Summer Learning Partnership Report
Baltimore City Public Schools
2015
Partnership Design

BELL is a nonprofit organization that partners with schools and community organizations to expand learning time for students in grades K-8. Since 1992, BELL has worked to transform the academic achievements, self-confidence, and life trajectories of children living in under-resourced communities.

Summer learning activities play an important role in a child’s academic success, as well as their social, physical, and emotional development. Without structured summer learning activities children lose two months of reading and math skills. By the time a child completes the 8th grade, this summer learning loss is responsible for approximately 66% of the academic achievement gap between children from low-income families and their higher-income peers. In addition, children who lack structured summer learning activities tend to gain weight and be more likely to engage in negative social behavior, exacerbating the community need for more and better summer learning opportunities for at-risk children.

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) and BELL have partnered to expand learning time in the summer and after school for the past decade. In the summer of 2015, the school district and nonprofit continued their partnership and expanded summer learning opportunities for students and families at 13 elementary schools.* Programs were offered at no cost to families.

Through combining resources and expertise, BCPS and BELL delivered a summer learning experience that helped scholars – particularly those who were struggling academically - strengthen the foundational academic skills they need to advance to the next grade and to begin the new school year ready to excel.

* BELL also partnered with BCPS to deliver summer learning opportunities for middle school scholars at risk of being retained in grade.
PROGRAM GOALS

BELL partnered with BCPS to eliminate the summer opportunity gap, accelerate students’ academic achievement, and close the achievement gap. Goals included:

- Increasing scholars’ literacy and math skills.
- Strengthening their self-confidence & social skills.
- Increasing parental engagement.
- Preparing scholars to succeed in school.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

BELL worked with BCPS to recruit, select and train program leadership teams consisting of a Program Manager, Program Coordinator, and Instructional Coach. The Program Manager was responsible for setting and fulfilling program goals, supervising staff, and engaging parents. The Instructional Coach served as the primary academic officer, overseeing assessment and ensuring instruction remained consistent with curricula and program goals. The Program Assistant managed logistics, attendance, and parent interactions. Most program leaders also serve as school or district employees during the school year.

BELL supported site operations and management by leveraging its capacity for program design & planning; scholar data management; staff recruitment, hiring & training; assessment & evaluation; payroll & finance; distribution of curriculum & supplies; fundraising; and information systems.

PROGRAM STAFFING & TRAINING

BELL collaborated with BCPS and school leaders to recruit and hire certified teachers to lead academic instruction. BELL also recruited and hired teaching assistants from colleges, universities, and the school community to support classrooms and enrichment activities. The YMCA of Central Maryland provided enrichment instructors during the afternoon.

Program Managers participated in BELL’s comprehensive leadership training including classroom-based training, online e-learning (BELL University), and webinars. With assistance from BELL, they took the lead in training program staff, including teachers and teaching assistants, who also completed e-learning courses. Training focused on the summer learning program model, utilizing assessment data to drive instruction, effective teaching practices, collaborative teaching, and behavior management.
Partnership Checklist

Summer Program Management
Academic Curricula & Supplies
Enrichment Curricula & Supplies
Student Enrollment & Attendance
Staff Recruitment & Hiring
Training & Coaching
Field Trips & Community Service
Parent Engagement
Assessment & Evaluation
Classrooms & School Facilities
Snack & Meal Service
Philanthropic Funding
Public Funding & In-Kind Contributions
Scholar Enrollment & Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Scholars Served</th>
<th>Average Daily Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arundel</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilmor</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graceland Park</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlem Park</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlandtown</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James McHenry</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Mosher</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maree G. Farring</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Henson</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pimlico</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel FB Morse</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel Coleridge Taylor</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waverly</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>767</strong></td>
<td><strong>83%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Family Engagement

Family involvement was a key component of the summer program. At each site, the program leadership team worked diligently to engage parents and guardians, as well as share our program model, goals for scholars, and requirements for adult involvement. Program staff members provided regular updates to parents on their children’s progress and challenges through phone calls, progress reports, and mid-program parent-teacher conferences. Parents were invited to join scholars at school for “Bring Your Parent to School Day.” Parents were also invited to attend a Closing Ceremony celebration, at which scholars presented on their summer learning experience, as well as creatively expressed their thoughts and feelings about their summer experience through skits, presentations, displays of writing and artwork, and songs.
Program Design

**CORE ESSENTIALS & VALUES**

The BELL Summer program design is guided by the principles of effective summer learning, which are (1) a culture of high expectations; (2) partnerships to magnify impact; (3) an exceptional learning environment, including a 2:20 staff to scholar ratio; (4) teaching excellence; and (5) relevant & engaging learning experiences that broaden scholars' educational horizons while developing 21st Century skills. Scholars and staff are always expected to model core program values: Respect, Learning, Collaboration, Excellence, and Courage.

