

BELL & Summer Learning Partnerships

Summary

BELL is a national provider of educational summer and after school programs for children. Its mission is to increase children's academic achievements, self-esteem, and life opportunities. BELL currently educates more than 12,000 "scholars" in Baltimore, Boston, Detroit, New York City, and Springfield (MA).

One of BELL's key strategies for educating children is to provide scientifically-proven summer learning opportunities that help them accelerate their learning, gain the skills they need to excel in school, and develop the self-esteem and determination that will guide them in life. Summer represents a critical opportunity. Studies have demonstrated that children who lack engaging activities during the summer lose two months' grade-equivalent skills that have to be relearned when they return to school in the fall. Each year, this summer learning loss contributes to the academic skills gap between children from lower-income families and children from higher-income families. Studies estimate that up to 66% of the "achievement gap" can be attributed to differences in learning that take place during the summer. In contrast, children who participate in educational camps and other structured activities gain academic skills.

To provide more summer learning opportunities to the children who need them most, BELL is forming innovative public-private partnerships with schools and school districts. In the last two summers, BELL successfully partnered with Baltimore City Public Schools, Springfield Public Schools, and a charter school network in Detroit. These summer learning partnerships delivered the following benefits to districts and schools:

- **Greater Outcomes for Scholars:** BELL's educational summer program is designed to help under-performing children, who we call scholars, to excel. They consistently gain at least four month's grade-equivalent skills in the six-week program. When school begins in the fall, they perform better in their classes and on standardized tests.
- **More Programming, Same Cost:** BELL augments a district's funding with contributed funds from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Through this leveraged investment, school systems are able to deliver a more robust program model that operates up to eight hours per day, five days per week, for six weeks. As a result, scholars participating in BELL expand their learning time for the school year by over 20%, and attain significantly greater outcomes.
- **Meaningful Employment:** BELL hires certified teachers and paraprofessionals from partner schools, as well as college students studying to become educators, to work in its summer learning program. Educators work with children in a small-group environment, with no more than 10 students assigned to each staff member.
- **Less Oversight:** Few schools have the time or resources to plan and execute a comprehensive summer learning initiative. Beginning in January, BELL manages the entire planning process. We enroll scholars and orient parents; recruit, hire, and train staff; purchase and distribute supplies; implement the BELL Summer program model; and measure success with nationally-normed tests and feedback from parents, teachers, and scholars.
- **High Community Satisfaction:** Scholars, teachers, parents, and principals consistently report a high level of satisfaction with BELL services. Over 90% of parents consistently state that they would recommend BELL to other parents. BELL emphasizes the importance of parent outreach and involvement, and over 85% of parents say that they feel more involved in their child's education as a result of participating in the BELL summer program.
- **Informing Student Plans:** Principals of each school receive reports on each scholar showing pre-test data, post-test data, and how the scholar's performance has improved during the summer against specific state standards in reading and math. This information helps principals develop student-specific plans in the first weeks of the new school year to focus on the areas where each student needs the most support.

Partnership Profiles

Following are summaries of three summer learning partnerships. In each case, BELL adapted to specific community needs to deliver the highest-quality educational experience to children. We leveraged national operating teams and systems, including a robust information technology infrastructure, to efficiently replicate BELL's proven program model in new schools and communities. We welcome the opportunity to form new partnerships with schools and districts that share our vision for children, families, schools, and communities.

Partnership Summaries			
	Baltimore	Detroit	Springfield
Scholars Served	2,000	750	800
Grades	K-7	K-6	2-5, 8
Sites	12	4	11
Hours / Day	6	8	8
Days / Week	5	5	5
Weeks	6	6	6

Baltimore City Public Schools: BELL was selected to deliver summer learning opportunities to 2,000 children in the city's 12 lowest-performing "Area 9" schools. We partnered with two leading institutions in Baltimore: The After School Institute delivered BELL's training content to teachers and tutors, and Johns Hopkins University's National Center for Summer Learning created an internship program for 50 college students, who completed coursework and 40 hours of BELL training, and received course credit and a college scholarship by working as teacher's assistants in BELL Summer. Scholars maintained an attendance rate of 73% and gained 4 months' skills in literacy and math.

