

2018
NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION
EXCELLENCE IN
SUMMER LEARNING
AWARDS



national summer
learning association

2018 NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARDS

The 2018 New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning and Founder's Awards honor programs that provide high-quality summer learning opportunities to children and youth in traditional and non-traditional settings. These programs demonstrate the best of summer learning through exceptional program models, engagement of youth and families, and a dedication to providing new opportunities to underserved youth and the greater community.



For the first time ever, NSLA introduces a new Legacy Award. This award acknowledges programs that exemplify longevity (more than two decades of high quality service to students) and those that lead the field as a shining proof point that summers can create magic and transform lives.

Research shows that most children lose up to two months of math skills during summer breaks, and lower-income children lose two to three months of reading skills without practice. This cumulative loss contributes significantly to the achievement gap, yet only one-third of households report having a child enrolled in a summer learning program. These award-winning programs strive to curb these losses, while employing research-based practices to build 21st Century skills for college, career and life success.

“We are firmly aligned with the National Summer Learning Association’s mission to help close the achievement gap for children across the country,” said Heather Nesle, President, New York Life Foundation. “The recipients of the New York Life Foundation Excellence awards illustrate how high-quality opportunities offered during the summer months not only keep children safe and healthy but allow them to stay on track for success in school and beyond. These nonprofits not only help the students and their families but the entire community benefits as a result of their work.”



**NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION**

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 more than \$250 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.

2018 HONOREES

LEGACY AWARD

Aim High

San Francisco, California

Since 1986, Aim High, NSLA's first-ever Legacy Award honoree, has uniquely focused on the "make or break" period of middle school, recognizing this time in a student's life as an important, yet challenging pathway to successful transitions to high school, college and careers. Aim High is a tuition-free, academically rigorous program model anchored in a team teaching approach and an immersive program culture where students learn by doing and collaborate around real-world issues.

EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARD

Breakthrough Miami

Miami, Florida

From the opening pep rally of the day to the close of their summer program, Breakthrough Miami is a supportive, fun environment, infused with positive energy and a sense of family. Breakthrough Miami values inclusion and recognizes the contributions of individual students as the program focuses on closing the opportunity gap in Miami-Dade County by delivering an eight-year, tuition-free academic enrichment program to more than 1,300 students in seven sites across Miami-Dade County.

Children's Circus of Middletown

Middletown, Connecticut

The goal of the Children's Circus is to foster positive youth development through a fun, challenging, physical theater experience for 8 to 15 year-olds that builds self-confidence, teamwork, and performing and life skills. This starts with a culture of acceptance and celebration of each person's unique potential and contribution, led by a highly qualified staff.

NSLA FOUNDER'S AWARD

Generation Teach Summer Teaching Fellowship

National

Generation Teach Summer Learning Teaching Fellowship 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.

Princeton-Blairstown Center's Summer Bridge Program

Blairstown, New Jersey

Princeton-Blairstown Center (PBC) empowers young people, primarily from under-resourced communities, to strengthen their social-emotional skills through experiential, environmental, and adventure-based programming. PBC strives for a future in which young people exhibit personal resilience and compassion, embrace expanded possibilities for their lives, and enact positive change within their communities and the world.

Self Enhancement, Inc. Summer Program

Portland, Oregon

Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) is an organization dedicated to the mission of guiding underserved youth to realize their full potential. Working with schools, families, and other partners, SEI provides a multitude of supportive services and opportunities to achieve personal and academic success—bringing hope to young people and enhancing the quality of community.



Aim High

San Francisco, California

LEGACY AWARD FOR SUMMER PROGRAM EXCELLENCE

Aim High was founded in 1986 with a goal of delivering high-quality and tuition-free summer learning to low-income middle school students in San Francisco. The program seeks to narrow the achievement gap by providing students with joyful summer learning, inspired and innovative teachers, and the community they need to succeed in school and life. Aim High serves students throughout their middle school years, helping them to develop the academic and social skills needed to prevent summer learning loss and ready them for success in the new school year and beyond.

All rising ninth graders at Aim High prepare for the transition to high school and their journey into adulthood. They also investigate issues affecting their community. As part of the ChangeMaker Project, ninth graders identify a local problem they want to solve and generate a solution. They design their own plan for change and present it to their peers using posters, videos, podcasts, and skits in the form of public service announcements. This project strengthens their decision-making and communication skills and invites them to explore their passion for community issues.

Aim High's program model features many research-backed methods that are proven to improve outcomes for middle school students. One such feature is project-based learning, exemplified by the Balloon Design Challenge, a signature Aim High activity. All eighth graders at Aim High learn about Newton's Laws of Motion and use their knowledge to design a balloon-powered car. The project encourages students to work collaboratively and autonomously and monitor their own progress.

