

# Citizen Science Institute (CSI)

## @ Thurgood Marshall Middle School

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### **Rigor, Relevance, Relationships**

#### **What is CSI?**

The Citizen Science Institute (CSI) is an Olympia School District magnet program housed at Thurgood Marshall Middle School. It is multi-grade (6-8) and consists of 60 students and two teachers. CSI teachers, students and parents work together as a team to help students achieve their full potential in Science, Civics, Service and Stewardship.

Through **academically-rigorous** scientific and civic investigations, students become

**Citizen Scientists**. They develop a sense of *belonging* and *responsibility* through place-based and service learning. Students understand and practice the philosophy of

“*interconnectedness*” — the idea that actions can have both positive and negative consequences on local and global communities.

#### **CSI Mission**

The mission of CSI is to develop **youth leadership in science** through field-based science investigations and **civic literacy** through service projects. Students collaborate with scientists and civic leaders outside the classroom to apply the skills and concepts learned to real world projects and investigations. Students also participate in regularly scheduled service-learning projects to gain perspective on civics concepts and to benefit their community.



#### **Is CSI a Good Fit for Your Student?**

- ✓ Does your student have strong reading and writing skills that are at or above a 6th grade reading level? (This is critical because of the rotating curriculum; some years, 6th graders study 8th grade history or 8th grade science which are at an 8th grade reading level).
- ✓ Is your student highly motivated and excited to explore science?
- ✓ Is your student mature and responsible enough to be trusted in the community without direct adult supervision?
- ✓ Does your student enjoy helping others? Are they excited to serve in our community?
- ✓ Can your student work well independently and in a team?
- ✓ Can your student manage comprehensive projects that are completed over the course of an entire semester?
- ✓ This is a very rigorous, multi-year program; is your child up to the challenge?

#### **How Does CSI Work?**

Students enter CSI in their first year of middle school, 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and stay through their 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. All three grade levels learn together. CSI teachers are responsible for team teaching the core subjects: science, social studies and civics. Students will attend CSI in the afternoon and core classes like Language Arts, Math and one elective class in the morning.

#### **What curriculum topics will be covered in each grade?**

Our curriculum is similar to that offered at all Olympia Middle Schools, but is arranged in an interdisciplinary 3-year cycle. For example, students will explore geology, biology, ecology, astronomy, chemistry, physics and engineering in science. Students will also learn about ancient civilizations, world history, Washington State history, U.S. history, current events and civics. However, unlike traditional classes, students will see how science and civics are interrelated and not taught in isolation from other subjects. Our curriculum is enhanced through experiential learning through field-based science and civics.

## **Grading and Assessment in CSI**

In addition to traditional letter grading, CSI emphasizes learning, self-assessments, journaling and presentations in a science fair format by teachers and real scientists that we collaborate with in our community. Students set goals for each quarter and frequently review their challenges and accomplishments.

## **STEAMposium and Civics Projects**

CSI students complete two extensive STEAMposium (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) and one Civics research project each year. Each project includes a research paper and oral presentation and demonstration on a topic of their own choosing which relates to our current curriculum demonstrating mastery of NGSS and State Social Studies standards.

## **Relationships**

Because students spend three years in the same program, a strong community is formed and many students in CSI develop friendships that last a lifetime, while making personal connections to teachers, staff and their community.

## **Field School**

In the spring, students travel to a regionally significant site, and spend the week afield learning about Washington's history, ecology, geology, science, technology, cultural diversity, leadership and each other. Similar to the Cispus trip that all 5th graders take, field school is a definite highlight for all CSI students.

## **Field Investigations**

Field Investigations are an integral part of CSI. CSI also takes part in community-building events. Recent Field Investigations have included water quality testing in local watersheds, planetarium visits to learn about the cosmos, Biodiversity studies at Point Defiance Zoo, ocean acidification and shellfish populations in Puget Sound and bird monitoring at Billy Frank Jr./Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge.



## **Parent Involvement**

The success of CSI is dependent upon parent participation. CSI is based on the assumption that parents have the right and the responsibility to be actively involved in their children's education and are vital contributors to diversifying our learning and understanding of how the world works. Parents participate in a variety of ways, such as chaperoning Field Investigations, leading a lesson on their given profession, joining the CSI parent board of directors and fundraising for our various offerings. It is important to note that while highly encouraged, parents are not required to volunteer with our program. Parent meetings occur three times a year, during which teachers share information about relevant classroom curriculum, activities and plan upcoming events.

## **All-School Activities**

CSI students participate in Thurgood Marshall Middle School activities including sports, assemblies, theater, clubs and activity nights with all other Thurgood Marshall students.

## **Fundraising**

Fundraising is needed to support the CSI budget. The funds are used for Field Investigations, Exploration supplies, museum visits, field school, speakers etc. Fundraising efforts vary from year to year.

## **Enrollment**

See our CSI application packet on our school website for enrollment information.

## **Where should I go for more information?**

You can contact the Principal, Condee Wood, [cwood@osd.wednet.edu](mailto:cwood@osd.wednet.edu) or [marshall.osd.wednet.edu](http://marshall.osd.wednet.edu) for more information.