

**ACROSS AGES** On average, American students lose about one month of learning over the three months of summer, meaning that at the start of the school year they are one month behind where they were in the spring. These differences tend to increase as students advance in grades, with more learning loss in higher grades. However, low income students experience much more of this “summer slide.” While reading skills of middle income students rise or stay constant, lower income students show learning loss that puts them about 3.5 months behind their peers. Low socio-economic status students are less likely to have access to summer enrichment programs or extracurricular activities. Below we profile a nonprofit that helps some 14,606 low income K through 8th grade students in 20 states combat summer slide.

**NONPROFIT MAKING AN IMPACT**

**BELL**

**WHAT IT DOES**

BELL Summer is a full-day, five- to- eight week summer program serving low income students in partnership with school districts in 20 states and Washington, D.C. Half of the day is spent in instruction and the other half in enrichment activities. BELL sets expectations for attendance and success while supporting students with small class sizes and individualized instruction. It provides hands-on learning through projects, community service, and field trips. And, it engages parents and students to reinforce learning at home by reframing education as a positive experience focusing on strengths.

In addition to running its programs in partnership with districts, BELL trains local groups, such as YMCA Power Scholar Academies, to implement its curriculum, evaluate outcomes, and fundraise. Even after the initial training, BELL supports its partners by continually evaluating the program and analyzing outcomes.

**HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT**

According to two independent studies, BELL students gain an average of one to two additional months of reading and math skills over the summer. Gains by BELL students over the summer are equivalent to—or better than—gains students make over the school year. But the program costs about half as much as two months of school, and keeps kids from losing the skills they’ve gained over the year. It’s one of the few summer learning programs to demonstrate learning gains, using key ev-

idence-based components, making BELL a worthy investment.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP**

Typically, districts put in 50% to 70% of the funding for the program, leaving room for philanthropic investment and allowing philanthropy to leverage public dollars. For example, \$100 can pay for books and curriculum for a student, and \$250 can cover costs for a summer Friday field trip for a class. Funders can directly give to BELL **at the national level**, or **at the regional level**, or through partners. National funding supports pilots, training and program evaluation. It also offsets regional costs, especially in new markets.

Regional donations help fund direct services at established BELL programs. Many programs and partners, especially the YMCA, **encourage volunteering** as well.

**PERSONALIZE THIS PROJECT**

If BELL is not in your area, there are other ways to invest in summer learning, including programs such as **Horizons National**, a tuition-free academic and enrichment program serving low income, public school students. Funders can also support district programs through local education funds. Lastly, philanthropists can advocate for more district- or state-sponsored summer learning programs, more funding for summer learning, or restructuring the school year to minimize the effects of summer slide. National policy organizations working on these efforts include the **National Summer Learning Association**, **Afterschool Alliance**, and the **National Center on Time and Learning**.

