



Photos by Stella Lorence

From left front: Citizens students Niyah Smith, Ezra Chattman, Souadou Ndiaya, Jayceon Baptista, Mawa Kourouma, Nizar Wahby. From left back: WHS Senior Mariam Kaba, Citizens Assistant Principal Jamie McKenzie, Citizens Principal Cathy Carvalho, third-grader Marley Velez, POC Founder Barbara Papitto, Superintendent Patrick McGee.

# Citizens School cuts the ribbon on new Think Tank space

By STELLA LORENCE  
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WOONSOCKET – Down the hall just around the corner from the main entrance to Citizens Elementary school is a room with comfy furniture, diffused lighting, calming music and plenty of fidget toys.

Once a conference room, the space has been transformed into the Woonsocket Education Department’s first “Think Tank” – a place for students to work through difficult motions or challenging situations – with the help of the Papitto Opportunity Connection and Woonsocket senior Mariam Kaba.

“The Think Tank space is significant for me because the well-being of a child directly impacts their physical health, mental health, academic performance, and overall response to issues they may

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WHS Senior Mariam Kaba (left), Citizens third-grader Jayceon Baptista and POC Founder Barbara Papitoo (right) cut the ribbon on the new Think Tank, a space for students to work through challenging situations.

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Photos by Stella Lorence

"Restore the village" was one of the guiding principles in Mariam Kaba's winning vision for the Transform Rhode Island Scholarship in 2022. Right: Citizens third-grader Jayceon Baptista and fourth-graders Ezra Chattman and Niyah Smith use fidget putty, one of the distress tools available in the Think Tank.



# Think

Continued from page A1

encounter in life," Kaba said at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Monday morning. "When we invest in our young people, we invest in our future leaders and change makers, and strengthen our communities."

Though it had a soft launch a few months ago, the official opening of the Think Tank marks a milestone on a couple different fronts.

For the Woonsocket Education District, it's another component of heightened social-emotional learning support, which has been a focus district-wide since the pandemic.

"We try to teach kids to self-regulate," said Superintendent Patrick McGee. "This completely fits into the SEL work we've been doing for years. I'm really happy we can do this, that we can provide this resource to our students."

The Think Tank is continuously staffed with social workers, behavioral interventionists and other SEL specialists who have begun using the space to host some of that programming with students who have been identified as needing extra support. Some of those students also helped create the space themselves, constructing and arranging furniture and decor.

Rachel Laudone, one of two social workers at Citizens, said it has become a kind of "multipurpose room" for all things SEL.

"I've definitely seen the need from the kids," she

said. "I don't think this happens in every district."

Laudone said her team and the principals, Cathy Carvalho and assistant Jamie McKenzie, spent time at the beginning of the school year talking with students about the expectations for the space and how to recognize when they might benefit from a trip there versus a trip to the "quiet corner" inside the classroom.

"It helps me destress. It's really calm," said fourth-grader Souadou Ndiaya. "It's not just a place to have fun and escape class."

Jayceon Baptista, a third-grader who helped cut the ribbon on the Think Tank and uses it multiple times per week, said he likes "the stuff that can help me calm down" like the fidget toys, coloring books and silly putty.

The Think Tank is also a milestone for Kaba and the Papitto Opportunity Connection. It was part of Kaba's "restore the village" vision that won her the first-ever Transform Rhode Island Scholarship in 2022. The scholarship rewards students who present an idea to create real change in their community, and Kaba's presentation took a comprehensive approach that included job fairs, city beautification, neighborhood-building efforts and mental health resources in schools, like the Think Tank.

"All the ideas are unique, but when Mariam presented hers— one of her first items in that powerpoint was job fairs, and I said, 'Why aren't we already doing that?'"

Said POC Founder Barbara

Papitto.

POC is about to announce the finalists for this year's Transform Rhode Island Scholarship winner, and Papitto said the foundation received 465 applications.

"It shows these high school students care," she said.

