



PRESS RELEASE

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Providence After School Programs Nationally Recognized for Helping Students Showcase Skills that Employers and Colleges Are Seeking

January 25, 2019 Providence, RI – The Providence After School Alliance has been recognized for cutting edge work in advancing digital badges, helping to validate the work readiness skills Providence high school youth earn in career-related courses offered through RIDE’s Advanced Course Network. “*Expanding The Boundaries of Education*,” a report issued by the Rennie Center for Education & Policy describes two cities efforts - the Providence After School Alliance and Boston After School & Beyond - to credential real-world skills through digital badges as part of a two-year [Nellie Mae Education Foundation](#) funding project focused on implementing the use of digital badges in after-school and summer programming.

Digital badges are a credentialing mechanism gaining national traction in both workforce development and education. The badge acts as a virtual certificate, and is a rich, compact, and mobile source of information that endorses a student’s exemplary demonstration of a specific skill or skill set. PASA’s badges validate and endorse student skills in non-academic, but highly valued competencies such as teamwork, communication and critical thinking. These skills are valuable to employers and colleges and are not always easily identified through high school grades or transcripts. When a student shares their badge, the badge gives potential employers or college admissions staff the ability to identify and recruit students that have demonstrated valid real-world skills as part of their coursework or expanded learning opportunities. The badges empower low-income and minority youth to promote their completion of rigorous career-related course work with college admissions or future employers.

“Often, low-income youth do not have powerfully connected parents to open doors and convince future employers that they are making extraordinary efforts to learn beyond the classroom,” explained Hillary Salmons, PASA Executive Director. “We are grateful to the partner organizations that have worked closely with PASA to develop this rigorous badge system that allows students to achieve a badge that is significantly harder to receive than a passing grade.”

The R.I. Department of Education, Providence Office of Economic Opportunity, Providence Public School District, Providence High School youth, and organizations such as Tech Collective, DownCity Design, Roger Williams Park Zoo, Young Voices, Youth In Action, and the Providence Public Library have worked closely on this effort with PASA, lending their expertise and assisting in the development of this rigorous badge system. Currently 30% of students who



pass a PASA work-based learning course go above and beyond in their coursework, demonstrating exemplary skills in areas such as communication, teamwork, perseverance, engagement in learning and critical thinking, and as a result earn a digital badge.

As reported in the brief, students enrolled in programs like the [Rhode Island Department of Education's Advance Course Network](#) program can earn both course credit and a badge for their achievements in engagement, teamwork, communication, perseverance, and critical thinking. The Providence badges started to have real meaning when Mayor Elorza's Office of Economic Opportunity offered to provide a guaranteed summer job for youth who achieved badge status. Year 1 of the project helped build Providence's capacity to communicate about, measure and award digital badges and the collaborative structure of the project has made students and staff more intentional about the skills students need to be successful in college and career. When students are awarded a digital badge, instructors and providers can upload student work to each badge, providing details on how the student achieved the badge and expanding student assessment beyond standardized test scores and grade point averages.

The use of digital badges with Providence students helps create a more robust and innovative system of student evaluation for marginalized and often underrepresented urban youth. Digital badging programs strengthen career pathways and college applications, giving students credit for real-world skills development and the valued learning that occurs outside of school walls.

[Read more about Providence's efforts with digital badging and the complete brief here.](#) ###

The Providence After School Alliance (PASA) has a mission to expand and improve quality after-school, summer, and other expanded learning opportunities for the youth of Providence by organizing a sustainable public private system that contributes to student success and serves as a national model. PASA is committed to the idea that in order to maximize youth outcomes and ensure our young people succeed, schools, after-school programs, and other expanded learning opportunities must work together to support youth.

To learn more about the Providence After School Alliance visit: www.mypasa.org