

EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES **BEST PRACTICES AT U.S. INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS’ SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS**

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INTRODUCTION

There was a time when summer school was regarded as a kind of purgatory for students who spent the regular school year in idle pursuit of nothing. Their penance for lack of attention and ignoring their assignments was several more weeks in the classroom and a second go-around of school work, while more motivated students enjoyed sunny skies and warm weather outdoors.

But that time seems long ago. Summer school today is often known by the more inspiring name of “summer enrichment” and there are many programs that live up to the billing. They still meet student needs in the disciplines of reading, writing and mathematics. But enrichment is also offered in the arts, music, computer science, government, athletics and outdoor exploration.

This report is a review of enrichment programs at several of America’s top independent private schools, educational foundations and non-profits. It looks at areas such as finance, student recruitment and program depth and tries to identify best practices that could be useful for educators considering starting their own summer programs.

The sampling of schools includes those in New England and as far west as Hawaii, whose directors were available and willing to discuss their operations in detail. It includes schools that run their own programs as well as an organization that operates summer programs at numerous private schools and universities in multiple states. Summer programs at a couple of the private schools interviewed have been running for about 100 years, while others are much younger. Some welcome students from around the world, while others enroll students from the surrounding region. The offerings of all the programs vary, as do the depth of their resources.

What is common among them is their view that summer enrichment is an effective way to reinforce courses taught during the traditional school year and limit the learning loss that is

typical among many students between June and September. Students’ standardized tests scores are typically lower after summer vacation than before it. Most students lose about two months of mathematical skills each summer, while low-income children also lose two to three months in reading.¹ Research has shown that summer learning can improve student achievement.²

For many of the students from the inner city or rural areas, the lush greenery and state-of-the-art facilities at some of these elite schools is a life-altering experience. Outside of their old environment and away from peer pressure at their school, inspired by new friends from other cities, states or countries, their understanding of the world suddenly expands beyond what they see on television or video games. Their acceptance of people from different backgrounds changes and their perception of what’s “cool” is altered in unexpected ways.

“Every year when I recruit in public schools, I hear stories about how their cousin or friend came for five weeks and saw that there is a bigger world out there,” says Elena Gosalvez Blanco, director of the Phillips Exeter Academy Summer School in Exeter, N.H. “There are other students out there who want to learn and help the world and reach their potential. It inspires them to do better in school and manage to go to the best college they could go to and really change and transform their lives.”³

What is also common among the schools is the type of student they want attending their programs. They’re focused more on a young person’s desire to learn than on academic achievement or family income. When considering an applicant, many admissions officers look for signs that the student is interested in trying something new, yet also wants to pursue a passion they have identified at a young age. Summer enrichment programs can offer that opportunity.

This paper is the second in a three-part series examining the current market for summer

enrichment programs in Massachusetts and potential expansion of it, with a specific focus on opening up opportunities for students who are most in need of innovative academic experiences. In part one, Pioneer surveyed private schools in Massachusetts to understand the array of existing summer enrichment opportunities for Bay State students, primarily looking into the operations of these programs. In this paper, we review best practices of summer academic programs at independent and parochial schools in Massachusetts and nationally, looking not only into financing, student recruitment methods, and program depth, but further into the philosophy of these programs and how they benefit disadvantaged students. Our final paper in the series will be an analysis of the cost to create one to three types of programs in Massachusetts that could serve as a model for anyone wishing to start a program, a culmination of the findings of Part I and II. Through this research, we hope to empower administrators, schools and organizations that wish to launch a summer enrichment program with the information needed to create one that is best suited for Massachusetts.

PHILLIPS EXETER ACADEMY SUMMER SCHOOL

EXETER, NH

The summer program at Phillips Exeter Academy⁴ began in 1919 as a remedial program for the “Exeter” boys. Those that weren’t doing well had to remain at school after the academic year to work on their subjects. It continued as a remedial program until about 20 years ago when it shifted to more academic enrichment, according to Elena Gosalvez Blanco, director of the summer school.⁵

Each summer about 775 students from 40 states and 50 countries attend the five-week program in the Upper School level (rising 10th-12th graders) and Access Exeter clusters (rising 8th-9th graders).⁶ Tuition for overnight students attending the Upper School is \$8,400 and \$1,280 per course for day students. Tuition for Access

Exeter overnight students is \$8,775 and \$5,450 for day students.⁷ About 30 to 35 percent receive financial aid, according to Gosalvez, with the average gift running “in the high \$6,000.”

