



SPERLING CENTER  
FOR RESEARCH  
AND INNOVATION



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS  
OF PROVIDENCE**

## Case Study of a Summer Partnership: **Boys & Girls Club of Providence**

Conducted by Sperling Center for Research & Innovation (SCRI)  
March 2021

### OVERVIEW

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Providence (BGCP) Rhode Island recognized a need to address summer learning loss in their local community. In 2019, BGCP was eager to deepen its partnership with the school district and to help kids improve their academic skills to support the community and the District's Turnaround Action Plan. BGCP learned of BellXcel's evidence-based partnership model, which offered the flexibility, tools, coaching, and professional learning to meet BGCP's needs. The partnership combined BGCP's 150 years of serving the Providence community with BellXcel's expertise in academic out-of-school-time impact. This combination empowered BGCP to implement a high-quality summer learning program to address learning loss. Using data from 2019 and 2020 surveys, assessments, quality observations, and interviews, BellXcel's research affiliate, the Sperling Center for Research & Innovation (SCRI), analyzed the summer learning program's impact on youth staff, families, and the community.

### THE BACKSTORY

Serving Providence, Rhode Island, for over 150 years, BGCP is the oldest continuously operating club in the nation.<sup>1</sup> Centered on their mission to enable and inspire youth, especially those from diverse or difficult circumstances, BGCP serves 4,000 youth ages 6-18, 82% of whom come from low-income households. BGCP offers homework help, childcare, mentoring, athletics, and educational and career development opportunities to inspire and support their young members' growth.

Previously, BGCP found summer learning program implementation to be a heavy lift with little measurable academic impact on the program's youth. The complexities of facilitating academic support within the BGCP model proved challenging, and BGCP was concerned annual summer learning programs may not be sustainable. Still, they remained eager to meet the challenge posed by summer learning loss. In 2019, BGCP learned of BellXcel's model, which would

1) <https://bgcprov.org/>

help them provide summer learning to Providence youth. BellXcel's model, based on out-of-school time (OST) best practices and decades of experience and evidence, includes professional development (PD), planning, resources, coaching, flexible curriculum, and evaluation services. Impressed by this partnership model and the ability to adapt it to their organization's needs, BGCP decided to launch BellXcel-powered programs in 2019 and 2020.

## CASE STUDY APPROACH

A suite of planning and evaluation tools and services are offered to track quality, experiences, and impact. To assess if BGCP's summer learning programs offered participants quality learning experiences, SCRI studied two years of data from the following sources:

- Star pre- and post-assessments in Literacy (K-6th Grade) and Math (1st-6th Grade)
- Surveys: family, staff, and scholar<sup>2</sup> (4th grade and above)
- Quality and interview data

## BELLXCEL MODEL EMPOWERED THE PROGRAM TO MEET THEIR COMMUNITY NEEDS

Data indicate that BGCP was empowered to meet their community's needs and ran high-quality, impactful programs. A BGCP leader noted BellXcel's model provided high-quality staff PD, flexible curriculum, meaningful quality visits, coaching, and resources. BGCP staff were guided to focus on instruction which ultimately supported youth academic and social-emotional growth.

Adaptable program goals help align expectations, planning, and activities while also allowing BGCP to address what they know their community needs, which was acutely important after COVID school closures. The program's goals were:

### 2019

- Reduce summer learning loss using math and ELA interventions.
- Increase self-awareness and interpersonal skills among scholars.
- Prepare scholars for the upcoming school year, specifically not being intimidated by new instructional content.

### 2020

- Catch scholars up on academic material from the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year
- Establish a routine for scholars.
- Provide social-emotional learning supports for scholars.

## IMPACT & RESULTS

In 2019, BGCP provided 100 youth with a five-week summer program and 72 hours of academic instruction. Expanding the summer program in 2020, BGCP included two more sites and provided 131 youth with a six-week program and 90 hours of academic instruction. Each year, the program supplied over 100 hours of staff PD.

---

<sup>2</sup>) Programs refer to youth as "scholars."

## THE PROGRAM EXPOSED YOUTH TO ENRICHING EXPERIENCES

OST research shows that youth benefit from exposure to fun, enriching activities that integrate new skills, careers, places, cultures, and perspectives. These enrichments increase confidence, leadership, and critical thinking. In qualitative reviews of BellXcel's nationwide data, youth often mention enrichments as a favorite part of their program, suggesting that these activities boost engagement and enjoyment.