Another pillar aspect of Aim High's program model is team-teaching, which pairs experienced educators with high school- and college-aged teaching interns, of which more than half are Aim High graduates. This approach invites youth interns to consider teaching careers while giving middle school students the opportunity to learn from positive and diverse role models and mentors.

Ninety-eight percent of Aim High alumni graduate from high school on time and enroll in college compared to 52 percent of low-income students nationally. Since Aim High's inception over thirty years ago, the program has expanded to 18 campuses across Northern California, trained 2,000 teachers and prepared 10,000 middle school students for success in high school, college, and beyond.



"The environment and community is very inclusive and unique. It makes me feel safe with people that make me feel wanted here."

-Aim High Student



"...My son is autistic. Everyone accepts him at Aim High. I'm so happy he's here. This doesn't happen in regular school. Coming here is amazing and it has made such a difference for him."

-Aim High Parent

Photos courtesy of Aim High

SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS (2017)



90% OF STUDENTS REPORTED THAT THERE IS A TEACHER OR ANOTHER ADULT AT AIM HIGH WHO WANTS THEM TO DO THEIR BEST.



WINNING STRATEGIES

Inclusive environment where students feel safe and confident to make choices on their own.

Strong social and emotional development components with emphasis on self-awareness.

Year-round communication with participants and families to connect them to resources, build community and increase student retention.

Breakthrough Miami

Miami, Florida

EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARD

Breakthrough Miami's year-round academic enrichment programming gives motivated students from under-resourced communities the tools—and peer relationships—needed to achieve their most ambitious life goals.

Generating opportunities for motivated young people to achieve their most ambitious life goals, Breakthrough Miami provides students with the tools, networks and resources to “break through” the social, cultural and economic challenges they face. As an eight-year, tuition-free academic enrichment program, operating year-round across six sites in the Miami Dade county, Breakthrough Miami ensures that motivated, under-resourced students have access to excellent educational opportunities, graduate from high school on time, and attend college.

Founded in 1991, Breakthrough Miami's “students-teaching-students” model engages outstanding college and high school students as Teaching Fellows, providing new experiences and pathways to the education sector. Guided by experienced educators serving as instructional coaches, Fellows lead academic instruction in core subject areas and facilitate enriching field trips, service projects, and community building activities.

Breakthrough Miami develops strong relationships between students, teachers, and mentors within a challenging, positive and supportive learning environment that builds a solid foundation for student success. Each morning commences with “Good Morning” cheers and “Spirit Checks” before scholars head off to breakfast and their academically rich schedule. Elective courses in entrepreneurship, 3-D printing, robotics, fashion design, gaming, coding, art and more introduce young scholars to a variety of future opportunities. Throughout the day, staff interactions with kids build a true family culture and an embedded spirit that tells visitors this program believes in helping every child “find or reclaim their dream.”

Kids want to and are excited about attending Breakthrough Miami's program and as one student remarked, “This is so not like school.” Serving over 1300 students (Scholars) and 130 Teaching Fellows each year, Breakthrough Miami's success is evidenced by 100 percent high school graduation rate and 98 percent college enrollment rate for Scholars over the last five years.



“There is energy, a sense of belonging, and mutual respect in every aspect of the program. A true family culture exists in here. The staff is so respectful to the scholars in their interactions...always engaging their opinions, thanking them for their contributions and encouraging them.”

—NSLA Program Evaluator



Photos courtesy of Breakthrough Miami

SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS (2017)



75% OF SCHOLARS RETURN EACH SUMMER BECAUSE THEY COMMIT TO ATTEND THE PROGRAM UNTIL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.



WINNING STRATEGIES

Youth voice and opportunities for youth leadership are integral to its program culture.

Places emphasis on inclusion and creating a supportive environment for everyone.

Learning sessions are interactive with students engaged in the academic process, which is practical, yet fun and creative.

Children's Circus of Middletown | Oddfellows Playhouse

Middletown, Connecticut

EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARD

Come one, come all to Children's Circus of Middletown, a unique summer program established by the nonprofit Oddfellows Playhouse in Middletown, Connecticut. This program proves summer learning doesn't have to be strictly academic for learning to blossom. The Children's Circus of Middletown is a five-week, full-day summer program of circus training in a camp setting for low to middle-income children ages five to fifteen.