Some donors provide funds used for financial aid, but primarily the gifts come from program revenues. Gosalvez says that because of the large number of applicants requesting financial aid from a limited pool of money, students who can afford the tuition have a better chance of being accepted into the program. “We try to make that clear,” she says.⁸

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Gosalvez says that students from around the world attend Exeter’s summer program, including exclusive schools in London, Singapore and Switzerland. But the school also works with several programs to bring students from low-income areas to New Hampshire for its summer term. Since the 1960s, it has been working with Reach Memphis, formerly known as Memphis Prep, an organization that selects top students from difficult neighborhoods in Memphis. Several charter schools from New York City annually send students to the summer program and since the 1970s, the school has been recruiting in the Navaho Nation in the Southwest. This summer Gosalvez expects 14 Navaho and 10 Laguna students. Sometimes the programs have funds they can offer to help with the tuition, such as \$1,000 per student. Families usually pay a small sum of \$100 to \$1,000.

“Because we have the Harkness Method, we are not as picky with grades in our selection criteria,” says Gosalvez. “We don’t require straight As from a student in an inner city school to come to Exeter. If they have a desire to come and spend their summer on academics it says a lot to us.”

In fact, students in the summer program are not graded on their work, nor can they earn credit from any of the courses that can be carried into the regular school year. Gosalvez says that allowing for-credit courses will attract students who are trying to get ahead, skip a class, or

graduate early. Those are not the students she's interested in.

"Summer enrichment is not for credit and it's not to get ahead," she says. "It's for the love of learning."

Because of the diverse backgrounds of the students and the very different environment of the Exeter campus compared to where many of the students live, Exeter takes steps to minimize culture shock. Often a native advisor is on staff for the Pueblo students.

"Our staff is pretty used to how they need to do things such as purify their room," says Gosalvez. "But that's great for the other students. They bring their own cultural habits and other students come here because it's so diverse. It really is bringing the world together."

PROGRAM CONTENT

Upper School boarding students are required to take three courses, while day students can take less. Students design their own curriculum, choosing courses from the more than 100 offered in English, humanities, math, science, languages and art.

Additionally, the school offers two enrollment alternatives. The Charles J. Hamm '55 Leadership Program is open to about 25 students. It includes two required courses: Leadership & Society and The Practical Leadership Seminar. The third course selection is the student's choice. The second alternative is the Process of Creativity Cluster, a program the school offers in partnership with the Stanford University School of Architecture. The course is taught by a professor from Stanford who is also a graduate of Exeter. It includes three required courses: The Creativity Experience; Visual Thinking; and Architecture.

Middle school students in Access Exeter choose subject clusters rather than individual courses. Eight clusters of three pre-selected courses are offered including Creative Design and Purpose for a Changing World; The Land and Sea; and

the Creative Arts, among others. An example of a cluster offering would be "The Shape of Things." It includes courses in chemistry, 2D and 3D geometry, and prototype design and fabrication.⁹

Through Academic Approach, a tutoring and test-prep provider, the summer school also offers SAT and SSAT five-week courses for high school students planning on attending college or middle school students interested in attending a boarding school.

Summer school courses are taught in the same manner as the academic year at Exeter, using the Harkness method. In the 1930s, Exeter changed their classrooms from rows of desks facing a teacher's larger desk, to one oval table. About a dozen students sit with the teacher, who acts as a facilitator for class discussions. Gosalvez says the students who are new to Exeter "blossom" under the different approach.

"A lot of those students when they come here and pick hard classes in biology or chemistry or English, they see how we teach it through the Harkness method," says Gosalvez. "They see that it's more student-centered, the responsibility is on them and it's not just a teacher lecturing at them. They really like the subject and they want to learn but their school wasn't doing it for them."¹⁰

CHOATE ROSEMARY HALL SUMMER SCHOOL

WALLINGFORD, CT

The summer school at Choate Rosemary Hall¹¹ was started in 1916 on the Wallingford campus, long before the Rosemary Hall school for girls and the Choate School for boys, which shared the campus, merged together in 1974 to form the current private school. It began as a remedial school for boys and today is an enrichment program "for students interested in pursuing learning in the summer," according to Eera Sharma, director of the summer program.¹²

About 650 students attend each summer, coming from more than 40 countries and 30 states.

Choate offers 78 courses to high school students and 36 to those in middle school. Students can select programs that run five, four, two and one week. The five-week program has several tuition levels, depending on the course group the student enters. They range from \$9,000 for boarding students attending the English Language Institute to \$6,800 for the Study Abroad program in Spain, not including airfare. Tuition for the Academic Enrichment program is \$7,700 for boarding students and \$2,000 per course for day students. Choate also offers an SAT/ACT test preparation course to boarding and day students for \$899.¹³

In 2015, about 21 percent of students received either a full or partial financial scholarship. The summer school is entirely funded by tuitions.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Sharma says she works with about 14 different programs to bring students to the Choate summer school, including several that place underprivileged students in elite schools. She says attending a summer program can have the most impact on inner city students who would never have an opportunity to spend four years at Choate, but might be there one or two summers.

