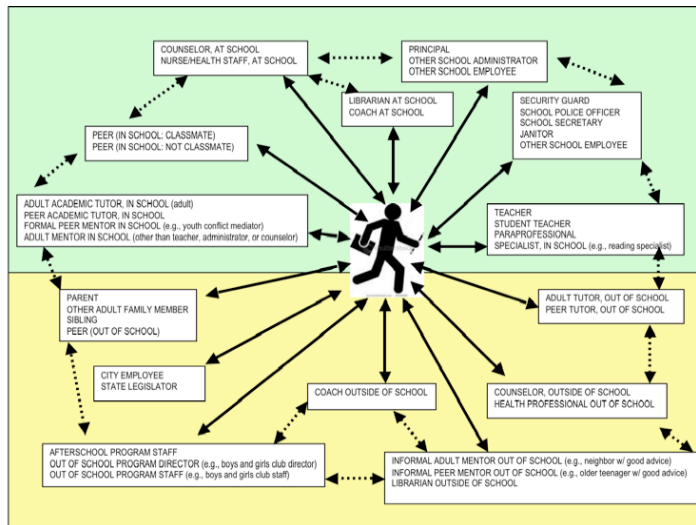


# ONEVILLE: community cooperation in young people's success

*Sharing in the success of young people – and each young person*



OneVille is a pilot community project pursuing a vision already shared across Somerville. **How can people across this diverse city work together, to support the city's young people to pursue their potential? How can we share resources, ideas, information, and effort** to support young people, and each young person? How can **basic technology** help?

We're testing tools and strategies to support communication between people in young people's lives. And, we're here to figure out strategies in Somerville that can then go anywhere.

## OneVille goal 1, 2010-11:

***Test and implement 3 tools that could eventually help a team of supporters pay close attention to the learning and development of every young person in Somerville.***

OneVille's first fundamental idea is to create an intergenerational support team around each young person. We are convinced that technology can help, and we're working closely with the Somerville Public Schools on three specific tools. In partnership with the Schools, we're lining up three working groups of people who live and work in Somerville to design and test the following three tools for supporting individual students. Our vision is that these 3 tools could eventually fit together in a dynamite student-support approach! We want each tool to support speakers of languages other than English and to be accessible by a cell phone, so people who don't own computers can participate:

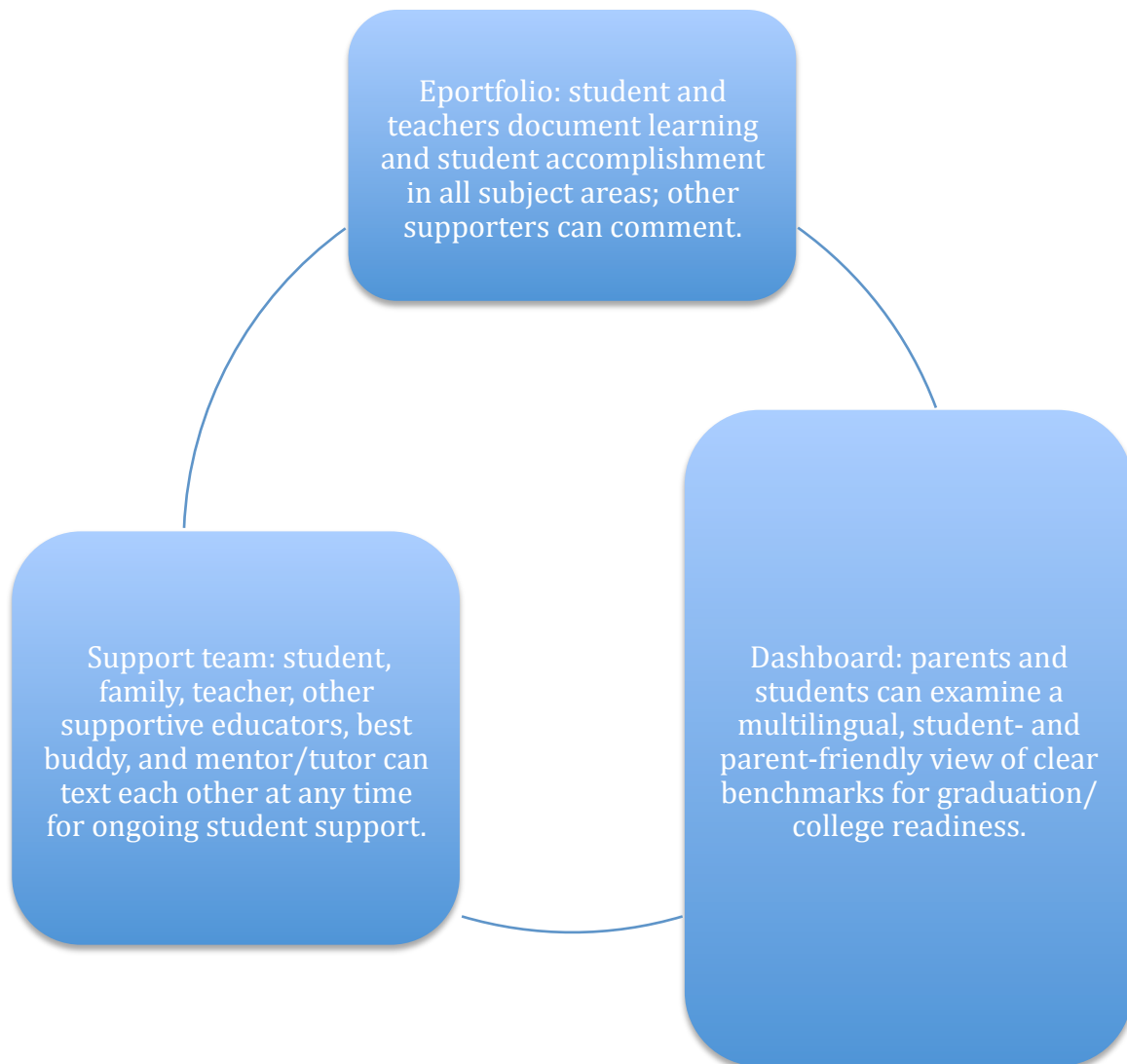
**Working Group 1: "Team around kids." Goal: test ways an on-call support team around every young person could communicate at any time.** Lots of supporters help