Kids participating in the Children's Circus of Middletown's summer program are free to be their authentic selves in a judgement-free zone where they study circus skills such as stilting, juggling, acrobatics, and more. There is a culture of acceptance and a celebration of each person's unique potential and contribution under the guidance of program's highly trained staff of circus artists. The activities of the Children's Circus challenge youth to develop physical and creative talents that will make them strong artists in their craft whether on stage or off stage. No matter how many summers kids attend, they will never have the same experience twice as staff select a different theme for the program every year.

Collaboration is key in all activities at Children's Circus of Middletown. The program fosters camaraderie through peer encouragement, seen in every aspect of participants' rigorous training. The Children's Circus creates an inviting atmosphere for family involvement as well. Fliers go home with campers as calls for volunteers to participate in Build Nights, evenings where families can come and work with artists to make props, build sets, and create costumes for the final show.

During the course of the summer, kids train and conceptualize original acts for their performances, but they also learn how to work with designers, musicians, and teaching artists. All the children's training and creativity during the program culminates in the "Big Show" where the community of Middletown comes to see what kids have learned and how they have grown as artists.

For 30 years, the Children's Circus of Middletown has given kids a place to express their creativity, build confidence, and strengthen relationships with peers. Its year-round collaboration with schools also keeps the program connected to kids' learning beyond the summer. Families see it as an experience that has bolstered their children's confidence and sense of self-determination.

The children in the program, its staff, and the greater community have known the value of the program since its very beginning. Years ago, when funding for the program was in question, kids and parents rallied to support the Children's Circus. Their efforts along with those of current staff, families, and the community, help to ensure that the opportunities kids experienced in Summer 2017 remain available to youth every summer.

AS ONE PROGRAM OBSERVER SAID, "THE PROGRAM IS FULL OF POP AND SPARKLE WITH A STRONG CULTURE THAT BUILDS UNIQUE, ATHLETIC SKILLS WHILE FOSTERING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN A FUN, COOPERATIVE ENVIRONMENT."

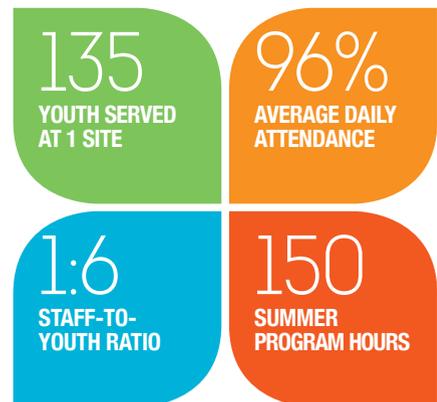


"The final performance is known widely by the local community. The show is seen by hundreds of people. It's the closest thing to magic while being in the middle of a field."

—Elissa, a staff member at Children's Circus of Middletown

Photo courtesy of Children's Circus of Middletown | Oddfellows Playhouse and De Kine Photo LLC

SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS (2017)



WINNING STRATEGIES

A unique curriculum that encourages creativity in a non-traditional, highly collaborative setting.

Brings family and community together to support the efforts of campers while fostering a communal atmosphere of acceptance.

Sense of accomplishment brings a high percentage of staff and campers back year after year.

Generation Teach Summer Teaching Fellowship

National

NSLA FOUNDER'S AWARD

Generation Teach combines the expertise of a national team of educators with the experience of local teachers to develop high school and undergraduate students as the teachers of tomorrow through its national Summer Teaching Fellowship. Fellows represent the diversity of the students and communities they serve with seventy-five percent being persons of color in addition to seventy-five percent of fellows growing up in or attending college in the communities where they train and teach.

Generation Teach aims to address the shortage of teachers of color in Boston, Denver, Providence, and Western Massachusetts through recruiting efforts at local high schools and colleges. The road to becoming a Teaching Fellow begins with an introduction to the program's core values of belonging, investment, initiative, growth, and excellence, in interviews during the selection process. The values are an integral aspect of the program's culture of "living a growth mindset." To help build and maintain this mindset, students, Fellows, and staff engage in collective reflection and restorative practices as part of a program-wide commitment to equity.

Teaching Fellows receive two weeks of training where they learn how to teach and mentor middle school students for four to five weeks. During their fellowship, Teaching Fellows complete 40-60 hours of solo teaching experience with daily coaching provided by professional educators. Learning is a community activity where teachers and Fellows learn from each other's experiences and provide feedback to continue strengthening the program and curricula. Fellows design elective classes in addition to customizing and implementing academic courses for students. Fellows appreciate the opportunity to practice their leadership skills, have someone to brainstorm ideas with, and receive constant feedback to enhance their role as Fellows.

Generation Teach believes training young people to become teachers is a worthy investment because of the importance and value of the profession and its positive and powerful impact on children and communities. After participating in the program, Fellows can take advantage of individual career counseling and many alumni have gone on to pursue careers in education in their communities.



