Stories From the Field

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EXPANDING LEARNING, ENRICHING LEARNING

Portraits of Five Programs

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Front cover: *Two students at a Horizons National program at the Greens Farms Academy in Greens Farms, Conn., show that summertime is reading time, too.* Back cover: *Students at the ExpandED program at P.S. 186 in Brooklyn get three extra hours daily of learning and enrichment.*

BELL photos: Sarosh Syed; Citizen Schools photos: Sarosh Syed; ExpandED photos: John Morgan; Horizons National at Colorado Academy photos: Marni Myers, courtesy of Horizons National at Colorado Academy; Horizons National report cover shot: Cynthia McIntyre, courtesy of Horizons National; Higher Achievement photos: Will Kirk Photography, courtesy of Higher Achievement.

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Introduction

– By Pamela Mendels

How can we expand opportunities for poor children to develop the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in the 21st century? Often, policymakers and educators answer this question by pointing to the imperative to make public education in low-income urban neighborhoods as good as it is in wealthy suburbs.

But uneven school quality is not the only kind of learning inequity poorer families face.

Myriad opportunities for children to develop new abilities, new habits of mind and new muscles await families with means—from summer camp to academic tutoring, from test prep to swimming classes. That's simply not the case for children from low-income homes. To cite just one indicator: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, only 18 percent of children in families with a monthly income less than $1,500 take lessons outside school (in music, technology, dance, languages and the like), compared with more than 40 percent of children from families making $6,000 or more a month.[1]

Figuring out how to change this picture is no easy task, however. For one thing, we need to know much more about what type of programming leads to specific benefits and outcomes for kids. Research has shown firmly, for example, that lower-income children tend to fall behind higher-income children over the long summer hiatus from school—a phenomenon nicknamed "summer slide." But how to stem summer learning loss for these children over the long term and on a wide scale is less clear. (The Wallace Foundation is financing a rigorous study of school district summer learning efforts to learn more about effective programming.)

Some 10.7 million children and teens live below 100 percent of the poverty level in the United States.

As for fall, winter and spring: Research provides some indication that higher student achievement is related to a longer school day or year filled with rich activities (the combination of time and high-quality use of it is crucial). But results vary from study to study, and the research often does not answer what accounts for the results.

To navigate this complex territory, Wallace has in recent years supported a group of what we call "leading providers," nonprofits that offer some evidence of success giving kids extra opportunities to learn during the summer or school year. In addition, these organizations are all testing out how to expand so they can reach more children nationally without compromising either the quality of their programming or the health of their finances. Each has also committed to, or expressed serious interest in, undertaking an independent evaluation of its efforts to determine what works and what does

1 U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, as reported in *A Child's Day (Selected Indicators of Child Well-Being)* Table D14: Extracurricular Activities of School Age Children--Characteristics of Families and Households with Children Age 6 to 17: 2009. The most recent *A Child's Day* covers 2009. http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/children/data/sipp/well2009/tables.html

not in boosting children's prospects for success. Wallace hopes that the experiences of these organizations will add to our understanding of expanded-learning programs and help determine how we can give low-income youngsters a better chance in life.

In the accounts that follow, you will read about the program operators we support – BELL, Citizen Schools, Higher Achievement, Horizons National and the ExpandED Schools effort of The After-School Corporation (TASC).

One thing you'll quickly see is how different they are from one another – evidence of the array of approaches being tested. BELL reinforces school-year learning with academic programs for low-achieving kids, kindergarten through eighth grade, while Higher Achievement seeks to give middle-school-age children the extra instruction and supports they need to be admitted to top high schools. TASC's ExpandED Schools initiative pairs elementary and middle schools with community organizations in order to add three hours of fresh learning and enrichment activities to the school day; Horizons National provides public elementary and middle-school students with nine consecutive summers of learning and enrichment at a private school or college campus. And Citizen Schools offers middle-school students academic support while drawing on professionals—ranging from engineers to artists—to volunteer to work with the kids on projects that expose them to career possibilities.

You'll also get a sense of the challenges each faces. How can Horizons ensure its graduates stay on track through their high school years? How can ExpandED Schools find enough part-timers to offer high-quality learning activities to large schools? How can Higher Achievement extend its influence to all the students in the schools where it is based, not just those enrolled in its afterschool and summer programming? How can BELL continue its close collaboration with school districts without falling victim to public budget shortfalls?

As a whole, the accounts also raise bigger questions.

First is the matter of the size of these programs compared with the need. The largest of them, BELL, served about 12,000 students between July 2012 and July 2013. Meanwhile, about 10.7 million children and teens live below 100 percent of the poverty level in the United States, according to the Census Bureau.[2] Moreover, surveys of parents show that significant percentages of those with children not currently participating in afterschool (38 percent) or summer (56 percent) programming say they would enroll their children if programs were available to them.[3,4] One particularly striking finding: About one-third of African-American, Hispanic and low-income children attend summer learning programs, but parents of some two-thirds of these children would like to enroll their kids in the future.[5]

Second is the issue of money. Even at a scale that is modest considering the magnitude of the problem, the groups sometimes struggle to find sufficient financing. An experience at a Citizen Schools effort in a struggling middle school in Santa Fe, N.M., provides a case in point. The program appeared, by most measures, to be thriving: Citizen Schools' enrichment activities were fully integrated into the regular school curriculum; lawyers, architects, nuclear chemists and other professionals had been successfully recruited as volunteers; and test scores were on their way up. But the program didn't make it to its sixth year. Citing persistent budget shortages, the Santa Fe school district opted against contributing the $1,000 per student needed to continue the program. Citizen Schools, as you'll read in greater detail in this report, requires such financial commitments from school districts. In June 2013, it shuttered its Santa Fe program.

