

# Expanded learning opportunities (ELO) for credit implementation awards

## Woonsocket And Central Falls Afterschool Partnerships Awarded \$80,000 Grants From Nellie Mae Education Foundation

*Funds Earmarked for Implementation of Recently Completed Pilot Programs*

PROVIDENCE, R.I., SEPTEMBER 10, 2010 – Following nearly a year of strategic planning, partnerships in Woonsocket and Central Falls, formed by two high schools and a pair of community organizations, will each receive an \$80,000 grant from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

The funds will institute projects, from September 2010 to August 2011, to stimulate and enhance Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) through which high school students learn and gain graduation credits during the school day and beyond it. Project management is being provided by the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance. Projects in Woonsocket, Central Falls and Providence originally received \$15,000 planning grants in October 2009. The trio of programs is: Woonsocket High School teamed with RiverzEdge Arts Project; Central Falls High School in partnership with the Square Mile Community Coalition; and the Providence School Department in collaboration with the Providence After School Alliance. Under RIASPA's oversight, the programs will move forward with the funding from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation grants. The Providence collaboration will receive a \$15,000 to continue planning, with an eye towards implementation later in the school year.

“In order to prepare all students for postsecondary education, work, and life we need to arm them with the skills and knowledge they'll need to succeed,” said Mary Sylvia Harrison, Vice President of Programs for the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. “These innovative partnerships create student-centered, experiential learning experiences that help prepare students for that success by taking into account the fact that young people don't stop learning when the traditional school day ends. Most importantly, these partnerships will help level the playing field by providing underserved students with access to high-quality learning opportunities outside the classroom.”

ELOs promote continuous student learning by encouraging various educational programs and activities both during the traditional school day and the hours after school is out. Additionally, ELOs effectively meld community resources such as colleges, community organizations, museums, and businesses with in-school resources to create a learning partnership with the student.

For example, a Woonsocket High School student proposed an arts project, which was supervised by a high school faculty advisor plus experienced artists at RiverzEdge. With the ELO team's guidance, the student received credits toward graduation while presenting his artwork at a student exhibit and submitting it into various competitions. “During recent months, discussion,

commitment and collaboration between the school district and community partners on the Woonsocket ELO planning team paved the way for collective innovation that emphasized student needs and student learning,” said Woonsocket School Superintendent Dr. Robert Gerardi.

One of the high school’s partners, RiverzEdge Arts Project, is a northern Rhode Island youth development program that gives educationally and economically disenfranchised youth paid employment in the arts.

“Through the generous support from the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the guidance of the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance, this grant will be a significant help in providing a positive future for the youth that we serve through unique, arts-oriented expanded learning opportunities,” said Rebekah Greenwald, RiverzEdge’s Executive Director.

RIASPA’s role in the process is as an advocate, catalyst, and facilitator to ensure that high-quality afterschool programs are available to the state’s students and that funding sources support programs such as ELOs.

“ELOs are on the frontier of education trends because they stimulate students to gain high-school credits by becoming actively engaged in unique projects that go beyond the standard school day and engage teachers in this process,” said Adam Greenman, RIASPA’s Interim Executive Director. “Projects such as these will help high school students graduate, prepare for college, and succeed in careers and life.”

RIASPA, established in 2002 by the United Way of Rhode Island, is a 600-member, statewide organization, promoting awareness and understanding of the benefits to students from high-quality, afterschool and summer programs. RIASPA is recognized as a leading, public policy advocate for the professional field of afterschool education, bridging policy and practice while serving as a liaison between schools, community organizations, funding sources, business leaders, government agencies, and elected officials.

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation is the largest charitable organization in New England that focuses exclusively on education. The Foundation supports the promotion and integration of student-centered approaches to learning at the middle and high school levels across New England. To elevate student-centered approaches, the Foundation utilizes a three-part strategy that focuses on: developing and enhancing models of practice; reshaping education policies; and increasing public understanding and demand for high quality educational experiences. The Foundation’s new initiative areas are: District Level Systems Change; State Level Systems Change; Research and Development; and Public Understanding. Since 1998, the Foundation has distributed over \$110 million in grants. For more information about the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, visit [nmefdn.org](http://nmefdn.org)