



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jackie Piques, Interim Director of Communications & Grants,  
[jpiques@k12.somerville.ma.us](mailto:jpiques@k12.somerville.ma.us)

### **Somerville Public Schools Celebrates Massachusetts STEM Week announcing expansion of STEM Middle Grades programming, including an after-school Climate Change Club**

*STEM opportunities for 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders also provide mentorship and leadership opportunities for high school students.*

*SPS educators engage in STEM activities all school year, because in Somerville, “Every week is STEM Week!”*

**Somerville, MA** – The Somerville Public Schools is celebrating [Massachusetts](#) Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Week (October 21 – 25) with the announcement of a new middle grades after-school Climate Change Clubs program for grades 6–8.

This year, SPS is expanding programming for middle grades students to include a STEM-focused look at Climate Change technologies and solutions. The Climate Change Clubs will launch at all K–8 schools for students in grades 6–8. High school students are co-designing the curriculum and will work as mentors in partnership with school-based staff. Clubs will be run in partnership with the SPS Climate Change Curriculum Committee, made up of SPS educators, and a climate advisory group, whose members come from industry and higher education. Students can expect to explore emerging challenges from climate change, then take a look at technology, science, and engineering solutions currently being developed. Along with exploration of emerging climate technology industries, many of them local to Somerville, students will look for creative ways to solve climate change. The program begins in January, 2025 and culminates in April during the City of Somerville’s Sustainaville Week celebrating Earth Day and the progress of the City’s Climate Forward Plan.

The expansion of STEM programming isn’t new to the district: over the last two school years, STEM and robotics programming in SPS has increased, with some existing programs doubling in membership over the last year. In 2023, SPS launched a series of new STEM programs for students in grades 5-8. With a growing interest in middle grades summer STEM programming, the district launched the Somerville Robotics League, an after-school STEM program designed and implemented by high school students from the Somerville High School Robotics Team. In addition, SPS fielded new FIRST Lego League teams and supported a new chapter of Girls Who Code.

Here at SPS we like to say, “Every week is STEM Week!”

Existing STEM programming in SPS includes:



## **The model of success: SPS STEM after-school clubs**

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## **SHS Robotics Team Doubles in Size**

The SHS Robotics Team competes in the FIRST® Robotics Competition, a yearly international competition that challenges high school students to design, build, and program robots to compete in a game. This year, the team has almost doubled in size, with 18 new students. There are a wide range of opportunities for students and the team organizes itself into work groups, including the competition drive team, software team, electrical team, mechanical team, and marketing team.

## **New Girls Who Code program for grades 5-8**

In Spring 2024, SPS launched the Girls Who Code program for students of any gender identity in grades 5-8. Students met weekly for 10 weeks to learn basic computer coding skills culminating in a [showcase](#) of student work. The program was made possible by a Somerville Math Fund grant with materials provided by the Somerville Foundation and in collaboration with the City of Somerville Fabville.

## **FIRST® LEGO® League (FLL) for middle grades sees jump in participation**

Expanding upon its existing participation in FIRST® competitions for high schoolers, the district created FLL and has seen a big jump for the middle grades league in the last year. Each of our four teams has adult coaches, SHS student mentors, and SPS educators. There are currently 25 students involved in FLL.

## **Somerville Robotics League - Intramural Robotics Teams at all K-8 schools**

Students in grades 5–8 across the district can now join intramural robotics teams at each school. These teams follow a curriculum designed and implemented by students on the SHS Robotics team, and are mentored by SHS Robotics team members. Teams compete with their peer teams from across the district throughout the year.

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*Robotics and STEM programming is funded in part by community partners through financial and material contributions. AARPA funding provided through Somerville Foundation and Somernova supported the initial development of the middle grades Somerville Robotics League in 2023.*

*Thank you to SomerPromise, DEILAB, and SomerBot for ongoing support that makes this work possible, and to the Somerville High School Robotics Team 6201, whose members are at the center of the work with middle grades. As a result of their work, they won the prestigious Engineering Inspiration [Award](#) at a district FIRST® Robotics Competition last year. The award celebrates*



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*outstanding success in advancing respect and appreciation for engineering within a team's school or organization or community.*

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