The programs all work according to different models – along with different goals and different strategies for achieving those goals. Those variations lead to a variety of successes and challenges. Taken together, however, these programs offer a well-rounded picture of the promising, innovative work under way to create new learning opportunities for low-income children – and the work that still remains.

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2 This is 20 percent of the total number of 5- to 17-year-olds. See "All Races" table in "POV03: People in Families with Related Children Under 18 by Family Structure, Age, Sex, Iterated by Income-to-Poverty Ratio and Race" http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032012/pov/POV03_100.htm

3 *America After 3PM*, The Afterschool Alliance, 2009, 2. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3_Full_Report.pdf

4 *America After 3PM, Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand*, The Afterschool Alliance, 2010, 4. http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/summer-learning/Documents/America-After-3PM-Special-Report-on-Summer.pdf

5 Ibid.

BELL:

In a Gang-Filled Neighborhood, Tweens Find an Oasis for Learning – By Sarosh Syed

Middle-school students at the BELL program at Bridges Academy in San Jose, Calif., work on a magnetism/electricity project.

A half hour's drive from Stanford University in the heart of Silicon Valley stands Bridges Academy, a charter school serving roughly 700 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders. San Jose-based Bridges is within a few miles of the sprawling headquarters of Facebook and Google, but these behemoths of the digital economy seem far removed from the low-income students the school serves. Bridges is in a tough neighborhood rife with gang activity. Crimereports.com, a Web site that maps crime data, recorded 40 incidents of violent crime within a mile of the school in July 2013 alone.

A five-week summer program at Bridges seeks in part to build a barrier between these troubling realities and the kids, most of whom are Hispanic and more than a third of whom are English-language learners. "There's a lot of drug activity and gang activity here; that's what our students are immersed in outside school," said Carissa Harris, a special education teacher who teaches math during the summer. "So creating a safe place, especially during the summer when they don't have a lot going on, when they can get into trouble, is a really important thing."

The Bridges summer program is one of a number operated by BELL, a Boston-based nonprofit that began life as a community service project by a group of black and Hispanic Harvard Law School students in the early 1990s. (The name "BELL" honors Derrick Bell, Harvard Law's first tenured African-American professor, while the initials stand for "building educated leaders for life.")

"Instead of 34 kids per adult, we have 10.5 kids per adult. It makes a difference," says a special education teacher in the BELL program.

Since then, the organization has expanded to running afterschool and summer programming, and today reaches some 12,000 disadvantaged youngsters in nine states. Both during the school year and summer, BELL focuses on the lowest achieving kids and works with public schools to boost their academic achievement and self-confidence.

Mornings at the Bridges summer program are devoted almost entirely to math and reading. On a summer morning in 2013, students in Harris' math class sat hunched over blue rulers and green graphing paper.

They had spent 45 minutes learning about college admissions and financial aid; it was College Day at Bridges and all teachers took time to show the youngsters that college is a realistic option for them. But the rest of the 90-minute class was dedicated to math, reviewing what students had learned in the sixth grade and previewing what they'd do in the seventh.

Harris and a teaching assistant, one of 15 at Bridges, patrolled the class, answering questions and reminding students to make sure their work was neat and to label their graphs. Their goal was to give struggling students the attention they are unaccustomed to receiving.

"In the regular school year, there are 34 kids in a class. In this class there are 21 kids, a teacher and a T.A.," Harris said as her students wrapped up and the T.A. shepherded them to their 90-minute English class. "Instead of 34 kids per adult, we have 10.5 kids per adult. It makes a difference."

The day isn't solely devoted to equations, graphs, reading and comprehension. To keep the kids coming, Erin Grenier, BELL's director of field operations in Northern California, and Paul de Ayora, Bridges' principal, work to create an atmosphere that's livelier than the

Field trips are part of the experience for BELL students at Davidson Middle School, shown here looking at the T. rex at the University of California, Berkeley's Museum of Paleontology.

one kids find during the school year. Afternoon enrichment classes, which include arts, karate, cooking and robotics, are designed to be as engaging as possible. The school's black, purple and gray uniforms are shelved for the summer; as long as students avoid gang colors, they can mostly wear what they want. Grenier hands out sunglasses and drawstring backpacks as rewards for good attendance. And teaching assistants encourage the tweens to regard school as an alternative to boredom at home.

"In the mornings, they're tired; they'd rather not be here," said Alex Castro, a 22-year-old T.A. at Bridges. "I always ask them: 'Would you rather be at home sitting by yourself or would you rather be with your friends?' Most of the time, they'd rather hang out [at BELL] with their friends."

The efforts apparently pay off. According to Grenier, BELL's Northern California programs boast attendance rates of 91 percent.

Indeed, BELL takes care to build in time for plain old fun.

The day after Harris' class was working on graphs, a few dozen BELL students from Davidson Middle School, a school in Marin County about an hour north of Bridges, squealed and giggled as they hurtled down a small hill at the University of California at Berkeley. Fridays in BELL's summer programs are reserved for field trips. Davidson students had spent most of the day gazing at stately libraries and concert halls, marveling over campus sports and concerts, and peppering their tour guide with questions about whether grades were really that important. Now they were diving down Berkeley's so-called "4.0 Hill," a grassy knoll that is said to reward freshmen who roll down it with a perfect G.P.A.