**THEMES**

All summer long, scholars were encouraged to Be Extraordinary, the program’s motto. The theme I Am The Future was woven into the program through activities focused on college- and career-readiness and healthy lifestyles. During College Pride Week scholars learned about the college experience and how success in school is connected to success in life.

**PROGRAM SCHEDULE**

The BELL Summer program model delivered academic and social enrichment for 6.5 hours per day, 5 days per week, for 5 weeks. It operated from June 29 to July 31. The daily schedule began at 8:30 am and ended at 3:00 pm. In sum, the program expanded learning time by a total of up to 162.5 hours per scholar. The summer learning model included the following core elements:

- **Breakfast + Community Time:** Scholars enjoyed a nutritious breakfast provided by the district. After breakfast, scholars participated in team-building activities to build social skills and strong relationships with peers and staff.

- **Literacy Instruction:** BELL equipped teachers with a powerful toolkit of teacher’s guides, scholar workbooks, access to technology and assessment data, and professional development to prepare them for delivering the greatest academic impact in a concentrated summer learning program. Each content area was scoped out to provide educators with details on whole group, small group, and individualized instructional methods in a rigorous, engaging, and scholar-centered learning environment.

Certified teachers led 90 minutes of literacy instruction using curricula drawn from Scholastic’s Comprehension Clubs, Guided Reading Program, On The Record, and Traits Writing.

Instruction focused on the priority skills critical for student success: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Curricula incorporated stories of contemporary figures and their journeys of struggle, perseverance, transcendence, and transformation and was organized around four social justice and learning platforms – define the self, become resilient, engage others, and build capacity – which provided a framework for scholars to chart their own development.

Writing activities helped scholars become capable, confident writers. The curriculum was based on the six traits of writing – Ideas, Organization, Voice, Word Choice, Sentence Fluency, and Presentation.
**Math Instruction:** Certified teachers led 90 minutes of instruction using curricula with targeted intervention modules to build conceptual understanding, problem solving, and math skills.

Scholastic’s *Do The Math* helped scholars compute with accuracy and efficiency, the number sense they need to reason, and the ability to apply their skills and reasoning to solve problems. It incorporated eight research-based instructional practices for scholars who need additional support: Scaffolded Content, Explicit Instruction, Multiple Strategies, Gradual Release Routines, Student Interaction, Meaningful Practice, Assessment & Differentiation, and Vocabulary & Language.

**Lunch & Recess:** Scholars spent 45 minutes eating a healthy lunch and engaging in organized physical activity during recess.

**Enrichment Courses:** After lunch, Enrichment Teachers and Teaching Assistants led two 45-minute enrichment activities each day. Enrichment courses were designed to foster critical 21st Century skills like teamwork and leadership, increase self-confidence, and expose scholars to new subjects, opportunities, and career paths.

**Field Trips:** Each week, scholars participated in field trips that blended learning and enjoyment. Such trips support scholar learning by exposing scholars to diverse ideas, people, and places, and nurturing increased empathy, tolerance, and critical-thinking skills.

**THE GROWTH MINDSET**

This summer, program staff and scholars focused on cultivating a growth mindset. In a growth mindset, scholars believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work — brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for short- and long-term achievement.

BELL’s culture of high expectations, staff modeling, and practice of transforming mistakes into positive learning opportunities are some of the strategies used to strengthen scholars’ growth mindset.

According to new survey questions, 85% of parents reported that scholars showed improved abilities to overcome challenges, while 98% of teachers reported that scholars exhibited a growth mindset.
Impact Measurement

The BELL Summer program sought to produce the following outcomes:

- Scholars will gain at least one month of academic skills, on average, instead of experiencing summer learning loss.
- At least 75% of scholars will demonstrate improved self-confidence and social skills.
- At least 75% of parents will report that they became more engaged in their child’s education.

To measure performance against these outcomes, program leaders produced qualitative and quantitative data.

**COMPUTER-ADAPTIVE ASSESSMENTS**

Teachers used STAR Enterprise Assessments, by Renaissance Learning, on a pre- and post-program basis. The assessments are built for measuring progress against Common Core standards. Scholars completed the STAR Reading and STAR Math assessments.

The multiple-choice assessments were administered via tablets. They adapted to scholar answers - if a scholar selected the correct answer, the next question became more difficult; if the scholar answered incorrectly, the next question became easier. The adaptive quality of these assessments enabled staff to hone in on the specific learning needs of each scholar. It also allowed staff to group scholars according to common needs and deliver data-driven instruction.

