects has demonstrated its effectiveness over the past ten years. Overall, students in City Connects schools show significantly greater improvement than comparison-school peers in statewide standardized test scores (MCAS); report card grades; and classroom behavior, work habits, and effort. The benefits are often largest for students most at risk. For example, English Language Learners (ELL) in City Connects have literacy report card scores similar to non-City Connects students proficient in English—thereby eliminating the achievement gap in these literacy outcomes for ELL students. Additionally, City Connects students show significantly lower rates of retention in grade, which is a strong predictor of on-time high school graduation. And after leaving City Connects, students outperform their Boston peers in middle school and achieve close to state proficiency levels on both English and math MCAS.

In the 2011-12 school year, City Connects is active in the following Springfield Public Schools:

1. Alfred G. Zanetti Montessori Magnet School
2. Brightwood Elementary School
3. Elias Brookings School
4. German Gerena Community School
5. Homer Street Elementary School
6. White Street Elementary School

City Connects

<http://www.CityConnects.org>

City Connects is an evidence-based approach to student support that ensures that all children engage and learn in school by connecting each child with a tailored set of prevention, intervention, and enrichment services in the community. By leveraging the resources of community agencies, City Connects works efficiently within the existing framework of schools and society to alleviate barriers to learning. City Connects is active in 15 Boston Public Schools and 6 Springfield, Mass., public elementary/K-8 schools and was developed at Boston College in 2001. In the 2010-11 academic year, City Connects facilitated the delivery of 33,700 services to 6,100 students in 17 Boston public elementary schools. City Connects is supported by the New Balance Foundation, Strategic Grant Partners, the Hayden Foundation, the Ludcke Foundation, and Boston College. Read our blog at CityConnectsBlog.Wordpress.com or follow us on Twitter [@CityConnects](https://twitter.com/CityConnects).

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