BELL's theory is that such field trips help expand the students' horizons, making college seem more accessible while giving the youngsters a chance to let loose beyond the rigid confines of the classroom.

"The kids love BELL," said Shar Lee-Nakayama, lead teacher at Bridges, as she prepared for a field trip to the University of California at Santa Cruz. "It's fun; it's the same teachers, but it's fun learning. And how many times have they been able to leave San Jose? Not at all! Nobody goes on field trips anymore because no one has any money!"

BELL's rewards become palpable in the fall, when, according to Principal de Ayora, it's easy to spot the kids who attended summer school. "Teachers will tell you the behavior is very different between those that did do summer school and those that didn't," he said. "They're more engaged; there's not a lot of time spent reviewing; they're just ready to go from the start."

None of this is to say that BELL operates without challenges, and a major one is how to guarantee funding year to year. BELL establishes new programs mostly through seed funding from national sources or by dipping into its general budget for operating expenses. As programs build steam and demonstrate results, BELL weans them off national funders, tapping school districts and local philanthropies to fill the gaps.

Afternoon enrichment classes, which include arts, karate, cooking and robotics, are designed to be as engaging as possible.

The results of this approach have been mixed in cash-strapped California. More than a year after its launch at Bridges Academy, the BELL program receives just $30,000 from official sources, less than 7 percent of the total cost.

"How sustainable is it if they're only putting in $30,000 each year and other funding streams disappear?" asked Erin Grenier, BELL's field director. "It's okay now, but what happens next year? That's the real question for California to answer."

BELL has made up for a dearth of official funds mostly through the support of local philanthropies, which now cover nearly 60 percent of the costs at Bridges. But Grenier's concerns are hardly theoretical; BELL programs have found themselves on budgetary chopping blocks before. An extensive program in Detroit that served 5,000 children ended abruptly in 2012, when the state took over the city's struggling schools. BELL terminated operations in Springfield, Mass., when a new superintendent took over and overhauled management of summer programs.

Students from Davidson Middle School hurtle down a hill on a visit to the University of California at Berkeley.

"That's what happens in districts," said Michael Sikora, director of communication for BELL. "People leave, new people come in and people want to pursue their own ideas. There's always going to be change and we're always going to have to adapt."

At Bridges, Grenier is trying to deliver demonstrable results in part to ensure the program can withstand such changes. "It's about building support among the parents and the scholars and the administration and the teachers," said Grenier. "We hope that the district will also see the benefits and buy into it as well."

In the meantime, teachers at Bridges Academy focus on delivering more immediate results, too. Alex Castro, the T.A., noted that a gang-related murder had occurred recently only minutes from Bridges Academy. "It's worth it keeping them safe with us," he said of the Bridges kids, "and keeping them off the streets."

Citizen Schools:

A Lesson in Pizza Gives Middle-Schoolers a Taste of Future Possibilities – By Sarosh Syed

A father-son Citizen Schools volunteer team—Bob Mersereau Sr. and his son, Bob Mersereau Jr.— offers insights into fermentation.

On a Tuesday afternoon in early fall, a dozen sixth-graders at Boston's Dever-McCormack School stared and sniffed with cautious curiosity at plastic tubs of yeast, sugar and water. Bob Mersereau Jr., a trim 30-something in jeans, a snug T-shirt and a Red Sox cap, paced the front of their classroom and explained how, when yeast eats sugar, it releases gas and alcohol. Mersereau's father, Bob Sr., was perched on a stool nearby and piped in every now and again to elaborate. Two adults, some years younger than the younger Bob, patrolled the class, making sure students focused on the lesson.

The subject was fermentation, but this was not a chemistry class. It was Pizza Science, an "apprenticeship" designed by the older Bob, a retired geologist; the younger Bob, a sous chef; and Citizen Schools, a Boston-based national nonprofit. Over the course of 10 weekly, afternoon sessions, students would learn the art of making pizza and receive an education in such cooking basics as why dough rises and how herbs complement tomatoes. They would also pepper the Bobs with provocative questions—what's up with putting a living organism into a blazing oven, for example—and take stabs at doing the math necessary to determine the number of teaspoons in a cup.

The idea was to offer the kids fun, interactive class time that piqued their interest, let them experiment with new activities and gave them the confidence to pursue college and careers. "It has to be exciting. It can't be more school," said Bob Mersereau Sr., explaining the rationale behind using pizza as a teaching aid. "It has

"It has to be something that grabs their attention. So we cook something they like. Like pizza," says a Citizen Schools volunteer.

to be something that grabs their attention. So I recommended that we cook something they like. Like pizza." The Bobs are two of more than 400 Boston-area volunteers Citizen Schools has recruited to give poor, urban middle-schoolers experiences otherwise largely unavailable to them. Citizen Schools dispatches these volunteers twice a week to six Boston schools, where they help children build musical instruments, conduct mock forensic investigations, set up small businesses and dig into a host of other activities that show tweens the career possibilities that await adults. The apprenticeships, Citizen Schools believes, can also help compensate for the disparity in the education and enrichment experiences of lower- and higher-income kids.

"The achievement gap is in direct correlation with an opportunity gap," says Kimberly Curtis-Crowley, principal at the Lee School, another Citizen Schools partner. "Some of our kids might not be aware that there are careers outside of a few that their families are in or their neighbors are in. Organizations like Citizen Schools help shrink that opportunity gap by exposing them to solid career opportunities."