out students in Somerville. But what if a *team* of supporters was on call at any time to support a young person's progress? This past summer, we started working with **teachers and students** from Somerville High to explore how a teacher and each young person in her class could use social media to stay in contact with a "team" of supporters of the young person's choice.<sup>i</sup> Texting rose to the top as students' most common communication tool. We hope that in one classroom this fall, students and teachers will test ways that student, teacher and "team" could text each other to communicate when the student needs support. We will ask students to list a parent/guardian and a "buddy" or other adult supporter who they'd want on their "team." We will add other team members (particularly, tutors and mentors) as we go. Teachers could also text back and forth with students about homework and other academic reminders. We may also create peer homework support teams in each classroom who text each other to work on homework outside of class. "Teams" would also talk face to face as needed about specific things that can support young people and their learning. By the end of the pilot, we want to know how an on-call, texting support team could assist each young person in Somerville.

**Working Group 2: Dashboard. Goal: create a tool showing youth and parents a simple, clear view of individual students' progress, so that every student can plan for graduation and college.**<sup>ii</sup> To support young people, people need to stay informed about how young people are doing. "Data" needs to be clear and accessible to families and students themselves. A **group of Somerville programmers, youth, and parents** is designing and testing out a multilingual, community-friendly "dashboard" (a quick data view) that families and youth could use to discuss and easily keep track of how each young person is doing on getting to graduation and college. ("Teams" could meet in person to look at the dashboard to plan for the success of individual students. Community groups could also look at larger data patterns, to consider ways of supporting lots of young people.)

**Working Group 3: Eportfolio. Goal: create an online place to privately display each student's learning and work.** Somerville educators and youth know that tests aren't the only way to demonstrate student learning. **Teachers and students at Somerville High**, along with other respondents chosen by students (such as parents and mentors), will be working together to design a multimedia ePortfolio for each student that will help students demonstrate what they can do — and support informed conversations about sparking and supporting young people's learning.<sup>iii</sup> (Eventually, teams could look at these together.) The High School was already planning on expanding their portfolio work. We're thrilled to support it!

**VISION FOR THREE COLLABORATIVE TOOLS SUPPORTING INDIVIDUAL YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOMERVILLE:**



---

**i Note on where we fit into Somerville:** This summer, with a SHS teacher and two classes of insightful summer school students, we explored the concept of convening a support team around every student, using social media to communicate about the student's progress. A few weeks into the course, we decided to focus the pilot exclusively on researching students' current support relationships, and their current and potential use of social media for support conversations. The natural use of texting in everyday support conversations, and the role of both in-school and non-parental supporters in youths' existing support networks, has risen to the top as an issue we plan to explore further in a next small pilot in one classroom. Students also indicated an interest in accessing data more often for tracking their attendance and other progress, another issue we plan to address in our work to develop an easy-to-understand "dashboard" for parents and students (below).

Many people in Somerville have been interested in the "support team" approach, or even suggested it at various community meetings. While we will most likely start our fall pilot with supporting teachers to first text student, parents and older "buddies" as a "team," we may also expand the pilot to include tutors on every "team." At the August 2 SomerPromise meeting, afterschool providers were again talking about the need for tutors and afterschool providers to communicate with teachers about what young people need to work on. This working group will start the exploration.

**ii** New Visions, in NYC, seems to be one of the most advanced projects in the country using a dashboard style tool to display data directly to parents and young people (with clear benchmarks that help students and parents plan for student success). (Other districts are moving toward showing parents and students how to access their "student information system" – Somerville's "X2.") The New Visions tool has been available in Spanish and English and has to date been used successfully in quarterly, official "views" for parents rather than available for viewing at any time as we propose (they too are moving in that direction). In Somerville, we propose to create a free dashboard that can be shared with other districts. We also propose that combining a dashboard with face to face and tech-supported conversations between "support team" members (see above) *and* with an eportfolio (see below) would really assist in ongoing planning for student success.

**Note on where we fit into Somerville:** We hope that our dashboard (and support team approach, above, and the high school's eportfolio model, below) could assist SomerPromise, even as SomerPromise also pursues more official agency data sharing. A community-friendly dashboard for every young person will help make it normal for the entire community to view and discuss data. In terms of individual-level dashboards, students/parents already have access to the district's student information system, X2, but those we have talked to say they don't tend to use it regularly or easily understand it. Nor is X2 multilingual. Nor does it highlight key benchmarks students need to reach. Finally, the State also requires all students "at risk" of failing to have an "individual student support plan" (ISSP) that includes a timeline, progress monitoring, and benchmarks for each student. This template could live on a student's "team" page, supporting tutors, teachers, youth, and other supporters to be in contact on a specific plan for a student. Something to explore.

**iii Note on where we fit into Somerville:** the high school already was interested in expanding their portfolio effort; we're supporting that desire.