



Excellence in Summer Learning

AWARD-WINNING PROGRAMS MAKE THE MOST OF SUMMER

The 2011 winners of the National Summer Learning Association's Excellence in Summer Learning Award not only tackle summer learning loss—they use summer learning to build the foundation for a love of learning all year. This enthusiasm for summer learning is reflected in the largest crop of winners in the six-year history of the Excellence Awards.

Winners must score highly on the Association's Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP), a set of 80 quality indicators defining research-based quality practices in summer program infrastructure and point-of-service. In this bulletin, you'll learn how our five 2011 winners are meeting the needs of youth in their community with intentional, focused, life-changing opportunities for learning and development.

Students can join New York's Fiver Children's Foundation at age 8 to begin working on building character literacy. New York City and Washington, D.C. public high school students learn about emerging global issues with Global Kids, Inc. Harvard students lead community-oriented summer programs for neighborhoods in Boston and Cambridge with Phillips Brooks House Association's Summer Urban Program. The Pennsylvania Department of Education, Migrant Education Program provides a holistic approach to serving the needs of migrant students. Chicago public middle and high school students work alongside scientists as part of Project Exploration.

While the winners have their own distinctive models and serve diverse groups of students, several shared characteristics emerged:

- The programs help participants fight negative influences by creating a positive community and interaction with mentors.
- Program staff are able to relate to participants because they have been through the program themselves, have a similar or shared background, or speak the same language.
- The programs have a school-year counterpart and remain a source of support for the student year-round.
- The programs stay in touch with students after they graduate from high school.

"These programs each have a very strong culture that sets the bar high for participants," said Sarah Pitcock, senior director of program quality at the Association. "Whether it's through rigorous, college-like content, analysis, and discussions, or through positive behavior-management strategies, these programs all empower young people to take control of their experience and the direction of their learning and contribution."



Standards of Quality

Excellence Award winners are chosen based on quality indicators in the Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP). Here are a few of its important indicators:

- Focus on project-based and experiential learning
- Relevance to youth interest and academic and developmental needs: Youth choice and voice in planning
- Commitment to family engagement and application of stakeholder feedback
- Strong summer culture: traditions, unifying themes and program principles
- Continuous focus on outcomes, evaluation and quality improvement

Global Kids broadens horizons

The U.S. in the World: Foreign Policy and International Law Institute offered by Global Kids, Inc., gives 25 public high school students the opportunity to engage with leading foreign policy experts for three weeks at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City.

Haisu Qu, a former participant and current staff member, came to the United States from a rural town in China at the age of 8 and is a 2011 graduate of SUNY Geneseo. "I first was involved with Global Kids in my junior year of high school and it definitely made a major impact because it exposed me to a lot of global issues," Qu said. "Global Kids has exposed me to the world and provided me with leadership skills."

Global Kids empowers students from communities and schools underrepresented in the professional sphere to speak out against global and local injustices. The organization has worked with more than 120,000 students and educators in New York City since it was created in 1989 by former Executive Director and Founder Carole Artigiani. Artigiani started Global Kids in reaction to the violence of the late '80s and early '90s and the negative portrayal of youth in the media. She correctly surmised that not only could underserved youth be positively engaged in discussions of international affairs, race relations and apartheid, but they would also enjoy such interactions. At the end of the 2010 summer session, more than 80 percent of participants felt that they had some tangible influence on foreign policy.

Global Kids participants come from immigrant communities and schools with low attendance rates. Most qualify for free or reduced price lunches.

Even though some believe these students aren't able to handle the opportunities provided by Global Kids, Executive Director Evie Hantzopoulos disagrees. "The world is changing so rapidly and to not prepare young people for an independent globalized world is to not prepare them for their future. They need to be able to understand their subject matter in school and what role they can play in creating their future."

Global Kids strives to incorporate youth development into its process. The organization takes the approach that students become engaged when they can understand and apply what they are learning to their own world and what they care about. Leadership skills are developed through hands-on activities, and information is displayed in an exploratory and interactive manner that allows students to use analytical skills combined with creativity to approach the problem solving.

The program has expanded to Washington, D.C., where 13 students learned about international affairs and foreign relations and ended the summer with a trip to Brazil. Other Global Kids summer programs included a service learning trip to Kenya; a youth employment program in New York; and a digital media project on sustainability with 13 students in New York.

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Global Kids, Inc.

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY 100 IN SUMMER LEARNING, AND THOUSANDS MORE THROUGH SPECIAL TRAININGS, ONLINE PROJECTS, AND SPECIAL EVENTS

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:8 FOR SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

PARTICIPANT AGE HIGH SCHOOL

FOCUS INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS

“Once a Fiver. Always a Fiver”: Program serves youth from 8 to 18

At the heart of Fiver Children’s Foundation’s program is an extraordinary pledge—to commit 10 years of service to participants beginning at age 8 and continuing to age 18. Founded in 1998 as a summer camp, the New York City based program now serves 550 students from New York City and rural parts of upstate New York with year-round programming.