Citizen Schools began in 1994, when the organization's two co-founders volunteered in a single Boston elementary school, one teaching journalism, the other teaching first aid. Today, the group provides expanded-learning services in 32 schools in seven states. Citizen Schools programs reach more than 4,000 middle-schoolers and engage more than 1,000 volunteer teachers every year.

In addition to these volunteers, Citizen Schools provides each school with a full-time staff of what are known as teaching fellows, mostly recent college graduates serving in the AmeriCorps national service program. Each Citizen Schools teacher is teamed up with a fellow, who monitors students' behavior during apprenticeships and helps teachers adapt lessons to meet the students' needs.

"Our job is to modify things," said Ruth Summers, a fellow in her second year at Dever-McCormack School. "It's to say things like, 'I love what you're doing here, but what can we do to make it applicable to sixth graders?'" When they're not managing apprenticeships, teaching fellows help students with English and math. For an hour every day, they review material students first learned two weeks earlier in the regular school day – essential reinforcement for teachers who may not have time to give children the individual attention they need.

This academic help requires Citizen Schools to operate as more than just an afterschool program. Staffers known as "academic program leads" observe classes during the regular school day so they know what the students are learning and when. Fellows maintain contact with school-day teachers through data-sharing systems such as online report cards and weekly meetings in which, among other things, they identify children who need extra assistance. And they make sure they uphold the culture of the school by adopting its mascot, dress code and expectations.

The program seeks out sites willing to make Citizen Schools an active participant in the life of the school. Dever-McCormack Principal Mike Sabin and Principal Curtis-Crowley at Lee include Citizen Schools staff members in morning classes. They make school administrators available in the afternoons. They share schedules and lesson plans. And they work Citizen Schools information into district data systems. Their efforts reflect a spirit of cooperation that, according to many Citizen Schools staffers, is essential for smooth operation of the program.

"It's really helpful when you have a principal who's invested in the process," said Heidi Suskin, director of the Citizen Schools program at Lee, speaking of Curtis-Crowley's efforts to ensure access to data and cooperation from teachers. "The quality of the program can really suffer if we don't have this sort of commitment."

Citizen Schools tries to ensure such an investment in part by requiring school districts to cover part of the costs of its programs – and has been willing to end operations when the financing wasn't forthcoming. "Part of why we need public support is just to keep the lights on," said CEO Eric Schwarz. "On top of that, we do think that the act of that commitment—of saying, 'We prioritize this enough to build it into our budget'—

Citizen Schools began in 1994, when the organization's co-founders volunteered in a Boston elementary school, one teaching journalism, the other first aid.

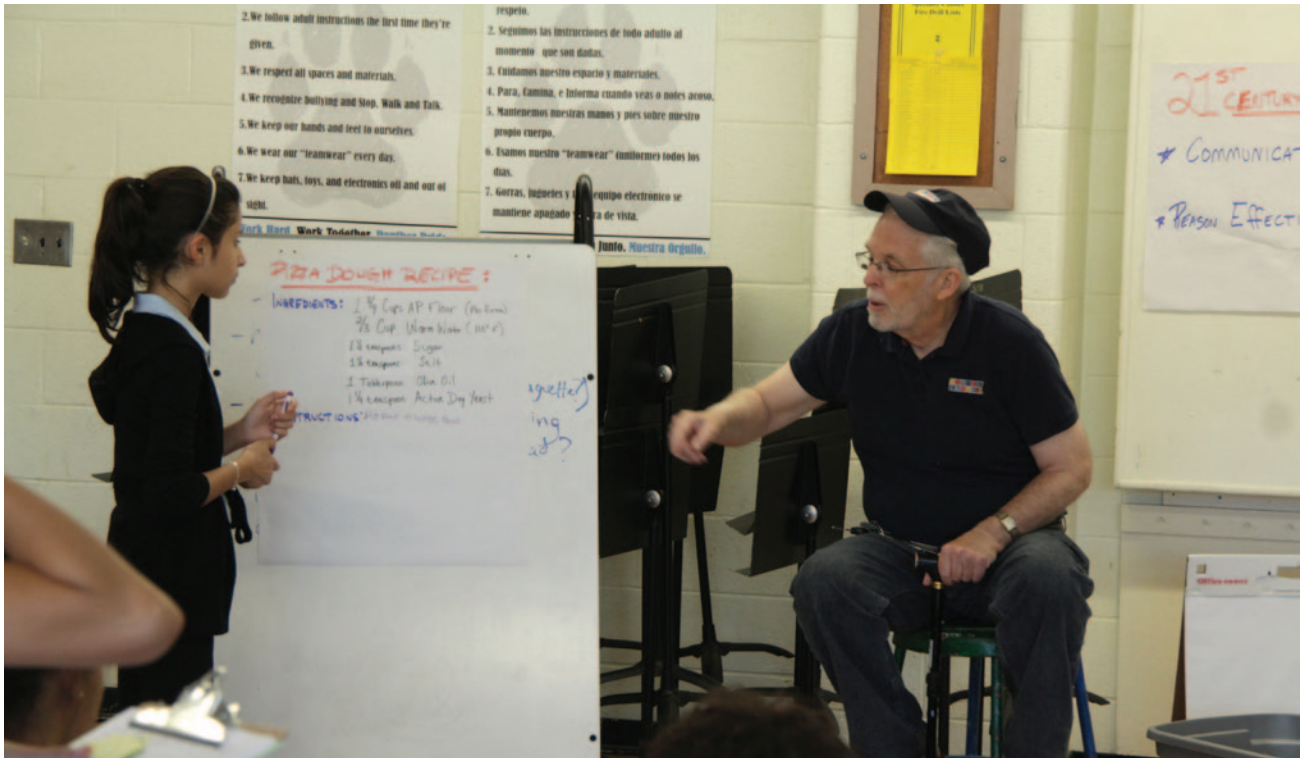
that's an important sign of district programmatic commitment to this model and this approach to education." Even with districts on board, relationships with teachers can present additional challenges. Afterschool programs with less experienced staff members have the potential to rankle veteran educators, a "natural tension" that Dever-McCormack Principal Mike Sabin says he has seen before.