Kaba's idea to provide more mental health support for students found a receptive audience at Citizens, where Carvalho said she had been wanting to create a space like the Think Tank for years but hadn't had the resources or support to do so. Working with Kaba and the POC, Citizens' behavioral intervention team modeled their Think Tank on a similar space at a New Jersey high school and soft launched it earlier this spring.

Kaba will soon graduate from Woonsocket High School and the Woonsocket Area Career and Technical Center to pursue a double-major in nursing and business administration on a full-ride scholarship at Northeastern University. But her idea will live on in Woonsocket as the Think Tank expands to more schools.

"I'd like to replicate this across the district," McGee said. "It's wonderful to have a high school senior who's giving back to her community. She's giving back to the students. She understands the importance of the social-emotional learning part of education and she's experienced it herself. It's wonderful for her to give back to the district that helped her."

Follow Stella Lorence on Twitter @slorences.

## TOWN OF BURRILLVILLE NOTICE OF PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX RATE CHANGE

The Town of Burrillville proposes to increase its property tax levy to \$32,870,373 in the 2024-2025 budget year; the property tax levy this year is \$31,655,164. THIS IS A PROPOSED INCREASE OF 3.84%.

It has been estimated that the proposed increase in property tax revenues will result in a proposed property tax rate of \$15.19 for real estate and \$14.39 for tangible property compared to the current tax rate of \$14.39 for real estate and \$14.39 for tangible property.

A real estate tax rate of \$15.22 and a tangible property tax rate of \$14.39 would be needed in the coming budget year to raise the maximum levy authorized by section 44-5-2 of the RI General Laws.

The Town of Burrillville Budget Hearings will be held on Thursday, May 16, 2024 at 7:00 pm, and Thursday, May 23, 2024, at 7:00 pm. Meeting details for public access will be posted at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting on the Town of Burrillville's official website: [www.burrillville.org](http://www.burrillville.org). Anyone interested in participating in the meeting may also call the Town Clerk's Department at 401-568-4300 to receive meeting access details.

The above property tax estimates have been computed in a manner approved by the Rhode Island Department of Revenue.

17-Apr-24  
Michael C. Wood, Town Manager  
Town of Burrillville

### TOWN OF BURRILLVILLE REPORT TO TAXPAYERS OF CURRENT AND PROPOSED BUDGET

Function or Purpose of Expenditures	June 30, 2024 Current Budget		Manager's Proposed Budget For FYE 6/30/25	
	Operating	Capital	Operating	Capital
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>				
1 Education	\$36,304,295	\$ -	\$36,979,734	\$ -
2 General Financial Administration	981,994	83,800	1,019,557	58,000
3 Public Works	1,728,696	2,042,700	1,699,712	1,666,000
4 Public Safety	3,411,907	206,700	3,475,026	292,500
5 Fire Protection	-	-	-	-
6 Sewerage (Debt)	392,109	-	386,918	-
7 Other Sanitation	1,128,672	-	1,162,812	-
8 Parks & Recreation	197,538	-	211,406	-
9 Interest on General Debt	378,985	-	482,474	-
10 Principal on General Debt	1,443,000	-	1,538,000	-
11 General Government	4,588,264	-	4,814,325	-
12 Libraries	1,028,340	129,800	1,055,846	29,500
13 Miscellaneous	17,100	-	17,350	252,800
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$51,600,900</b>	<b>\$2,463,000</b>	<b>\$52,843,160</b>	<b>\$2,298,800</b>
<b>REVENUES</b>				
1 Local Property Tax	\$29,049,054	\$2,463,000	\$30,421,095	\$2,298,800
2 Local Non-Property	1,541,691	-	1,737,250	-
3 Federal	-	-	-	-
4 State	20,772,155	-	20,524,815	-
5 All Other (Departmental)	238,000	-	160,000	-
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$51,600,900</b>	<b>\$2,463,000</b>	<b>\$52,843,160</b>	<b>\$2,298,800</b>

Certification: This is to certify that the data contained in this report are accurate to the best of my knowledge. 17-Apr-24 Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, Town of Burrillville