Springfield Public Schools: Springfield awarded BELL a sole-source contract to provide BELL Summer for 800 scholars representing two specific groups: 5th and 8th graders at risk of being retained in grade, and 2nd, 3rd, and 4th graders who had performed poorly on state exams and had grade-point averages of C or less. Of the first group, 100% of scholars who completed BELL Summer advanced to the next grade. Scholars maintained an attendance rate of 82% and gained 9 months' skills in literacy and math.

Detroit Charter Schools: Six principals of charter schools asked BELL to deliver its summer learning program to 750 scholars in 2008 and 2009. Principals were highly engaged in the enrollment of scholars to ensure the children who needed the program the most were able to access it. The principals also worked with BELL's recruitment team to encourage the most outstanding educators on their staff to work in the BELL summer program. Parents were highly involved in the program, volunteering as extra teacher's assistants and participating in community service projects and field trips. Scholars maintained an attendance rate of 85% and gained 7 months' reading skills and 8 months' math skills.

Program Activities

Program Model: The BELL Summer program is a six-week enrichment experience that operates from Monday through Friday for eight hours per day in July and August. Children start the day with a nutritious breakfast and "community time" activity to develop strong friendships with fellow scholars and staff. Certified teachers lead two hours of literacy activities and one hour of math instruction using Houghton Mifflin's *Summer Success* reading and math curricula, as well as a leveled reader's library of multi-cultural titles. After an hour break for lunch and recess, specialty instructors lead structured enrichment activities such as music, art, drama, and physical education. A wide variety of enrichment classes are provided to children. On "Mentor Fridays," scholars listen to successful community members as they share inspirational stories about what scholars can achieve if they apply themselves. Scholars also visit museums or other educational destinations and participate in community service projects.

BELL Summer Schedule	
8:00 – 8:30	Breakfast & Community Time
8:30 – 10:30	Literacy Instruction
10:30 – 11:30	Math Instruction
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch & Recess
12:30 – 4:00	Enrichment
4:00	Session Ends
Mentor Friday	Includes guest speakers, community service projects, and field trips.

Scholar Enrollment: BELL and its school partners work together to ensure the children who need high-quality summer learning opportunities are able to access them. Districts may elect to identify target populations of scholars from throughout the district, as Springfield Public Schools did, or restrict enrollment to students from specific under-performing schools, as Baltimore City Public Schools elected to do. They may choose to offer BELL Summer in place of district-mandated summer school, or offer the program as an optional enrichment opportunity. Regardless of the arrangement, summer learning partnerships are most effective when principals are committed to the program and lend their endorsement and support in reaching out to parents. Some ways principals have facilitated scholar enrollment include the use of broadcast voicemail and email and participation at parent information sessions and post-enrollment orientations. BELL produces enrollment materials in English and Spanish and, when necessary, in other languages.

Teacher & Tutor Recruitment & Training: BELL hires teachers from the school district to work as academic teachers and enrichment teachers in the BELL Summer program. We also hire college and graduate students, often studying to become educators, to work as Teacher's Assistants (TAs). We welcome referrals from principals and other district staff to ensure we hire the best educators to work with scholars in a small staff to scholar ratio, often no more than 1:10. We conduct rigorous background checks. We partner with teachers' unions and offer salaries and stipends that are consistent with local wage rates. Once hired, Teachers and TAs complete over 12 hours of e-Learning, one day of in-person training, and one day of meetings and site set-up at their school just prior to program start. Modules include, for example, the BELL Summer program model; Literacy Instruction; Math Instruction; Mentoring; Enrichment; Behavior Management; Assessment & Evaluation; Culturally Relevant Teaching; and Differentiating Instruction for English Language Learners.

Program Management & Operations: BELL Summer sites are led by a Program Manager (PM), a full-time staff member who functions as the "Principal" of the BELL Summer site. To ensure that all sites operate with fidelity to BELL's program model, BELL often invites several of its experienced managers from previous summer and after school programs to lead some program sites and serve as mentors to new PMs. Program Managers are supported by an Assistant Program Manager (APM). APMs are often individuals who are strongly recommended by the principals of partner schools. Site leadership participate in a rigorous training program that includes in-person and webinar modules focusing on BELL's Mission; Scholar Enrollment; Staff Recruitment; Program Operations; Site Technology, including the Edusoft Assessment System; Managing Enrichment; Attendance & Retention; Managing Partnerships; Managing Family Engagement; Leading Staff; Behavior Management; Teaching & Learning; and Teamwork. In sum, site leadership participate in three days of in-person training and 25 hours of webinar training.