"The newer staff members come in; they make a very strong bond with the kids right away," he said. "They're very sympathetic; they start to identify with the students. The school-day teachers may not get the support they need from the partners; they see the kids misbehaving; they see them getting away with things; and then they think they're starting to undermine the discipline of the school."

Sabin overcomes such tensions in part by encouraging a mentoring relationship between school-day teachers and Citizen Schools staffers. Dever-McCormack School, where Citizen Schools first piloted its programs of apprenticeships 18 years ago, has seen several fellows eventually become public school teachers. "We're treating it more as a pipeline into teaching than as a culture clash," Sabin said.

Summers, the teaching fellow, appears ready to enter that pipeline. She studied political science in college with hopes of becoming a lawyer. But her work with special-needs students at Dever-McCormack prompted a career change.

She speaks proudly of a football game against another school at the end of an apprenticeship she oversaw in her first year with Citizen Schools. It was the only time her special-needs kids played on the same teams as their schoolmates. One of them scored the winning touchdown and moved Summers to tears. "It was better than the day I graduated college," she said. "It was easily the best moment I've ever experienced."



Citizen Schools volunteer Bob Mersereau Sr. walks students through pizza making.

ExpandED Schools:

Tapping Community Programs to Make the Most of Extra School Hours – By Daniel Browne

At the ExpandED program at Brooklyn's P.S. 186, students examine "fingerprints" in an afterschool forensics program.

"A monster." That's what Annette Scaduto calls the schedule of activities her organization provides at Brooklyn's P.S. 186. It's a sprawling checkerboard of some 350 group and one-on-one sessions – from tai chi to tap, "Mad Science" to "Fitness Freaks," book clubs to homework help and snack time.

The schedule is evidence of a bold experiment: School leaders and organizers from the nonprofit NIA Community Services Network, where Scaduto is director of program operations, work side by side to add three hours of high-quality instruction and enrichment to the school day. "We're really creating a school within a school," says Donna Neglia, an assistant principal who oversees the initiative at P.S. 186.

The effort, begun in 2010, was made possible by ExpandED Schools, a demonstration project at work in 11 elementary and middle schools in New York City, Baltimore and New Orleans, established and administered by TASC (The After-School Corporation), a New York City-based nonprofit founded in 1998 to help build a citywide system of afterschool programming. ExpandED schools each receive a mix of public and private funding (in P.S. 186's case, $800,000 in 2012-13 to serve 500 students) to collaborate with a community organization on afternoon programming that supplements the school-day curriculum with hands-on projects, small-group instruction, physical education and the arts.

TASC president, Lucy Friedman, has described the initiative as an attempt to bridge two worlds that have traditionally functioned in isolation from one another:

It takes painstaking coordination between the school and the community organization, with a helping hand from TASC, to make it happen.

"[W]e've seen that schools and community organizations that once might have preferred to operate in separate time zones—schools owning the hours from 8 to 3, afterschool owning 3 to 6—are stronger when they work together, more efficient and more effective in helping kids do and be their best."

It takes painstaking coordination between the school and NIA, with a helping hand from TASC, to make it happen. Vivian Barreto, NIA's ExpandED Schools director for P.S. 186, is in daily communication with assistant principal Neglia. They receive regular input from NIA's director of program operations Scaduto and Principal Bayan Codotte. TASC provides training to NIA community educators and technical assistance on planning, logistics and issues related to curriculum, including aligning activities with new Common Core State Standards and determining the right proportion of academics to enrichment. "We're fortunate we like to spend time together," says Barreto, herself a former assistant principal.

One result of their teamwork is a richer reading experience for the students. In a typical English Language Arts (ELA) class at P.S. 186, the teacher-student ratio is 1 to 27, and that one instructor is obligated to cover a number of distinct reading competencies, such as phonics, vocabulary development, comprehension and motivation to read. In the ExpandED portion of the day, however, the ratio is 2 to 20, and that same teacher, joined by an NIA educator, is free to focus on a specific area in which students need extra help. And while state tests have prompted an emphasis on short, nonfiction passages during the regular school day, ExpandED gives students the opportunity to read and discuss books popular with kids—such as *Amber Brown Is Not a Crayon*—ensuring that achievement doesn't come at the expense of enjoyment.

The ExpandED program offers participants everything from homework help to tap dance.

A year-end theatrical performance is one of the activities children in the ExpandED program at P.S. 186 can look forward to.

Even nonacademic offerings support the learning that takes place during the school day. Take, for example, tai chi, the system of gentle exercises. At P.S. 186, ExpandED students practice tai chi poses to help them cope with frustration and anxiety—which can afflict even young children in an education system geared toward testing and accountability. As one third-grader says, "ELA tests are hard. Sometimes it makes us nervous, but tai chi helps us relax."