“If you want to make a lasting impact on a child, you have to get inside their heart,” said Executive Director Christie Ko when reflecting on Fiver’s approach. “That’s what Fiver does. Once children are referred, they are immediately embraced by a new extended family with a powerful, positive, immersive culture.”

The Fiver Children’s Foundation takes its name from “Watership Down,” the celebrated work of fiction by Richard Adams. The story focuses on the survival, leadership, and courage of a group of rabbits, led by the visionary rabbit Fiver, who set out to find a better way of life for their family. Founder and Chairman of the Board Tom Tucker started the organization in 1998 with that spirit in mind. Tucker’s belief was that at-risk New York City kids would be inspired to keep dreaming, instead of losing sight of their goals, like so many of their peers, if they were exposed to new opportunities and outstanding role models. Thirteen years later, this belief continues to fuel the work of Fiver staff who have been recognized by their peers and evaluators as implementing a program that is heartfelt and effective.

The name Fiver spells out the core values of the Whole Self character literacy curriculum at the heart of the organization’s approach: Friend, Individual, Valuable Team Player, Environmentalist, and Risk Taker. “It may seem strange to include risk taker, but it’s a really important element,” said Christopher Chavez, Fiver’s Supervisor of Program Quality. “It could mean anything from eating eggplant to not following the crowd in doing negative things; studying; or seeking out peers and mentors who are going to help you make positive life choices.”

Whole Self underpins all of Fiver’s programming. Fivers are always asked to focus on the development of their entire character, and enrichment of their whole self, whether they are building fires to roast marshmallows as first-time campers attending Camp Fiver, or learning valuable skill sets as high school interns placed with a Summer in the City partner company.

Through its summer programs and year round support services, Fiver excels at creating a “unique program culture”—a key category in the Association’s Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP). Visitors will hear the same motto from ex-summer staff and graduated Fiver participants: “Once a Fiver. Always a Fiver.” “What keeps Fiver students involved over the course of ten years is the sense of belonging they feel,” Ko said. “They build strong relationships with staff and also with their peers. The teens become role models for the younger Fivers, a role they take very seriously.”

One of the strengths of Fiver’s culture is that it pervades everything. The personal and professional development of Fiver staff, seasonal and full-time, is just as important as the contributions they give to the development of participants. “At Fiver, summer learning is best understood as summer community,” Ko concludes. “Fiver is proud to make summer a time when positive community can flourish and aims to nurture its development throughout the year.”



Fiver Children’s Foundation

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY 550

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:3 TO 1:8

PARTICIPANT AGE 8-18

FOCUS CHARACTER LITERACY

Of the 116 graduates of Fiver’s program to date, 93 percent received their high school diploma or G.E.D. Of these, 95 percent have enrolled in college or joined the military.

Phillips Brooks House Association brings the campus to the community

The Phillips Brooks House Association (PBHA) Summer Urban Program exemplifies how a university and a nonprofit organization can partner to provide a continuum of supports to children, youth and young adults in their community.

PBHA is a nonprofit organization affiliated with Harvard University, and the Summer Urban Program (SUP) is run by a corps of undergraduate students from Harvard and other colleges who serve about 900 students with community-based summer programs. SUP connects students with

Phillips Brooks House Summer Urban Program

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY 900

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:8

PARTICIPANT AGE ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

FOCUS COMMUNITY- AND CULTURE-BASED SUMMER LEARNING



Eighty-five percent of English Language Learners in the SUP program improved scores from pre-camp to post-camp diagnostic tests in literacy.

quality service-learning and is designed to increase the graduation and college enrollment rate. Activities blend support in core academic areas with social and emotional development and increased community awareness and activism. Daily field trips expose campers to community resources and experiences they may not otherwise access. Students come from Boston's Empowerment Zone—Dorchester, Mission Hill, Roxbury, and the South End—or neighborhoods in Cambridge, Chinatown, and South Boston affected by poverty and violence. Ninety-seven percent of PBHA SUP parents confirmed that their child learned new things by participating in academic enrichment activities.

Involvement with SUP can span decades. Participants could join the program in elementary school, become Junior Counselors from ages 14-18 and go on to lead the program as Senior Counselors or Directors during college and beyond. Junior Counselors receive job training and wages, gain teaching experience, prepare for college with SAT classes and college visits, and receive support with resume development and employment searches.

"Most of the children know who the senior staff are. Last year we had six or seven directors who grew up in the program or are from the neighborhood. I estimate that 40 percent of the senior staff grew up in the program or are from the neighborhood," said PBHA Deputy Director Maria Dominguez Gray.

SUP began in 1980 and has 11 day camp sites, along with one evening site to teach English as a second language to immigrant and refugee teens. While most SUP sites are based on geographic communities, the Native American Youth Enrichment Program is the only summer program specifically for urban Native Americans in Massachusetts.

Each site's service projects and advocacy are closely tailored to its youth interests and community needs. For example, when one neighborhood had a high prevalence of asthma, students learned that one of the biggest causes was diesel buses. They partnered with Alternatives for Community and Environment and advocated and lobbied to help the city get a \$100,000 federal grant to install mufflers on the buses.