"Ironically, teaching is more about learning than it is teaching. At Generation Teach, I learned every day from students, other Teaching Fellows and our coaches. I came into the program with a passion for teaching but now I leave the program with an obsession to be a lifelong learner and catalyst for change in our education system."

—Generation Teach Teaching Fellow



Photos courtesy of Generation Teach Summer Teaching Fellowship

SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS (2017)

177

FELLOWS
ACROSS 6 SITES
(73% LOCAL)

97%

OF TEACHING
FELLOWS COMPLETED
THE FELLOWSHIP

94%

OF TEACHING FELLOWS IMPROVED
THEIR PERCEPTION OF TEACHING
AS A CAREER



WINNING STRATEGIES

Coaching model gives Fellows support needed to succeed in their roles as mentors and teachers to students.

Inclusive community focused on growth and learning for students, Fellows, and staff.

Program-wide commitment to equity and inclusion.

Princeton-Blairstown Center's Summer Bridge Program

Blairstown, New Jersey

NSLA FOUNDER'S AWARD

Princeton-Blairstown Center's (PBC) Summer Bridge Program blends an outdoor summer experience with an "adventure-based", social-emotional learning model designed to empower youth to set personal goals, persevere through challenges, develop leadership and critical thinking skills, and help them build relationships with peers. Princeton-Blairstown's program envisions a future where youth "embrace expanded possibilities for their lives, and enact positive change within their communities and the world."

Since its founding in 1908, Princeton-Blairstown Center has demonstrated a commitment to making a difference in the lives of underserved youth from urban neighborhoods in New Jersey. PBC launched their Summer Bridge Program in 2015 as a free summer learning opportunity for middle school students from Trenton and Newark, New Jersey, and New York City. Students who attend the Summer Bridge Program spend a week in residence (5 days and 4 nights) at PBC's 264-acre campus immersed in STEM work, project-based STEAM learning, and literacy activities to reduce summer learning loss. Program staff work with partners (schools, nonprofits, etc.) to identify students to attend the summer program. Additionally, they have a Leadership Training Program to help students develop leadership skills and create a pipeline for new staff.

Nature is the perfect backdrop for science lessons as the natural environment presents a host of opportunities for experimentation and, for some, an introduction, to a new world. During a science lesson, youth focused on studying bioluminescence as seen with fireflies. They blew tinted bubbles outside and learned about the life cycle of the insects, and then went into a dark room to blow glowing bubbles. Youth then discussed the chemical equation that causes fireflies to glow. In the evening, they had a night hike planned where they would see the fireflies glowing.

Princeton-Blairstown Center has created an intentional culture of teamwork within their summer programming model. Students encourage peers and help each other with projects and tasks. Activities are very collaborative such as in one literacy class that used music videos and poetry to explore themes relating to nature and culture. With its beautiful, picturesque setting, PBC also engages students in keeping their environment clean and healthy, a practice collectively known as "restoration" of spaces that is connected to the responsibility and care for nature as well as for each other in a shared space.

SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS (2017)

488

YOUTH SERVED AT 1 SITE

98%

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE

2:10

STAFF-TO-YOUTH RATIO

250

SUMMER PROGRAM HOURS



"I have been in the program four times including 2 years with my Summer Bridge group. My experience has always been fun and exciting. I never thought I would learn so many different things, like how to survive in the forest, identify animal tracks, and write plays!"

—Axel, program student



Photos courtesy of Princeton-Blairstown Center's Summer Bridge Program



WINNING STRATEGIES

Hands-on, immersive learning environment.

Opportunities for youth to engage with peers and staff to strengthen problem-solving skills for application in future challenges.

Partnerships with schools and community-based organizations help build parent engagement.

Self Enhancement, Inc. Summer Program

Portland, Oregon

NSLA FOUNDER'S AWARD

Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI) was founded in 1981 as a one-week summer basketball camp for African-American boys living in Albina, a low-income, inner-city neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. From the beginning, SEI's summer program focused on individual mentoring, life skills development, and educational guidance for success in school. Today SEI is Oregon's largest African-American-led nonprofit, serving over 14,500 individuals annually, and the second-largest minority employer in the state and Portland-Vancouver metro region.

In response to community concerns about rising gang activities, SEI transitioned into a year-round youth development program to keep children and young people safe while offering a wide variety of family services. SEI developed a model that is responsive to the needs of a diverse enrollment while addressing specific race-based inequities that contribute to summer learning loss among children of color in Portland and Multnomah County.

SEI's summer program offers a five-week, full-day learning and enrichment experience, plus 2-3 additional one-week basketball, soccer, gaming, and/or arts-focused camps that serve to children from elementary through high school. SEI's founding principles of integrity and respect guide every activity, from program participation to training and daily communication with peers and staff.

