



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Kate Shatzkin
National Summer Learning Association
kshatzkin@summerlearning.org
410-856-1370 x208
443-604-3508

National Summer Learning Association chooses Fiver Children's Foundation and Global Kids, Inc. as two of the best summer learning programs

Award-winning New York City programs provide low-income students with quality summer learning

Editor's Note: Sarah Pitcock, senior director of program quality at the National Summer Learning Association, is available for phone interviews about Excellence in Summer Learning Award winners. To interview Pitcock, reporters should contact Kate Shatzkin by phone at 410-856-1370 x208.

Baltimore—[The National Summer Learning Association](#) has chosen [the Fiver Children's Foundation](#) and [Global Kids, Inc.](#), both New York City-based summer programs, as two of the recipients of the 2011 Excellence in Summer Learning Awards.

This annual award recognizes summer programs demonstrating excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for young people, as measured by the Association's Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs. Winning programs also demonstrate exemplary practices in overall programming, including supporting staff, schools and other program partners in fulfilling shared goals.

Research has established that low-income students are disproportionately at risk to lose academic skills during the summer. While most children lose up to two months worth of math skills during summer breaks, lower-income children also lose two months of reading skills. Excellence Award winning programs strive to curb these losses, but also employ other research-based practices to build 21st Century skills, confidence, parental engagement and future aspirations.

"This year's Excellence Award winners are nothing short of inspiring," said Sarah Pitcock, the Association's senior director of program quality. "This diverse crop of programs is evidence that regardless of subject matter or setting, young people thrive when summer learning programs build positive relationships, self-efficacy and knowledge in equal measure."

Fiver Children's Foundation takes its name from *Watership Down*, a novel whose main character, Fiver, has a vision to create a better future for himself and his community. The foundation makes a 10-year commitment to each participant from ages 8 to 18, which allows for focus on long-term character development. Participants are encouraged and aided in developing a sense of self and ways to relate to the world around them through the foundation's *Whole Self* curriculum. Fiver was founded in 1998 as a summer camp and has since expanded to year-round services serving 550 urban and rural at-risk elementary, middle, and high school students. Camp Fiver continues to host

participants in four, two-week sessions every summer in Poolville, NY. In the city, Fiver teens are eligible to attend Summer in the City, a program connecting high schoolers with either a three-week urban summer internship paired with professional development workshops or a mixed session made up of workshops, trips, and guest lectures on career and college prep. About 95 percent of students qualify for free or reduced price meals.

The 10-year program separates students into four developmental stages. The LEARN stage for kids 8 – 12 focuses on developing self confidence and broadening perspective on goals and dreams. The TAP stage, for 13 – 14-year-olds, focuses on personal and academic preparedness for high school, the importance of giving back, and team-building initiatives. The LEAD stage, for 15-16 year olds, focuses on community service, ethical decision-making, and leadership skills. The SERVE stage, ages 17 – 18, helps teens with the post-high school transition into college, job training programs, and careers. All students spend time playing field and water sports, riding horses, creating art, attending campfires, and reading and discussing books with cabin-mates. The LEAD and SERVE youth also participate in college visits, public speaking, ethics, and debate.

Fiver places a strong emphasis on family engagement. When a new student is referred to Fiver by a community based partner, his or her younger siblings are automatically enrolled upon turning 8 years old. Every fall, parents also spend a kid-free weekend at camp to see what their children will experience. These tactics are helping students succeed. From 2009 to 2010, Fiver Children's Foundation retained an organizational high of 88 percent of participants. Of the 108 high school seniors who have completed their 10-year commitment with Fiver, 96 percent graduated from high school or received their GED. Of those same youth, 93 percent have enrolled in college, graduated from college, or are serving in the military.

“One of the main reasons Fiver is successful is because its immersive culture becomes embedded in kids' hearts,” says Executive Director Christie Ko. “It is more than a program to the 550 children enrolled and more than 100 alumni. Fiver is an extended family. Children do not just *attend* Fiver programs. They *become Fivers*. Participants understand that it is their responsibility to take the lessons they have learned at Fiver and share them with their families, their schools, and their communities. We are incredibly proud to have created a program that is worthy of this distinction from NSLA.”

Global Kids, Inc., started its U.S. in the World summer program in 2005 and serves 25 public high school students for three weeks each summer at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City. The youth served are racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse. Most come from underserved and politically marginalized New York City neighborhoods and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in American universities and many professional spheres. Many of the students attend schools with poor attendance and low graduation rates. Global Kids, Inc., strives to establish a community of youth who are informed about international affairs and committed to global engagement and peer outreach. The program also seeks to expose its students to the diversity of career and academic opportunities available in foreign affairs and public policy.

Global Kids provides participants with the skills and background knowledge necessary to think critically on issues like equality, justice, sovereignty, economic policy and human rights. While the subject matter is often serious, the program infuses humor, creativity and fun through group games, role plays and multi-media presentations. Every day the students have the opportunity to engage in real dialogue with a guest speaker. Most are Fellows of the Council on Foreign Relations, and others are experts in the day's topic from governmental and non-governmental agencies. The young people are engaged as peers and analysts on an issue, which has been shown through research to be important to inspiring interest and future aspirations in globally competitive fields.

After the three-week program, students spend the remainder of the summer planning and choosing the topic for the peer education project they will research and present to the rest of their school during the following school year. Students choose their own topics, such as environmental sustainability or conflict minerals. This gives participants advocacy experience based on their own interests.

At the end of the 2010 summer session, more than 80 percent of participants felt that they had some tangible influence on foreign policy. Ninety-six percent of students could name three major global issues compared with 75 percent at the beginning; 60 percent could recognize both democratic and non-democratic elements in U.S. foreign policy compared with 35 percent at the beginning; and 100 percent were able to define and name an international treaty, up from 75 percent. Some participants left reflections with comments expressing their newfound passion for watching the news, new feelings of confidence in order to be an effective activist, or hopes of being a diplomat.

“As the demographics of our nation change and our world becomes more interconnected, it is imperative we engage youth from underserved communities in the sophisticated exploration of global affairs and tap into all the assets they possess,” said Evie Hantzopoulos, Executive Director of Global Kids. “We are thrilled to receive the Excellence in Summer Learning Award for our unique approach to developing global citizens, community leaders, and life-long learners who are prepared for the 21st Century workplace.

The other three winners of the 2011 Excellence in Summer Learning Award are Project Exploration of Chicago; the Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program; and Phillips Brooks House Association in Cambridge, Mass.

Twitter version: NYC programs @fiverfocus and @globalkids are two Excellence in #summerlearning Award winners: <http://bit.ly/bURh3S>

####

The mission of the National Summer Learning Association is to connect and equip schools and community organizations to deliver quality summer learning programs to our nation's youth to help close the achievement gap. The organization serves as a network hub for thousands of summer learning program providers and stakeholders across the country, providing tools, resources, and expertise to improve program quality, generate support, and increase youth access and participation. *For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org.*