**ATTENDANCE DATA**

BELL managed scholar enrollment and tracked attendance data in an online Scholar Management System powered by Salesforce.com. Scholars were expected to attend at least 80% of the time, given the strong positive correlation between learning time and academic and social outcomes. Program leaders integrated enrollment and attendance data with staffing and quality indicators to optimize the learning environment.

**TEACHER SURVEYS**

Partners used a teacher and teaching assistant survey instrument to assess program implementation and efficacy from the perspective of instructional staff. Teachers and teaching assistants completed the anonymous survey at the end of the program, which included questions regarding scholars’ progress, training, curricula, program staff and service, and parent engagement.

**PARENT SURVEYS**

Partners employed a parent survey instrument to assess parent observations of scholar improvement, program quality, and parent satisfaction. Parents completed the anonymous survey on-site during the final week of the program.
**Scholar Achievement**

**ACADEMIC GROWTH**

Gains in reading and math skills are an important indicator of student success because they provide a measure of how much a student has progressed up the proficiency ladder at a time when most children are not engaged in structured learning activities. A full grade level contains ten months of skills development (i.e., based on an average school year of learning from September – June). To put it another way, a gain of one month is equal to what an average student learns in 10% of a school year.

Teachers utilize formative assessments from the start of the summer to understand each scholar’s learning needs and to inform individualized learning plans.

Assessment data from the end of the BELL Summer program show that scholars gained an average of one-and-one-half months of reading skills and one-and-one-half months of math skills.

Scholars’ academic growth suggests that participating in summer learning activities could have a positive impact on academic achievement and eliminate summer learning loss. The data also suggests that summer learning opportunities may have the greatest impact on those scholars who are struggling academically and are, therefore, most in need of additional time-on-task beyond the standard school-day and school-year.

![Academic Growth Graph](image)

**ACADEMIC GROWTH IN THE BELL SUMMER PROGRAM VS SUMMER LEARNING LOSS**

-2 Months of Summer Learning Loss Experienced by Disadvantaged Students Without Summer Learning Opportunities*

+1.5 Month of Reading Skills

+1.5 Months of Math Skills

* Sources


SELF-CONFIDENCE & SOCIAL SKILLS
Scholars’ academic success requires self-efficacy skills, determination, and social skills, including an ability to communicate clearly and work well with others. Teachers and parents consistently reported that scholars’ participation in BELL Summer program helped them make important gains in these areas. Such a positive impact can be attributed to a culture of high expectations, high-quality staff, a small scholar to staff ratio, and an individualized learning environment.

PARENT & TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Parents report:

- Scholars are more confident in their abilities: 84%
- Scholars have a more positive attitude about school: 82%
- Scholars enjoyed the BELL Summer program: 97%
- The BELL Summer program helped me become more involved in my child's education: 92%
- I am highly satisfied with my BELL Summer experience: 94%
- I recommend the BELL Summer program to other parents: 98%

Teachers report:

- Scholars have more confidence in themselves: 98%
- I recommend the BELL Summer program to parents: 100%
- Program staff are diverse and reflect scholar diversity: 100%
- Working with BELL helped me develop my professional skills: 96%

PARENT & TEACHER ENGAGEMENT & SATISFACTION
Teachers and parents consistently reported that the BELL Summer program was of high quality and met or exceeded their expectations. Teachers reported that the program structure and resources helped scholars achieve the goals set forth for them. They also reported that working with the program helped them develop their professional skills. Parents reported that the model boosted their involvement in their child’s education – an outcome that is proven to have significant long-term impact on student achievement in school and beyond.
Public & Private Funding

**Baltimore City Public Schools**

BCPS and its schools contributed public funding and in-kind resources to support program costs, including classroom space, utilities, janitorial services, and breakfast and lunch each day.

**BELL**

BELL worked diligently to raise philanthropic funding from local and national sources to cover a portion of program expenses. Local sources of support for this summer learning partnership include:

- The Abell Foundation
- Baltimore Community Foundation
- Cammack Family Gift Fund
- Family League of Baltimore City
- The David & Barbara B. Hirschhorn Foundation
- The Zanvyl and Isabelle Krieger Fund
- The Lerner Family Foundation
- The Doris K. Marlow Memorial Fund
- France-Merrick Foundation
- The Norman R. Rales and Ruth Rales Foundation
- The Alvin and Fanny B. Thalheimer Foundation
- The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

BELL raised additional philanthropic funding from national sources to develop program innovations, build local sustainability, and cover a portion of program expenses:

- The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
- The Wallace Foundation
- Target
- William Randolph Hearst Foundation
- News Corp.

**Contact Us**

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