One of SEI's most impressive strengths is its ability to bring a host of partners to the table who contribute to a robust curriculum that goes beyond traditional classroom academics. These partners share SEI's recognition that expanded learning opportunities are essential to help underserved youth realize their dreams and reach their full potential. One partner, Pixel Arts, a nonprofit gaming education organization, provides middle school students a weeklong STEAM experience. Students created their own video games through coding exercises and lessons on character development, animation, and musical scores.

High school students at SEI have had the opportunity to participate in a hands-on, project-based learning experience through Wind & Oar, a nonprofit youth education organization serving the Portland metro area. These students used STEAM and critical-thinking skills to build sail-worthy wooden boats for auction at SEI's annual fundraiser.



Photos courtesy of Self Enhancement, Inc. Summer Program

"One of our students who was transitioning from middle to high school struggled in last summer's programs, and we knew he would have problems as a freshman. We talked to his middle school coordinator, and as a result of our joint planning and efforts, this young man's progress shows that "the continuum" works! All the guidance he got in middle school is seeping in: he is passing all his classes, is on the basketball team, and we hope one day to read his name on a list of college applications."

-SEI Staff Member

SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS (2017)



WINNING STRATEGIES

Wrap-around services for student and their families.

Strong partnerships with nonprofit organizations and public schools, and service districts to provide special programming.

Connection and commitment to the whole community with a focus on equity.

IS A SUMMER LEARNING AWARD IN YOUR FUTURE?

Apply for the 2019 Summer Learning Awards Today!

Submission Deadline:

Friday, December 21, 2018 by 5PM ET



NSLA will announce the winners during the National Summer Learning Week celebration – July 8-13, 2019.

Winning programs of the Summer Learning 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.

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.

► Visit summerlearning.org/excellenceawards to learn more.

This year's winners were celebrated on local billboards donated by NSLA's national media partner: Clear Channel Outdoor Americas.



Courtesy of Princeton-Blairstown Center's Summer Bridge Program, Blairstown, New Jersey

A DECADE OF EXCELLENCE AWARD APPLICATIONS HAS RESULTED IN A RICH COMPILATION OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE FIELD OF SUMMER LEARNING.

SUMMER LEARNING AWARDS FAST FACTS

Summer programs are found in every corner of the country, in many different settings. The average number of youth served per program were almost identical for urban and suburban programs, and only slightly lower for rural programs. Because choices are more limited in rural areas, students may be more likely to attend one particular program. The largest providers of formal summer programs tend to be school districts.

Though the Award is open to any summer program, we find that **the vast majority in our network are serving students who are considered low-income** (defined as eligible for free or reduced school meals).

- 80 percent of youth served are low-income
- 21 percent of programs report a 100 percent low-income population
- 53 percent report a low-income population of 85 percent or higher

Funding for summer programs is incredibly diverse. NSLA data show that on average, programs use funding from three different sources to make up their budgets, and these range across many public and private types of funding. By far, the most frequently reported source of funding is private foundations (67%) followed by individual giving (36%) and program fees (31%). Considering that 80% of the students served by these programs are low-income, **NSLA believes greater public investment is needed to ensure students succeed.** The most significant source of public funding is the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21CCLC) program (19%).



Courtesy of Children's Circus of Middletown | Oddfellows Playhouse, Middletown, Connecticut and by De Kine Photo LLC



Courtesy of Aim High, San Francisco, California



Courtesy of Generation Teach Summer Teaching Fellowship, National



Courtesy of Princeton-Blairstown Center's Summer Bridge Program, Blairstown, New Jersey

ABOUT THE NEW YORK LIFE FOUNDATION EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARDS

The New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning Award and NSLA Founder's Award recognize outstanding summer programs that demonstrate excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for low-income children and youth between pre-kindergarten and twelfth grade.

Since 2004, the Excellence in Summer Learning Award program has been a critical strategy of NSLA to support the growth and visibility of high-quality summer learning programs. Over time, it has matured into a program with far-reaching implications for improving the quality and impact of the summer learning field as a whole.

In 2015, NSLA introduced the Founder's Award to further expand its reach and better document outstanding practices and unique informal or drop-in models for summer learning in the field. The awards overall provide a growing knowledge base that NSLA uses to educate policymakers, funders, and the public on best practices and standards of quality for summer learning. With in-depth applications from more than 600 programs serving more than 500,000 youth, the Excellence Awards recognition offers an unparalleled look at the summer learning landscape.



NEW YORK LIFE
FOUNDATION

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.



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