Family Involvement: Family involvement is a key component of the summer learning partnership. BELL sets high expectations for parents, just as it has high expectations of scholars. Parents or guardians are required to attend a parent orientation and learn about the program model, goals for children, and requirements for their involvement. They complete reading logs each week, attend parent-teacher nights, and participate in Closing Ceremony activities.

Measuring Success: BELL measures the academic and social gains achieved by scholars; parent and teacher satisfaction; and the quality of program operations. We administer nationally-normed Stanford Diagnostic Tests in reading and math during the first week of the program. We use an innovative web-based assessment system, Edusoft, to process outcomes and develop individualized score reports for each scholar, highlighting areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. BELL uses these score reports and other performance data collected from partner schools to differentiate instruction. A skills-based quiz after the third week of the program enables BELL staff to realign instruction based on scholars' progress. In the last week of the program, BELL again administers the diagnostic test to quantify gains in literacy and math skills. Also, BELL collects qualitative data from a series of teacher and parent surveys. Regarding program quality, we track a series of 25 operating metrics daily to ensure each BELL Summer site delivers the highest quality experience for children. Examples of operating metrics include average daily attendance, staff to scholar ratio, and scholar retention rates. BELL implements a quality assurance system through which its national Manager of Quality Assurance monitors each program site and coaches Program Managers to continuously improve program delivery.

Summer Learning Partnership Outcomes

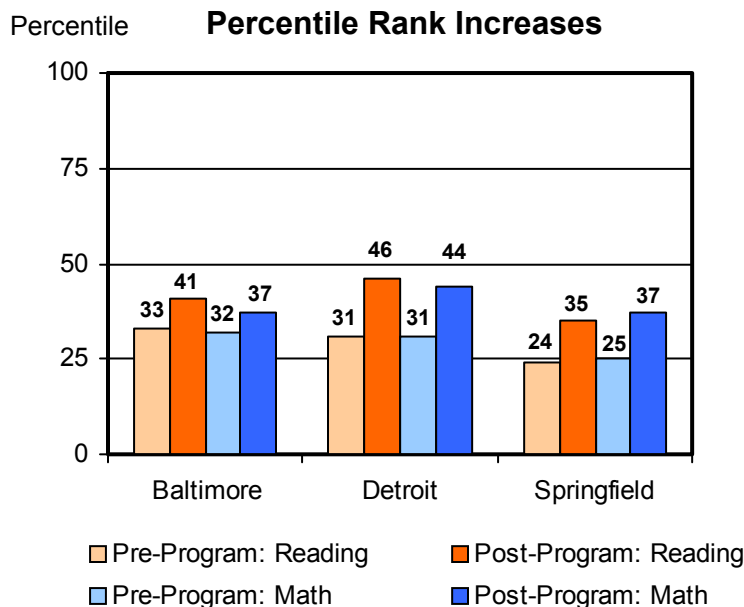
In BELL’s Summer Learning Partnerships, scholars excelled. In Baltimore, Detroit, and Springfield, scholars averaged gains of 7 months’ grade-equivalent skills in literacy and math in the six-week program. The following chart summarizes the grade-equivalent gains achieved by scholars, by region. Following on the next page is detailed data on grade-equivalent gains by grade and by region. This chart also includes percentile ranks and Normal Curve Equivalent scores, explained below.