Initially, SUP was attached to public housing developments, and camp leaders would actually live in the neighborhoods of their sites.

Pennsylvania Migrant program offers learning for mobile kids

The Pennsylvania Department of Education Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) began in 1964 when a group of farmers in Adams County, Pa., wanted a place for the children of migrant workers to read while their parents worked in the field. Over the past half-century, it has grown into a 22-site program that serves nearly 3,000 young people each summer, from 3-year-olds to young adults.

PA-MEP serves children and youth whose parents or guardians are migratory fishers, dairy workers or agricultural workers, and who have changed school districts in the last three years in order for the worker to obtain temporary or seasonal employment. The young people often have little English proficiency and are adjusting to culture shock from being new to the United States or feeling isolated by the lack of community that results from a highly mobile lifestyle.

“ESOL students struggle the most,” said Lysandra Lopez-Medina, PA-MEP program development coordinator. “We do have readers that are high interest and lower reading ability. A lot of our older students are new to the country and their main language is Spanish or something else, and we have to help them with those skills so they can graduate. We try to hire teachers that are bilingual or bicultural and always make sure we have bilingual aides who are able to mitigate with the students.”

The program gets in touch with students by meeting parents at their place of work on the farms or in meat processing plants; through tips from the schools; or even in the community by greeting new people in grocery stores or other public areas.



In addition to providing a high-quality summer learning experience, the program connects parents with affordable medical assistance like the free dental vans in Lancaster; holds social events like soccer tournaments for students to meet each other; and provides other support like the PASS (Portable Assisted Study Sequence) program for older students to make up credits and graduate on time.

The sites all have different themes. In Erie, the focus is on STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) learning that gives youth the opportunity to sail on catamarans and rowboats, and use the same training equipment as the U.S. Coast Guard. The Adams County program has a career focus for upper-level students. Other sites offer curricula about India, Africa, and other countries; reptiles, amphibians and fish, with a visit from reptile reserve representative; or community gardens.

Pennsylvania Department of Education Migrant Education Program

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY 2,814

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:9 TO 1:12

PARTICIPANT AGE 3-21

FOCUS FILLING SCHOLASTIC, SOCIAL, AND PROFESSIONAL GAPS CREATED BY A HIGHLY MOBILE LIFESTYLE AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Ninety-four percent of kindergarten students improved or maintained their pre-test scores in literacy after a summer at PA-MEP.

Project Exploration: Changing the face of science

Educator Gabrielle Lyon and paleontologist Paul Sereno created Project Exploration in 1999 to change the face of science. They sought to make exciting, real-life, hands-on science more available to students overlooked by science education initiatives – in particular students of color, girls, and students who were struggling academically in under-resourced urban communities.

“We wanted to create programs that wouldn’t otherwise exist for students who just weren’t in the equation,” Lyon said.

For Lyon, the challenge of expanding the field for careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) is two-fold. “A lot of programs recruit students who already interested in science and focus on what these kinds of students can do for science. We focus on science in the service of students. We focus on what science can do for you.” Furthermore, she said, for many parents “there is a perception that ‘Science is important, but not for my child.’ We’re working to change that narrative.”

Lyon believes that science provides a fundamental skill set that is valuable—necessary even—for all young people, whether or not they decide to become a scientist. “Fluency with science ensures students understand the difference between evidence and opinions, recognize patterns, make detailed observations, ground statements in evidence, develop a critique for what they are reading or seeing and apply those decisions.”

Project Exploration prides itself on not having an “off-the-shelf curriculum” and instead creates curricula based on the interests of students and the real-life work of scientists. There is one constant element throughout its programs, which range from hunting for mammoth and dinosaur fossils in the South Dakota and Wyoming to discussing ecology in Yellowstone Park to learning about forensics with Illinois state police: All students keep journals and read and write together every day.

Students are asked to respond to a prompt and to read what they wrote. After students have finished writing, a volunteer is chosen as a “respondent” to offer comments as each student reads his or her entry aloud. Journaling as a group using a specific structure is intended to build community, help students think and talk about their ideas, and prepare youth for formal modes of communication. It is also a key for personalizing science and making it accessible.

“We get some powerful prompts responses. Tapping in to students’ personal experiences is a critical part of what we do differently,” Lyon said. “For example, before we can start studying something as abstract as 4.5 million years of earth history and geologic time, we ask students to think about a moment when something changed and they were different afterwards. What they write can range from funny to deeply personal things they haven’t shared before. Starting with a personal experience becomes the gateway to understanding otherwise distant scientific concepts.”



ORGANIZATION **Project Exploration**

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY IN SUMMER PROGRAMS 100

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:8

PARTICIPANT AGE MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

FOCUS PROVIDING UNDERSERVED STUDENTS WITH QUALITY SCIENCE LEARNING AND SUPPORTING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS BEYOND SUMMER

A recent 10-year evaluation of Project Exploration found that 95 percent of students 18 years and older have graduated or are on track to graduate high school. Sixty percent of participants 18 and older majored or are majoring in a STEM field in college.