

ELEVATE YOUTH, MAYOR SIDDIQUI'S OFFICE, AND CHA WORK FORCE PROGRAM LAUNCH FREE OUTDOOR PROGRAM FOR CPS 4th AND 5th GRADERS



September 24, 2020

The Office of Mayor Siddiqui and CHA's Work Force Program have partnered with local nonprofit organization, *Elevate Youth*, to launch its "Local Parks Program" in Cambridge this week.

The Local Parks Program is entirely in-person and outdoors, for students in grades 4 and 5, who normally would not have the opportunity to experience the outdoors in a structured environment. The program will run from 3:30-5:30 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays from September 23rd-October 28th at Danehy Park and Sennott Park.

"The Local Parks Program not only provides a free and robust opportunity for underserved children to connect with others and with nature, but it also serves as an important leadership opportunity for youth in the Work Force Program, who we have

interviewed and employed to serve as co-instructors,” said Mayor Siddiqui. “I am excited and proud to launch this program in Cambridge.”

The goal of this partnership is to empower CPS’s highest need students, through social and emotional learning activities centered around structured time in the outdoors led by Youth Instructors from the Work Force Program with support from *Elevate Youth* staff.

"These types of partnerships are imperative to strengthening our community, especially during these challenging times. Young people enjoy being outdoors with their peers. The benefit and bonus of exploring nature, the community, and through social-emotional learning makes this a huge win-win. I am excited to see what the future holds for this partnership. Thank you to the Youth Instructors from the Work Force Program for stepping into this leadership role," said Ayesha Wilson, Senior Teacher-Counselor of the Work Force Program.

This program’s model adheres to public health safety guidelines from federal, state, and local officials and allows parents to easily pick up and drop off their children without the need for shared transportation. Within a safe and controlled environment requiring social distancing and mask-wearing, students are able to enjoy the outdoors in a fun, educational, and enriching way.

Each outing will have a primary focus of empowering youth through hands-on learning, open-discussion, and a friendly and inclusive environment. The Youth Instructors will play a critical role in supporting and improving the curriculum, engaging the children, and ensuring that safety measures are met.

“We are thrilled to provide outdoor programming to Cambridge youth during this difficult time. It is essential that kids spend time away from screens, enjoy the health benefits of nature, and most of all have fun with their peers in safe and structured way,” said *Elevate Youth* Executive Director Alec Griswold. “I want to thank Mayor Siddiqui for her support in getting this program off the ground, and we are grateful to have 4 co-instructors from the Work Force Program to help facilitate our parks program.”

Elevate Youth is continuing to accept applications from families of 4th and 5th graders until capacity is met. Click [here](#) to apply ASAP.

For more information or questions, please contact B. Kim, Mayor Siddiqui’s Education Liaison and Policy Advisor at BKim@CambridgeMA.gov.