



For Immediate Release  
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## **National Summer Learning Association Now Accepting Applications from Summer Learning Programs for the 2017 New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning Awards**

*Since 2004, more than 500 programs serving nearly 500,000 youth have applied, offering the most comprehensive look at the national summer learning landscape in America*

Baltimore, MD – [The National Summer Learning Association](http://www.summerlearning.org) (NSLA) is seeking applications from summer learning programs nationwide for the 2017 New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning Awards. The Excellence Award and Founder's Award recognize outstanding summer programs and models that strive to curb learning loss in children and youth between pre-kindergarten and twelfth grade. The New York Life Foundation honors programs with a monetary award and NSLA will announce award recipients on National Summer Learning Day, July 13, 2017. Details of the Award, its application and past winners can be found at: [www.summerlearning.org/excellence-awards/](http://www.summerlearning.org/excellence-awards/). The deadline to apply is Wednesday, February 1.

The Excellence in Summer Learning Awards grew out of the reality that the summer months can be a season of high risk for millions of children and youth who lose access to enrichment opportunities, free and reduced school meals and caring mentors once school doors close for summer vacation. In fact, most children lose up to two months of math skills during summer breaks. The cumulative effects of this "summer slide" contribute significantly to the achievement gap, yet only one-third of households report having a child enrolled in a summer learning program. Moreover, these learning losses are particularly acute for low-income youth who lose two to three months in reading achievement, while their higher-income peers make slight gains. This differential explains more than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth in the U.S.

"The Excellence Awards spotlight exemplary programs that creatively keep young people learning, safe and healthy during the critical summer months, an imperative task in ensuring students are prepared to succeed in the school year ahead," said Matthew Boulay, Founder and Interim CEO of the National Summer Learning Association. "NSLA identifies and honors programs that tirelessly work to nurture the intellectual curiosity of our nation's youth while providing educators with insightful strategies around what's working in summer programs across the country."

These model programs reinforce a huge and growing body of research that shows summer learning and after-school programs as great equalizers – they serve many students from low-income, African

American and Hispanic families; provide STEM opportunities to minorities and girls, while transforming the summer learning slide that plagues so many students into a summer learning boost.

Winning programs of the Excellence Awards demonstrate exemplary practices in overall programming, including professional development for program staff and collaboration with community partners in fulfilling shared goals for student and family engagement. In 2015, NSLA introduced the Founder's Award which recognizes organizations with onsite and/or virtual programs that occur anytime, anywhere, and blend learning and enrichment to serve youth in an effort to fill gaps in underserved communities. The Awards program provides a growing knowledge base that NSLA uses to educate policymakers, funders, media and the public on best practices and standards of quality for summer learning.

"The Excellence in Summer Learning Awards help to improve the quality of summer learning programs for thousands of children across the country," said Marlyn Torres, Senior Program Manager, New York Life Foundation. "Year-round programs, specifically summer programs help keep students on track to successfully advance academically and socially."

Programs which apply are measured against the Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment, developed in partnership with NSLA and the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. NSLA staff, in addition to education and summer learning experts in the field, review applications, conduct interviews and site visits with a short list of semi-finalists.

All summer program models are encouraged to apply for the Awards including drop-in sites or summer-focused plug-in programs. Also eligible are wrap-around programs that do not partner with a traditional site or enrollment-based summer program, but provide learning or enrichment opportunities during the summer.

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### **About the National Summer Learning Association**

The National Summer Learning Association is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and advocates for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. NSLA's work is driven by the belief that all children and youth deserve high-quality summer learning experiences that will help them succeed in college, career, and life. For more information, visit [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org).

### **About the New York Life Foundation**

Inspired by New York Life's tradition of service and humanity, the New York Life Foundation has, since its founding in 1979, provided \$220 million in charitable contributions to national and local nonprofit organizations. The Foundation supports programs that benefit young people, particularly in the areas of educational enhancement and childhood bereavement. The Foundation also encourages and facilitates the community involvement of employees and agents of New York Life through its Volunteers for Good program. To learn more, please visit [www.newyorklifefoundation.org](http://www.newyorklifefoundation.org).