

Summer Scholars Honored for Excellence in Summer Learning

DENVER — The Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University is thrilled to announce Summer Scholars as the 2005 recipient of the Excellence in Summer Learning Award. The program's commitment to innovation, pursuit of excellence through best practices, passion for data-driven improvement, and devotion to continuity of service is making a difference in the lives of children in northeast Denver.

"The Summer Scholars program is of great benefit to the students at our schools. The summer literary and recreation program, the after-school tutoring program, and the family literacy services enhance student achievement and provide safe, fun enrichment to participating students," said Patty Kipp, the principal of Palmer Elementary School, one of the schools where Summer Scholars is located. Kipp is also the lead principal for the nineteen Summer Scholars partner schools.

Summer Scholars began as one teacher's idea in 1993 in response to a summer filled with violence in Denver. When the program got underway the following summer, 511 students were enrolled. Over their eleven year history, an excess of 11,000 children, ages five to eleven, have received high-quality reading and writing instruction as well as enrichment activities. Nine-hundred-and-fifty children were served last summer and Summer Scholars intends to enroll 1,050 students this summer.

The northeast Denver community is highly impacted by poverty and the



Photo Courtesy of Summer Scholars

Summer Scholars receive individual attention with reading skills development.

need for programs and enrichment opportunities is great. In 2004, 28 percent of fourth graders in the area served by Summer Scholars scored an unsatisfactory on the state reading test. Slightly more than 65 percent of Denver Public School students receive free or reduced lunch, and more than a third of children under eighteen live in poverty. Summer Scholars is designed to give low income children who lag behind in reading skills an opportunity to catch up. The program consists of literacy instruction during the morning followed by afternoon enrichment and athletic activities.

Summer Scholars is supported in

their mission to offer literacy and youth development to low-income children through strong partnerships with the Denver Public School System and the Denver Department of Parks and Recreation. The partnerships with Denver public schools allows Summer Scholars to use their physical structures and to collaborate on teacher training. Prior to the summer session, staff are trained in reading instruction techniques including reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, demonstrated writing, and independent reading and writing. The program maintains a 1:5 staff to student ratio, and each

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Scholars Receive High-Quality Literacy Instruction and Enrichment Opportunities



Photo Courtesy of Summer Scholars

Summer Scholars participate in a wheelbarrow race. Afternoon activities promote student participation in the morning literacy class and provide Scholars with additional opportunities to learn and to grow.

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literacy class has two teachers instructing, one aide, and one teen intern, as well as parents and other volunteers in the room. In addition, students are paired with a teacher who will stay with them at the start of the following year.

The Denver Department of Parks and Recreation provides enrichment and recreation services and funding for Summer Scholars' afternoon activities.

Financial support for the program is provided through public and private funds including more than 1,500 individual donations. Last year through wise stewardship, Summer Scholars spent 93 percent of their expenses on program costs and the remaining seven percent was used for administration and fundraising costs.

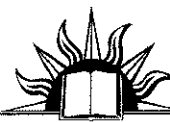
While the per student cost is \$1,000, parents pay a nominal fee of \$20 to help cover the expense of field trips during afternoons.

The six-week summer program runs five days per week, seven hours

a day and focuses primarily on literacy, recreation, and enrichment activities including games, art projects, and field trips. Students may also participate in swimming lessons, athletics, music lessons and character education. All of these enrichment activities are designed to serve as incentives for participation in the morning instruction and as ways to enhance learning; the mix of services appears to be working.

Summer Scholars places a high priority on attendance and builds relationships with families through a parental contract. Home visits by teachers are a regular practice, and families can expect frequent communication from program staff members regarding their child.

Jerry Wartgow, Superintendent of the Denver Public Schools said, "Urban school districts like Denver are challenged to meet the diverse needs of our student population, and it is wonderful to collaborate with organizations like Summer Scholars. Our combined efforts positively impact the youth of our community."



CENTER FOR SUMMER LEARNING

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The mission of the Center for Summer Learning is to create high quality summer learning opportunities for all young people.

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REAL Kids Play Baseball

EAST HARLEM — By harnessing the appeal of baseball, Harlem RBI encourages neighborhood youth to play, to learn, and to grow. A dedicated youth development organization, Harlem RBI offers a full range of year-round programming for students ages seven to eighteen. During the summer, REAL Kids (Reading and Enrichment Academy for Learning) serves children ages nine to twelve for seven weeks. Participants are grouped by age into co-educational baseball teams and divisions.

