The Somerset Street School was located at 3 Somerset Street, and was the site of the first public kindergarten in the United States. Originally built as a private home in 1824, it was purchased for use as a primary school in 1853 and converted into a schoolhouse with eight rooms and five classrooms.

The kindergarten movement in Boston was largely motivated by two prominent women: Elizabeth Peabody and Pauline Agassiz Shaw. Peabody brought Freidrich Fröebel’s German philosophy of “kindergartens” to the city and pushed the Boston School Board to establish a kindergarten in the Somerset Primary School in 1870. Shaw, founder of the North Bennet Street School, was responsible for establishing kindergartens as part of the Boston Public School System. In 1877, Shaw requested the construction of kindergartens in Jamaica Plain and Brookline. Altogether, she personally founded 14 kindergartens in Boston during the 1880s, leading to the Boston School Committee officially accepting responsibility for Shaw’s kindergarten programs in 1887.

"Under Mrs. Shaw’s management and munificent expenditure, the kindergarten has been so conducted and improved as to assume a new relation to our school system, and now appears as fully entitled to incorporation into that system as any existing grade of schools."

Building on Shaw’s work the School Board established sixteen new kindergartens in 1889 and 1890, making a total of thirty-one, with an attendance of nearly two thousand children.

The Somerset School later became a school for exceptional children with both learning disabilities, as well as physical and mental handicaps.