Barreto says that giving children time to express themselves physically and creatively is important in a community as culturally and linguistically diverse as the Bensonhurst neighborhood in which the school is located. Students at P.S. 186 come from 40 countries and speak at least 10 languages. "It helps our [English Language Learner] students feel successful," she says. "They may not be able to read English very well, but they can still participate through other activities, such as dance, and can work on completing art projects."

More time for a balanced curriculum and close collaboration with a community partner are two of the core elements of the ExpandED model. The others are engaging and personalized instruction and a sustainable cost structure that allows for 35 percent more learning time at only 10 percent additional cost. TASC's proposition is that, by adopting these elements, P.S. 186 and the other ExpandED schools can make a big difference in the lives of children, especially the less advantaged. A five-year study by an external evaluator, now under

Giving children time to express themselves physically and creatively is especially important in a community as culturally and linguistically diverse as P.S. 186.

way, will measure the program's effects on students. TASC's own analysis of official student data suggests that ExpandED schools are outperforming city averages in math scores and attendance, particularly in New York where they have operated the longest.

For P.S. 186, challenges remain. Currently, ExpandED is available only in grades two, three and four. Organizers hope to include all grades, but face daunting logistical hurdles. At 940 students, the school is the largest New York City participant in the ExpandED Schools initiative, and the classroom space necessary to maintain a 2-to-20 adult-student ratio is already hard to come by. Recruitment of qualified and reliable community educators is another ongoing concern because the position is part time, difficult to balance with other employment and not commonly perceived as a rung on the education career ladder. NIA is working with local colleges and universities to meet its staffing needs, and the school is helping current community educators supplement their hours by requesting them as substitute teachers.

School leaders and NIA staff also recognize that ExpandED won't reach its full potential until more P.S. 186 teachers join forces with community educators, welcoming those educators into their classrooms during the school day and, when possible, making their presence felt after 3 p.m. Neglia says that about 20 percent of teachers still haven't embraced the initiative. "Contractually I can't really require that [they participate]," she says. "… They really don't have to do it, but I think they have to buy in."

Overcoming these obstacles will take hard work, meaning the ExpandED team at P.S. 186 will continue spending a lot of time together, but they wouldn't have it any other way. Referring to that monster schedule, Scaduto says, "Is there a way to simplify it? Yeah, there is a way to simplify it, but the kids don't get the same mix and the same variety of activities. We decided to keep it complicated."

Chess is on the schedule, too, for ExpandED students at P.S. 186.

Higher Achievement:

Providing a Path to a Strong High School Education – and Beyond – By Daniel Browne

Higher Achievement's Summer Academy ends with the annual Olympics of the Mind, an event where students engage in academic and athletic competitions.

Visit Higher Achievement's Summer Academy at Marie Reed Elementary School and you'll see posters galore, filled with exhortations to the 76 enrolled middle school students – or "scholars" as participants are known.

On one wall hang the four "culture principles" adopted by all Higher Achievement sites: "spirit," "respect," "excellence" and "collaboration." On another are the principles particular to the Marie Reed location – "CARE +2," for "choices," "attitude," "respect" and "energy," plus "leadership" and "preparation." And on still another, the non cognitive skills dear to numerous education reformers are displayed on multi colored construction paper: "grit," "zest," "curiosity" and "self-control."

The posters speak volumes about the approach to creating opportunities for disadvantaged children taken by Higher Achievement, which was founded in Washington, D.C., in 1975 and today serves more than 1,000 students yearly in 13 schools in the District as well as Baltimore, Richmond and Pittsburgh. The program's immediate aim is to help low-income students build the academic prowess necessary for matriculation in top-performing high schools. But Higher Achievement aspires to something longer lasting, as well: that its children develop the confidence, character and social skills that will lead them through higher education and into fulfilling adulthoods.

"The soul of the program is that our scholars graduate

An 8th grade student in Higher Achievement's Washington, D.C., program constructs a Rube Goldberg machine, a culminating project in a Summer Academy math class.

from Higher Achievement and have been so imbued with this culture and with the high expectations for themselves and for their community that they go on to succeed in college, that they go back and invest in their communities; they become our future mentors; they become our future elected leaders and teachers," says Higher Achievement CEO Lynsey Wood Jeffries. "…That culture stays with them and really changes the world."

This is a tall order, so it comes as little surprise that Higher Achievement demands a lot of its kids. From fifth grade through eighth grade, they must attend both the program's Afterschool Academy, which meets three days a week from 3 to 7:30 p.m. during the school year, and the Summer Academy, which runs from 8 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. five days a week for six weeks. In total, the scholars spend an extra 650 hours each year in an educational setting. During that time, they work their way through a curriculum designed to keep pace with, and even exceed, state standards.

At Marie Reed, in Northwest Washington's diverse and gentrifying Adams Morgan neighborhood, the Summer Academy's method is on full display. Mornings are devoted to lessons – in a math class, sixth-graders are working with flash cards to reinforce skills they had learned during the previous school year, while in social studies, students finalize their closing statements for an upcoming mock trial.

Homerooms are named after elite local private and public high schools. Ronshai Jones, a soft-spoken fifth-grader, gets the message, explaining to a visitor that he opted to take the Higher Achievement prep course for the Secondary School Admissions Test—a kind of SAT for private schools—as his summer elective class instead of sports or art. His goal, he says, is to be accepted at Washington's Sidwell Friends (where both of President Obama's daughters go to school), and he hopes the summer prep will help him ace the school's rigorous application procedure. "I heard that at Sidwell Middle School … you have to write a 500-word essay on why you want to get in," he says.