The program began in the summer of 1999 with 45 youth, and now in its seventh year, has 210 participants. REAL Kids prevents summer learning loss, teaches sportsmanship, and exposes children to new experiences and opportunities.

Harlem RBI youth are representative of the surrounding community; most of the young people are Latino or African-American, and one-third of East Harlem families live below the poverty line. Sixty percent of families of REAL Kids participants have an annual household income of less than \$35,000 and 65 percent of participants live in a single parent or no parent household.

A high priority is placed on literacy, since approximately half of REAL Kids participants read below grade level. All children wanting to participate in REAL Kids are accepted. Through this free of charge summer program, Harlem RBI begins the process of engaging youth over many years, both during the school year and over the summer months.

Monday through Thursday, REAL Kids attend Literacy Workshops and Team Clubhouse in the morning, followed by lunch and baseball in the afternoon. Fridays are devoted to field trips such as the New York Hall of Science and the American Museum of Natural History.

"Harlem RBI means playing baseball, getting help with your homework, and getting help with your game," says Shakeem McGrier, REAL Kid. "You connect with other kids. I like to think that Harlem RBI

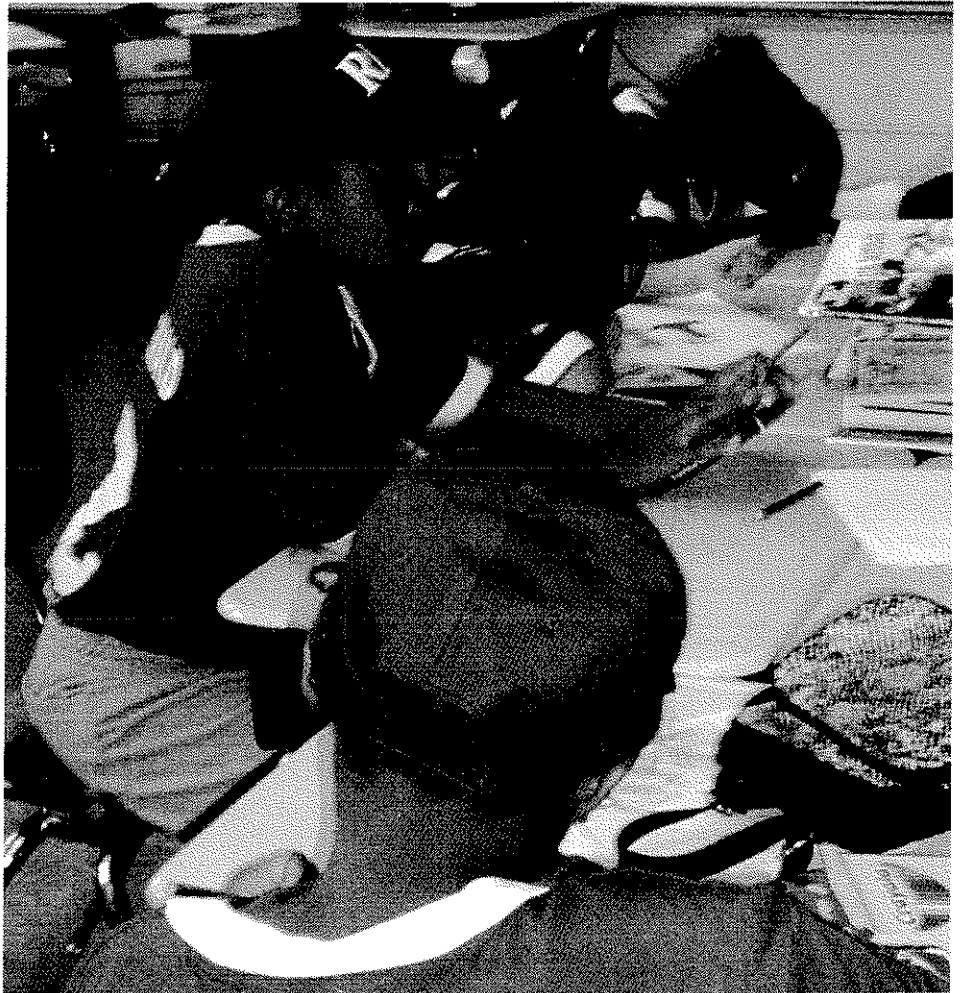


Photo Courtesy of Harlem RBI

REAL Kids earn runs both on and off the field through a merit system. Runs accrued during morning classroom instruction carry over to the afternoon's ball games.

will always be here."

