

From: **National Summer Learning Association**

Contact: DKC Public Relations | [Summerlearning@dkcnews.com](mailto:Summerlearning@dkcnews.com)  
Bruce Bobbins | 212.981.5190  
Laura Johnson | 410-856-1370 x 208



**National Summer Learning Association Announces Winners of the 2018 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Awards**

*Superior Programs across the Nation Lauded for Raising the Bar During Pivotal Months to Avoid the 'Summer Slide'*

**BALTIMORE, MD, July 13, 2018** – Stellar programs from across the country that stand out for designing innovative, diverse, and experiential learning opportunities for students in all grade levels have been named winners of the prestigious 2018 New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Award. The awards are presented annually by the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities.

The **2018 Excellence in Summer Awards** Honorees are:

- **Breakthrough Miami Summer Institute** (Miami, FL) where peer mentors and small class sizes allow individualized instruction, hands-on learning and an environment that feels like family.
- **Children's Circus of Middletown** (Middletown, CT) where kids learn life skills and take physical risks: unicycle riding and aerial acrobatics, trusting their peers to support them physically and emotionally.

There are three recipients of the annual **Founder's Award**, which recognizes non-traditional program models:

- **Princeton-Blairstown Center's Summer Bridge Program** (Blairstown, NJ) uses the natural resources at their disposal and the unique curiosity of youth to provide an intensive weeklong, overnight experience, allowing kids to explore the independence of being away from home.
- **Generation Teach Summer Teaching Fellowship** (National) works to address the root causes of the shortage of teachers of color by recruiting Teaching Fellows beginning in high school and providing them with authentic teaching experiences and support as they apply for teaching jobs in their communities.
- **Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) Summer Program** (Portland, OR) deftly combines learning, enrichment and exposure to 'hands-on, minds-on' opportunities that facilitate students' growth while supporting them through multi-year, one-on-one mentoring as part of a community-wide system of summer learning.

And the inaugural **Legacy Award**, given to a program that exemplifies longevity (more than two decades of service to students) and excellence, goes to **Aim High**, a San Francisco, CA-based tuition-free program. It is academically rigorous, with an eye to college readiness and ultimately career preparation.

"Thanks to innovative programs like our award winners and finalists, so many kids are trying new things and having fun while they're learning. When school starts again in September, they'll be ready to rock and roll without missing a beat," said Matthew Boulay PhD, Founder and CEO of the National Summer Learning Association

Excellence Award winning programs are remarkable for their efforts to curb learning losses, particularly among low-income students who are disproportionately at risk for academically falling behind their higher-income peers during the summer. While most children lose up to two months of math skills during summer breaks, the cumulative effects of this "summer slide" are most detrimental to low-income students and contribute significantly to the achievement gap.

"Every child deserves access to high quality summer learning opportunities, regardless of their zip code," says Marlyn Torres, Corporate Vice President, New York Life Foundation. "Each year we look forward to having our name attached to programs that are raising the bar and moving the needle."

The annual awards recognize summer programs demonstrating excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for low-income children and youth, as measured by the Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment (SLPQA) -- an instrument designed jointly by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality and NSLA. Winning programs 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.

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

*The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) 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 in summer learning, develops and delivers community capacity-building offerings and convenes and empowers key actors to embrace summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. For more information, visit [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org)*

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