Summer Learning Partnerships: Summary Academic Outcomes			
	Baltimore*	Detroit	Springfield
Grade-Equivalent Gains, Reading	4 months	7 months	9 months
Grade-Equivalent Gains, Math	4 months	8 months	9 months
Percentile Rank, Reading	33 rd to 41 st	31 st to 46 th	24 th to 35 th
Percentile Rank, Math	32 nd to 37 th	31 st to 44 th	25 th to 37 th
NCE Gain, Reading	6.5	10.3	7.8
NCE Gain, Math	4.0	9.1	9.2

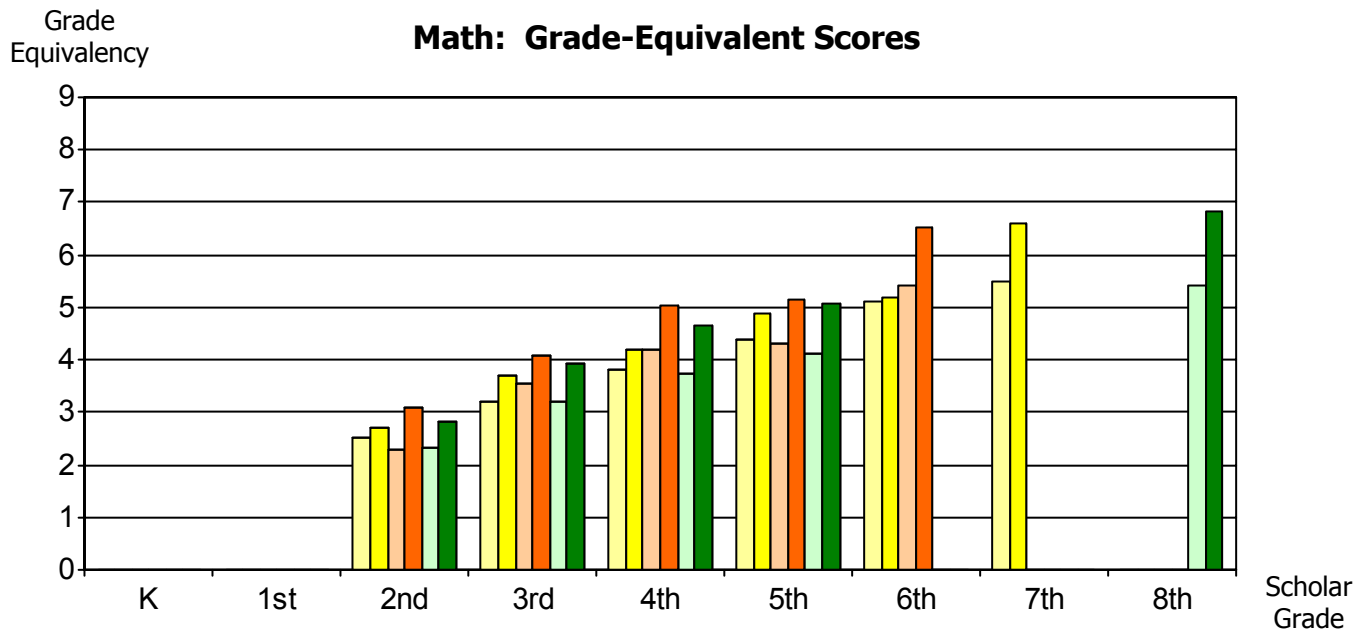
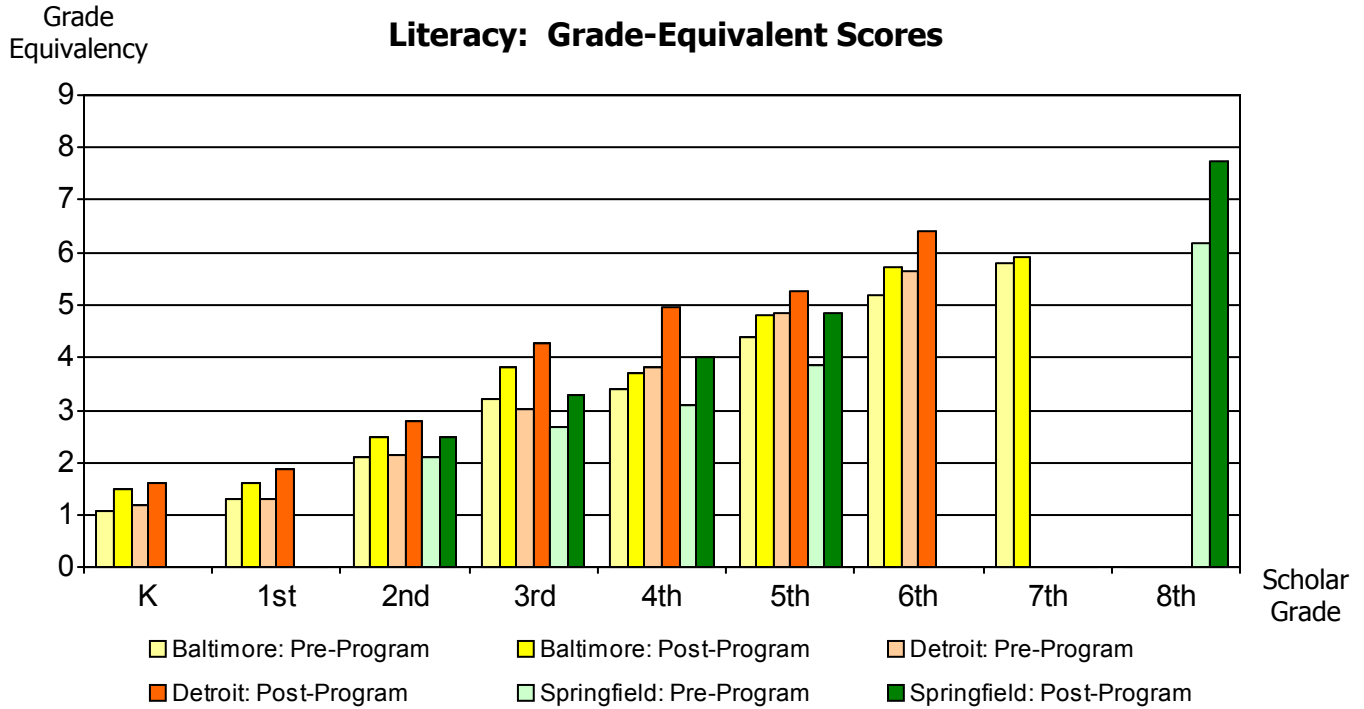
* Baltimore City Public Schools requested that the BELL Summer program in Baltimore operate for 6 hours per day, instead of 8. As a result, scholars received two fewer hours of social and cultural enrichment and mentorship.