Despite the high expectations students shoulder, the program is designed to be more than just a grind. Teachers leaven academic instruction with four social justice themes—"voice, "solidarity," "freedom," and "justice"—to give the children a sense of themselves as citizens with a valuable contribution to make to their communities. On an early morning walk along the Adams Morgan Heritage Trail, teachers used the historic sites as prompts for a discussion of civil rights and the effects of gentrification.

For some students, the opportunity for personal enjoyment of literature opens new doors. "Always after recess, we'd come to homeroom and we'd have a period where we'd just read," recalls Victor Alleyne, a graduate of the program who returned to the Marie Reed program in the summer of 2013 as an intern. "That's what got me reading. I'm a book worm. I visit the library all the time. I have a personal library in my room. ...That's what Higher Achievement has given me."

The packed schedule also makes space for pure and simple fun. Transitions between classes are marked by music, rather than a standard bell. Kids who behave in accordance with program principles sometimes get to

choose the tunes, one of many rewards for exemplary behavior. In the afternoon, they have their choice of electives such as art, poetry, yoga and sports.

The mix of principles, themes, goals and activities – it's all part of the culture that Jeffries considers central to the Higher Achievement ethos. The program also has a serious head for data, though, tracking not only scholastic outcomes, such as attendance, test scores, G.P.A., high school placement and high school graduation, but also academic "red flags"—indicators that a scholar is struggling with a particular skill aligned with the new Common Core academic standards. "The idea is that we don't have to wait for report cards to get that very specific feedback on our scholars," says Mike DiMarco, former director of program quality and evaluation and current national program director. Instead, Higher Achievement instructors assign supplemental work to address the difficulties before they drag down grades and test scores.

The program also surveys scholars on a range of social-emotional indicators, which can serve as early warning signs of other kinds of problems that influence academic performance. If, for instance, a student disagrees with the statement, "I know I will graduate from high school," staff members provide support to boost the scholar's confidence and help manage difficulties at home or school that may be causing the problem.

This commitment to data led Higher Achievement to do something very few out-of-school-time programs have done: participate in a large-scale randomized control trial, or RCT. The findings from this rigorous study, which was conducted from 2006 to 2010, are mixed but include some genuine gains. After two years in the program, Higher Achievement scholars out-performed their peers on standardized reading and math tests; after four years (when about half the scholars in the trial had moved into high school and out of Higher Achievement), they held on to those gains in math but not in reading. This is notable because two previous RCTs of out-of-school-time programs found no academic gains. As for Higher Achievement's goal of placing students in competitive high schools, program scholars were more likely to attend a private high school and less likely to attend an academically noncompetitive public charter or magnet school. But they were no more likely to attend a public charter or magnet school that was competitive.

Today, Higher Achievement is at a crossroads. While it has long focused on helping disadvantaged youth get into top high schools, its leaders are now doing what it asks its scholars to do: Think bigger. "By 2030, we want every child in the cities where we operate to graduate from high school ready for college," says Jeffries. "And that requires much more than running awesome afterschool and summer programs." Therefore, the organization is figuring out how to promote broad adoption of its distinctive features—such as its emphasis on culture and use of data to keep kids on track—in the cities where it works, even in schools where it doesn't have staff. Higher Achievement's new strategic plan acknowledges the need for strong partnerships with districts and principals in order to make this happen.

The four "culture principles" adopted by all Higher Achievement sites are "spirit," "respect," "excellence" and "collaboration."

One word you won't see on the walls of Marie Reed is "ambitious," but it may be the best way to describe Higher Achievement—both its staff and students like Ronshai.

Horizons National:

Nine Consecutive Summers on a Lush Campus – By Daniel Browne

Students at the Horizons National program at the Colorado Academy in Denver take part in the swimming lessons that are part of the Horizons model.

What do the words "summer school" mean to you? Perhaps they evoke dreary images of children fidgeting in their seats, eyes glazing over, while their friends play outside, taking a well-earned break from their studies.

For the 142 students, pre-K through ninth grade, enrolled in the Horizons program at Colorado Academy (C.A.) in Denver, summer school means something else entirely. It starts when the buses roll onto the C.A. campus, 95 acres of green, tree-lined quads, surrounded by mountains. The children catch glimpses of rabbits hopping through a vegetable patch. Over here is the sculpture garden and the music center, over there the tennis courts and nature preserve. In the sun-soaked dining hall, the children choose their own breakfast from an abundance of options. Though their urban neighborhoods are only minutes away, they might as well be in another world.

Horizons at C.A. is one of 37 programs in 15 states and Washington, D.C., affiliated with Horizons National, a nearly 20-year-old institution based in Westport, Conn. Low-income public-school students spend six weeks each year for nine consecutive summers on the campus of an independent school or college in their community, learning from a mix of public and private school or college teachers and enjoying a variety of enrichment activities and field trips. "The thing that makes Horizons work is that it's about a long-term commitment from the get-go," says Lorna Smith, chief executive officer of Horizons National. "[The schools] ask, 'How long is the commitment?' and I say, 'Forever. We hope Horizons becomes an integral part of who you are as

"The thing that makes Horizons work is that it's about a long-term commitment from the get-go," says the organization's chief executive officer.

a school.' ... But we also tell our families that. So when students apply to Horizons, this is not about *a* summer; this is about the next six, seven, eight, nine summers." Since Horizons National began replicating the original 50-year-old program at New Canaan Country School in Connecticut, no affiliate has ever closed.