---

*“Everyone throws around the buzzwords of ‘Best Practices in OST,’ but there is not a college preparation program to teach what this looks like in practice. BellXcel is a resource for youth development leaders to bring them up to speed and impart wisdom [...] The professional development and targeted coaching that BellXcel provided was like the college class that everyone needs.” - BGCP Leader*

---

BGCP integrated over 30 unique opportunities including, but not limited to:

### Field Trips & Guest Speakers:

- Providence Fire Department
- Bowling & Picnic in the Park
- Providence Mobile Library
- Providence Children's Museum
- Slime in Space (virtual)
- New York Aquarium (virtual)
- Natural History Museum (virtual)
- Jerome Williams, Big 3 Basketball

### Enrichment & Physical Wellbeing:

- Cooking
- Gardening
- Art
- Do it Yourself (DIY) STEAM
- Community Service Learning
- College & Career Exploration
- Sports
- SNAP Education: Healthy Habits
- Swim
- Positive Action

---

*The best part was “the Fridays because it is fun Friday meaning we got to do spelling bees and go to the pool.” – Youth Participant*

---

## THE PROGRAM EXCEEDED QUALITY STANDARDS

Engaging in quality checks illustrates a focus on improving program experience and impact with ongoing, data-driven changes. In 2019, partners received visits from BellXcel-trained observers who rated activities on critical indicators with a 4-point scale<sup>3</sup>, ranging from “below expectations” to “exemplary.” BGCP's visit covered eight clusters or activities, and the overall quality rating was 3.3, above the 3.0 goal of “meeting expectations.” BGCP's 2020 self-reflection<sup>4</sup> rating was 3.2. In 2019, the observer saw strong integration of social-emotional learning (SEL), voice and choice, data-driven plans, instructional coaching, positive behavior systems, and collaboration.

---

<sup>3</sup> Quality rubrics measure indicators on a 4-point scale: 1 is “Below Expectations,” 2 is “Needs Improvement,” 3 is “Meets Expectations,” and 4 is “Exemplary.”

<sup>4</sup> Leader self-reflection quality checks were used in 2020 because of COVID travel restrictions

The visit identified improvement areas such as additional visual displays, expanded Community Time, and added mindfulness activities in transitions. A BGCP leader valued the process saying,

---

*“[the quality check] visits were really positive and compassionately conducted. It was great to have a third party from whom to ask questions.” - BGCP Leader*

---

#### YOUTH, FAMILIES, AND STAFF WERE HIGHLY ENGAGED

Over 90% of surveyed youth enjoyed academics (92%), enrichment (95%), and the program overall (100%). Most youth (87%) felt focused and excited to engage, and over 95% of staff and families said youth found the program enjoyable and engaging.

Most surveyed families said the program was a welcoming environment for family engagement (95%). In an average week, 85% of staff contacted most families, and all (100%) families said staff addressed their questions and concerns and that they felt informed about youth participation expectations.

After pre-program PD, nearly all (97%) surveyed staff felt prepared to implement key instructional strategies such as differentiation, promoting SEL, positive behavior management, and scaffolding for high-level thinking. Eight in ten (79%) staff felt the ongoing summer coaching and support helped them improve, and 89% said the program helped develop their professional skills. These staff member’s opinions align with a recent RAND study, which identified summer as a chance for educator growth.



---

*“My child grew in their “excitement to go and learn! Always coming home to tell me what he’s done differently for the day.” – Family/Caregiver*

*“It was good to see the children respond positively to summer learning.” – Staff Member*

*“It was enjoyable to share the successes of the scholars with their families every week.” – Staff Member*

---

---

*“Partnering with BellXcel allowed the B&G clubs to do B&G clubs things” – BGCP Leader*

---

#### THE PROGRAM ESTABLISHED POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND PROMOTED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Almost all surveyed youth trusted (98%) and got along (97%) with their BGCP teacher. Eight in ten felt safe to ask for help and support (87%) and felt their opinions were valued (84%). Families agreed that their children found the environment and staff were supportive (97%), trustworthy (100%), and emotionally safe (96%).

Participants had positive views on SEL, with most staff (90%) feeling that effective teaching requires SEL awareness, and all (100%) saying SEL efforts help youth progress academically. Most surveyed youth believed they could learn from mistakes (97%) and improve with hard work (94%).

BGCP helped youth progress in SEL skills. Most staff (89%) and families (80%) said youth improved their willingness to work hard to overcome challenges. Staff indicated youth grew more willing to ask for help (95%), improved their relationship skills (89%), and all staff felt the program allowed for caring, consistent relationships with youth.

---

*“The first way that I grew was in math when I didn’t know how to do a math problem, then I figured it out. The second thing was I set some goals and achieved them” – Youth Participant*

---

#### YOUTH GREW THREE OR MORE MONTHS IN LITERACY & MATH

Just over half of BGCP youth’s pre-test scores indicated they would benefit from academic support<sup>5</sup> in literacy and math. These youth tested an average of 16 and 19 months below grade-level in math and literacy<sup>6</sup>, respectively. Far exceeding growth expectations, these youth gained three months of literacy and over three months of math<sup>7</sup> skills in the program, which indicates that BGCP stopped learning loss and enabled new skill growth. These results are shown in Figure 1.

For BGCP youth whose pre-test scores indicated they did not require academic support,<sup>8</sup> pre and post-test scores were not statistically significantly different.<sup>9</sup> On average, these youth stayed at or above grade-level during the program, which indicates that the program stopped potential summer learning loss for this group of youth.