The summary table above includes Normal Curve Equivalents (NCE) gains in reading and math. NCE shows a student’s relative position compared to others in the same grade and tested at the same time of year. A gain in NCE units indicates that the student has “grown” at a faster rate than the norm group. The average student demonstrates no change relative to the norm group and generally maintains his/her position for an NCE gain of zero. BELL scholars were targeted for underperformance in school and need to learn at an accelerated rate in order to excel (i.e., demonstrate a positive change in NCE scores). The higher the NCE gain, the faster scholars learned new skills and concepts relative to their peers.

The bar chart below illustrates increases in scholars’ percentile rank score. Percentile ranks range from a low of 1 to a high of 99, with 50 representing the middle score and denoting average performance. The closer scholars’ average percentile rank is to the norm group (50), the more the BELL Summer Program has narrowed the gap between under-performing scholars and their peers.

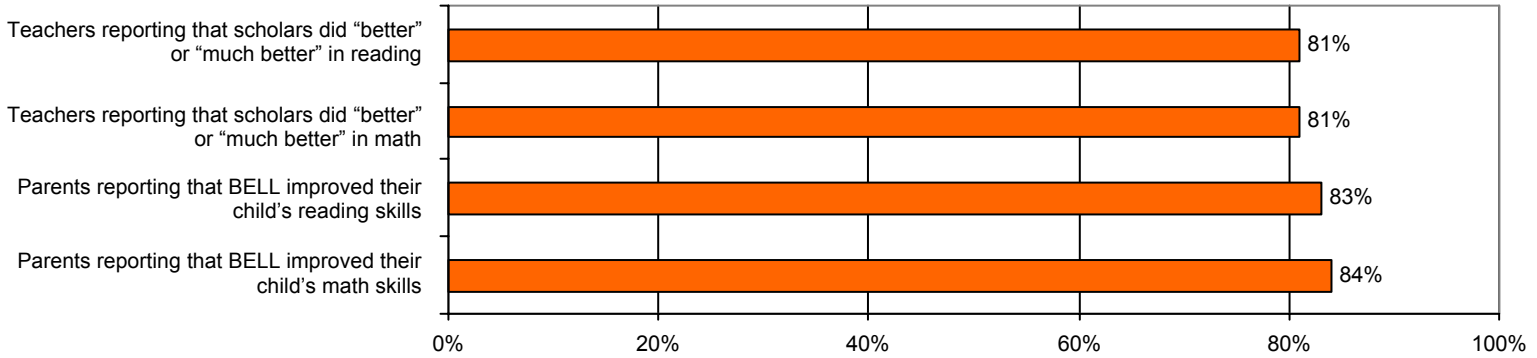


The charts on this page illustrate the grade-equivalent scores, in months, achieved by scholars by grade in the six-week BELL Summer program. Grade-equivalent scores relate scholars' scores to the typical performance of students in specified grades tested in a given month of the school year. This data comes from Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test IV and Math Test IV, nationally-normed tests that are administered on a pre- and post-program basis. Scholars gained, on average, seven months' skills in the six-week program.

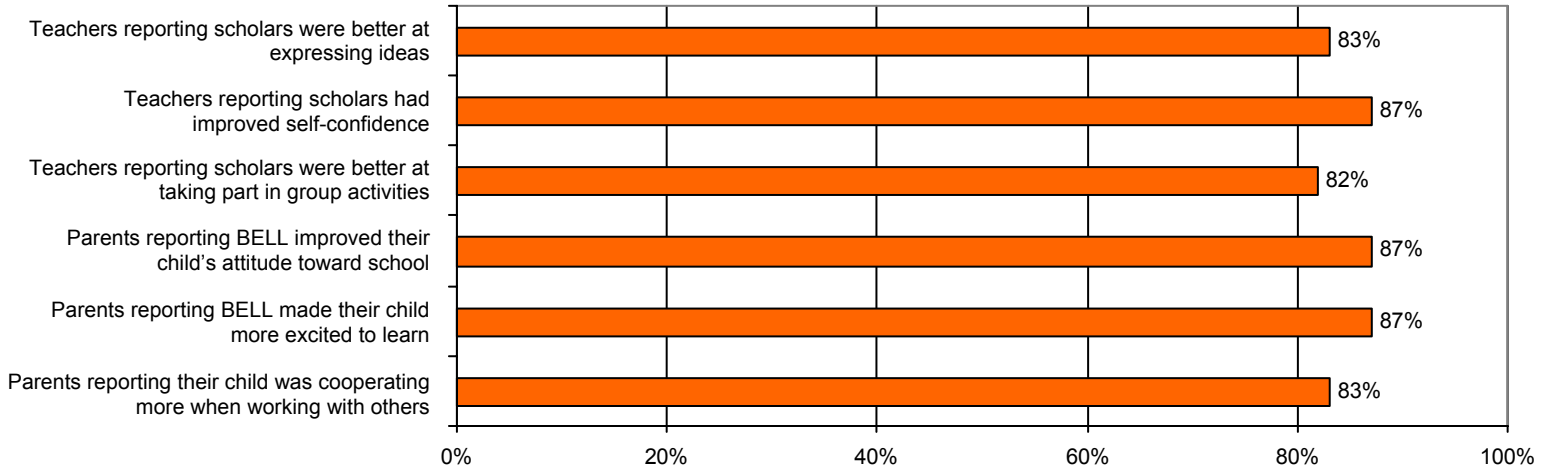


At the end of the BELL Summer program in Baltimore, Detroit, and Springfield, we administered a series of surveys to teachers and parents. The BELL teaching staff – comprised primarily of certified teachers from the scholars’ own schools – was asked how much scholars improved in the main program areas since the beginning of the program. Staff responded by selecting “Much better,” “Better,” “About the same,” “Worse,” or “Much worse.” Parents completed a survey at the end of the program and were asked if they felt the BELL Summer Program had improved their child’s academic skills. Parents responded by selecting “Yes,” “No,” or “I’m not sure.” Scholar self-efficacy and social and community skills were also assessed based on teacher and parent observations and indicated in their survey responses. Finally, parents were asked about their overall satisfaction with the program. Data in the charts below represent averages from surveys conducted in all three districts.

Teacher & Parent Observations of Scholar Achievement



Self-Efficacy & Social/Community Skills



Parent/Guardian Satisfaction