Swimming is one cornerstone of the Horizons model. Academically, the focus is on preventing the summer slide, the erosion of reading and math skills over the summer months. To that end, academic classes must maintain an adult-to-child ratio no greater than one to five. While these features are common to all Horizons programs, each site is free to design its own curriculum. At C.A., teachers use a range of resources and strategies unavailable to them in a typical Denver public school. For example, C.A. donates tablets and computers so all students can use Lexia, a self-paced, computer-based reading system, which allows them to work independently on individualized lessons. Middle-schoolers are assigned to classes based on assessment tests rather than age, an approach that mirrors the way C.A. groups its own students. Low performers work one-on-one with a reading specialist. And because of the low adult-to-child ratio (many academic classes include a teacher, an assistant teacher, and an intern or volunteer), even the more advanced students receive individual attention.

There are signs of a long-term payoff. While the on-time high school graduation rate in Denver Public Schools hovers around 60 percent, 84 percent of Horizons-at-C.A. alumni have graduated on time since the program began in 1998, by its own count. On the national level, preliminary data suggest that, while Horizons students on average continue to perform slightly below grade level in reading, those who stay with the program for several consecutive summers are beating the trend for low-income students—for them, the achievement gap is narrowing from year to year.

But academics are only part of the learning experience. Whether making pottery, tending the garden or learning to ski, students are challenged to develop new interests and skills.

If there's one activity that best represents this approach to enrichment, it's the daily pool period. Program organizers say the majority of kids come to Horizons not knowing how to swim, and some are scared out of their wits. But with the encouragement of their instructors and the example of the older children, they discover they can overcome their fear, accomplish a goal, and have fun doing it. It's a lesson that can last a lifetime. "I was a swimmer in high school, captain of the swim team," says Gerry Perez, a 19-year-old Horizons alum. "It was the first time in 15 years that my high school had a swim team. … I tried to get everybody who seemed kind of interested just to try it out; we built a team and we made it to finals."

Families also benefit from the social capital that comes from belonging to the Horizons community. Colorado parents have the option of sending their children to any of the state's more than 1,500 traditional public schools or 187 charter schools, space permitting—but many, especially those with limited proficiency in English, have difficulty obtaining the information they need to make an educated decision. Horizons staff members help parents choose the right school for their children, even making introductions to admissions officers. In a few cases, Horizons students have received scholarships to attend C.A.

Perhaps most importantly, students say the program allows them to be a part of a tight-knit group with strong values. "By coming here, we met good people," says Perez, "good-hearted people who think correctly. It's not pride, just doing the right thing even when no one's looking. … It's a way of life."

Buoyed by these positive outcomes, Horizons at C.A. and Horizons National are trying to come up with effective ways to maximize the program's impact. In Denver, to ensure Horizons graduates stay on track after they age out of the program, Horizons is recruiting mentors to offer the students advice and support throughout their high school years.

More challenging is the matter of serving a greater number of families. Horizons leaders agree the organization should expand. "If it's this great of a program … don't we have a moral obligation to make it avail-

able to more kids?" asks Horizons-at-C.A. board member Jim Kidder. The question is how to do so without compromising the intimate atmosphere that gives each child a chance to shine.

In recent years, the organization has seen promise in forming partnerships with community colleges and universities, which now account for 10 of the 37 Horizons sites, with more on the way. CEO Smith says these partners offer unique advantages, including pro bono contributions from faculty; the resources of graduate schools of education; the chance to expose students at an early age to the world of post-secondary education; and the prospect of inspiring Horizons parents to take college classes for the first time.

With new opportunities come new challenges, however. While a private secondary school such as C.A. is able to take the lion's share of responsibility for fundraising and service delivery by drawing on its individual donor base and primary and secondary school resources, many of Horizons' new partners need to collaborate—with each other and with a range of other community stakeholders—to capture the essence of the Horizons experience.

"What we're doing now … is to go into a community … and just talk to lots of people," Smith says. "In Atlanta, we met with the Chamber of Commerce, the United Way, the Boys & Girls Clubs, schools, funders and other program providers and said, 'This is what we specialize in. Is there room here in Atlanta for more of it, and if so, would you be interested in working with us?'"

In Atlanta, where there are currently five Horizons sites with more to come, a regional board of directors handles fund-raising, and resources are shared across sites so cash-strapped colleges aren't over-burdened.

As for C.A., new faces will join the Horizons family next summer and old friends will return. The program may grow, but the fundamentals will remain: swimming, engaging academics, eye-opening new experiences and as Perez puts it, "Good times, good people, good food."

Academics are only part of the experience. Whether making pottery, tending the garden or learning to ski, students are challenged to develop new interests and skills.

The Wallace Foundation is a national philanthropy that seeks to improve education and enrichment for disadvantaged children. The foundation has an unusual approach: funding projects to test innovative ideas for solving important public problems, conducting research to find out what works and what doesn't and to fill key knowledge gaps – and then communicating the results to help others.

Wallace has five major initiatives under way:

- School leadership: Strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement.
- Afterschool: Helping selected cities make good afterschool programs available to many more children.
- Arts education: Expanding arts learning opportunities for children and teens.
- Summer and expanded learning: better understanding the impact of high-quality summer learning programs on disadvantaged children, and enriching and expanding the school day in ways that benefit students.
- Audience development for the arts: Making the arts a part of many more people's lives by working with arts organizations to broaden, deepen and diversify audiences.

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