In the morning literacy workshops, classes are led by a certified teacher and two college coaches. REAL Kids is structured with low staff to youth ratios (1:5) and is group-based to foster strong peer support networks. Last summer, 82 percent of youth improved their reading scores or kept them constant, showing no summer learning loss while 92 percent of children improved in reading comprehension.

After classroom literacy instruction, students go to Team Clubhouse, which complements material covered earlier in the morning through active team building while giving teams an opportunity to discuss conflict, celebrate successes, and foster respect. During the summer, teams also com-

plete a learning project to be shared with their families at the conclusion of the program. Previous projects have included a video documentary, a simulated sports highlight show, life-size baseball cards, a summer yearbook, and a rap about the history of baseball.

After lunch, participants play organized baseball games and practice ball skills until the end of the day. There is a baseball director at each of the two sites who is assisted by Harlem RBI high school youth serving as role models.

At the conclusion of the summer, eleven- and twelve-year-old participants who have successfully completed the program attend a five day overnight camp, which serves as both an incentive and a reward.

BELL Accelerates Learning and Empowers Students to Succeed

BOSTON — Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) seeks to teach youth that “smart is not something you *are*, smart is something you *get*.”

After four years of school-year programming, BELL expanded to offer a summer educational and enrichment component in 1996. The Accelerated Summer Learning Program (BELL Summer) seeks to increase children’s basic skills in reading, writing, and math. BELL Summer also works to achieve the intangible goals of raising children’s expectations and self-esteem, empowering parents, and developing mentoring relationships. BELL has an amazing track record of sustaining mentor relationships and encouraging students to further their education. Out of the first class of BELL scholars, 100 percent are enrolled in college.

BELL scholars are typically six months to two years below grade level. The average household income for a BELL family of three is \$16,047 annually, and 87 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Over 95 percent of students are African-American, and BELL enrolls slightly more boys than girls. BELL operates with a staff to student ratio of one to eight with a maximum class size of twenty. The cost per pupil is \$1,000.

Last summer, BELL scholars improved by an average of six months in grade-equivalent skills in reading and math. At the beginning of the program, scholars ranked nationally at the 43rd percentile in reading and the 31st percentile in math. Six weeks later, scholars performed at the 50th and 42nd percentiles respectively. But the gains were not only academic. Eighty-three percent of parents reported noticeable improvement in their child’s self-esteem, motivation to learn, and ability to work well with others.

BELL serves nearly 5,000 underperforming elementary school children in Boston, New York City, Washington, D.C., and Prince George’s and Montgomery counties in



Photo Courtesy of BELL

Scholars assemble for a group picture prior to boarding the bus for a Friday field trip. Since 1992, BELL has educated more than 8,000 children to help them succeed in school and life.

Maryland. Students from kindergarten to sixth grade are recommended by their teachers and previous participants are invited back. Students are called “scholars” once enrolled, which speaks to the program culture. Parents are required to attend a mandatory orientation and are encouraged to remain active in the program.

The program operates either five or six weeks, depending on the site, for eight hours a day, five days a week. Children are instructed by certified teachers who are joined in the classroom by a teacher’s assistant. Both teachers and teacher’s assistants primarily come from BELL’s school-year tutors.

BELL places a high priority on the staff reflecting the ethnic make-up of the student population. Students receive instruction in reading and math as well as art, music, dance, and drama. Opportunities for scholars to learn about their cultural heritage are incorporated into the curriculum.

In addition to providing for scholars’ academic development, BELL also cares for their health by serving two balanced meals each day: break-

fast and lunch.

A number of partnerships assist BELL in reaching their goals. The faculty at Cambridge College support the design of a 32-hour staff training program. The literacy curriculum was designed by Voices of Love and Freedom and the consulting firm, Monitor, plays an advisory role regarding program quality.

This summer, BELL continues in the second year of collaboration with the Urban Institute, which is conducting an external study of the impact of BELL Summer using random assignment of students. Once completed, this study will report the extent to which the summer programs help children in low-income communities overcome summer learning loss by comparing children who participate in BELL Summer with those who do not. Not only will the study provide BELL with its first third-party longitudinal evaluation of impact, but it could influence policy regarding out-of-school time.

This newsletter was written by Center for Summer Learning staff in collaboration with Summer Scholars, Harlem RBI, and BELL.