---

5) Defined by Star, “Urgent Intervention” scores fall in the 1-9th Percentile Rank and “Intervention” scores fall in the 10-24th Percentile Rank

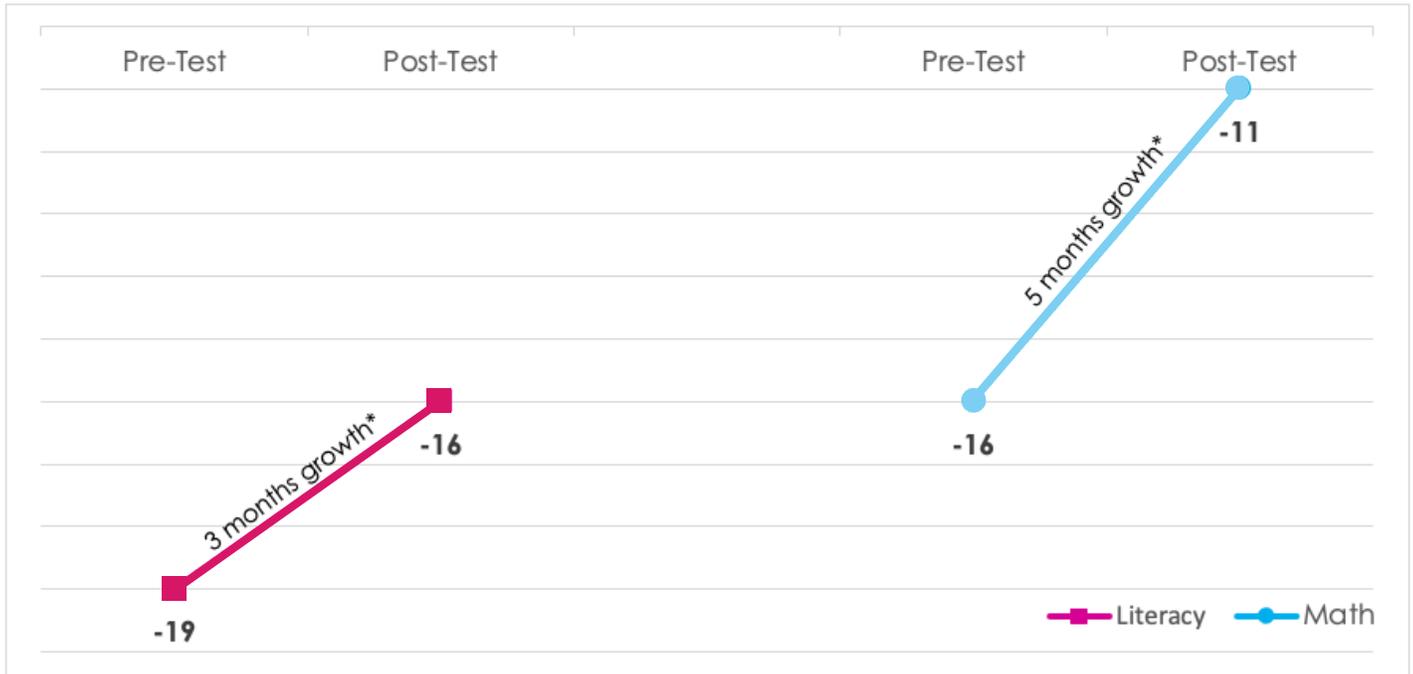
6) Literacy  $t(86)=-4.4$ ,  $p=0.0$

7) Math  $t(74)=-5.0$ ,  $p=0.0$

8) Not being in an “intervention” category is defined by Star as scores that fall in the 25th Percentile Rank or higher

9) Literacy  $t(81)=1.0$ ,  $p=0.3$ , Math  $t(68)=-0.3$ ,  $p=0.7$

Figure 1: For Youth in Need of Academic Intervention, Average Months Behind Grade-Level in Pre-and Post-Tests.



\*p<.00

*“I [...] loved how in love with the books students were, they often begged for more time in book groups and loved read-aloud times.”  
- Staff Member*

## CONCLUSION

Serving Providence for over 150 years, BGCP was committed to stopping summer learning loss. A review by SCRI found that BGCP’s awareness of their community and their engaged staff combined with BellXcel’s tailored technical assistance model led to successful 2019 and 2020 summer learning programs. BGCP served and engaged their community and over 230 youth in summer learning with 54 program days, 160 hours of academic instruction, and over 30 unique enrichment experiences. Analyzing survey, assessment, quality, and interview data, SCRI found the programs established high-quality, enriching, and engaging experiences which promoted SEL and academic growth.

Professional development prepared staff with high-quality instructional practices. Quality observations found that the program exceeded quality goals, and the visit provided the program with valuable insights for short and long-term changes. The program was enjoyable, exciting, and supportive of family, staff, and youth engagement and growth. Staff also established an emotionally safe environment and trusting relationships with youth and families. The environment, combined with a flexible summer curriculum, boosted SEL and enabled the program to successfully reverse learning

loss for youth in need of educational support. In partnership with BellXcel, BGCP continued to meet the community's need for fun, safe, engaging, and high-quality youth development programming and made a measurable impact on youth social-emotional and academic growth. Successful summer learning programs also allowed BGCP to deepen its relationships in the community and establish an increasingly strategic partnership with schools.

---

*"A favorite moment was when a scholar who is generally shy and anxious began to volunteer and participate more actively in whole group discussions without needing prompting."*  
– Staff Member

---