“They are usually the students who go back and write us the most heartwarming thank-you notes and say that were it not for that one summer they wouldn’t be in medical school or in college,” says Sharma. “Even a two-week program here is so transformative in their lives.”¹⁴

Among the programs that provide a pipeline to Choate are Squash Haven, an urban squash and summer enrichment program in New Haven, CT; Minds Matter in Chicago; Reach Memphis; Summer Search, a San Francisco-based mentoring organization with offices around the country; and the Harkness Institute, an alternative high school in Nayarit, Mexico.

Sharma says usually 10 percent to 15 percent of the 650 students who attend are sent via programs serving disadvantaged students.

“The majority are well-prepared,” she says. “The transition once in a while is challenging. But we have students from such diverse socioeconomic and religious backgrounds, different countries, that it’s not as challenging because of the diversity we have here in the summer. It’s not just haves and have-nots. They learn from each other and they do well.”

PROGRAM CONTENT

About 75 percent of the teachers in the summer program are part of the winter school faculty. Sharma says they teach during the summer program to work with different age groups, test new teaching methods and try out new course ideas that might later be used during the academic year.

“We like to call it a lab school for our teachers and our students,” says Sharma. “Our students continue to pursue things of interest to them, whether it’s math or science or theater or they try something new. A lot of the programs we have started from our current teachers or our alumni who have contacted us and said that Choate did so much for them they want to come back and start a program.”¹⁵

Boarding students in Choate’s summer school take two major courses and one minor, while day students are allowed to take less. Options available to high school students include the Academic Enrichment program, with courses offered in the arts, science, math, history, English, social sciences, languages and computer science.

Sharma says that for about 30 years Choate has offered a study abroad program in both its academic and summer school schedules. The five-week immersion course combines faculty who are experienced with working with American and international high school students and selected host families in China, France and Spain. In China, the focus is on urban and rural development. In France, French language students live in Paris and in Spain, Spanish language students study in La Coruna, a city in the northwest part of the country.

The John F. Kennedy '35 Institute in Government program was established to honor President Kennedy and offers intense study for students interested in politics and government. The highlight of the course is four days in Washington, D.C., meeting with staffers who work on Capitol Hill or in Washington lobbying firms, as well as touring the different sites in the city. Nearly all of the contacts are former Choate students, according to Sharma.

Students in the summer program are given mid-term grades after two-and-a-half weeks. They are meant to provide a baseline for advisors to discuss with families or students if needed. At the end of the summer students receive ratings ranging from honors to high pass, pass, low pass and fail, with reports written by advisors and teachers on their work and feedback for the families. Immersion Geometry is the only course that gives letter grades.

THE CLARENCE T. C. CHING PUEO PROGRAM

PUNAHOU SCHOOL

HONOLULU, HI

PUEO (Partnerships in Unlimited Educational Opportunities)¹⁶ is a seven-year program in which students begin during the summer after fifth grade and graduate during the summer following their junior year in high school. Located at the Punahou School, an elite private school whose graduates include President Barack Obama, PUEO identifies middle and high school students in neighboring public schools with high academic potential, but with low economic opportunity.

The day-only program is funded through private donors that include the Harold K. L. Castle Foundation¹⁷ of Kailua, HI and the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation¹⁸ of Owings Mills, MD. The major sponsor is the Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation¹⁹ in Honolulu, which has donated about \$6 million over 10 years.

About 325 students at seven different levels attend the summer program at no cost, according to Carl Ackerman, director of the PUEO program. Each receives a seven-year scholarship of \$2,200 per year, plus a \$500 award in their eighth (post-PUEO) year for college counseling and standardized testing, for a total award of \$15,900. Though students are primarily from Oahu, others come from the outer Hawaiian Islands, Arizona, Washington and California.²⁰

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

PUEO accepts students who academically occupy what Ackerman calls “the great middle.” While many federal programs aim at students in the top 20 percent or the bottom 20 percent in academic achievement, Ackerman believes PUEO can have an impact focusing on the students in between. He said he came to that conclusion in part by reading the best-selling book “Moneyball,” a story about how Oakland Athletics General Manager Billy Beane created a successful team through a new focus on baseball statistics and not scouting reports.

“In Moneyball, Billy Beane used metrics and he said he didn’t want someone who looks like a baseball player, he wanted someone with the best on-base percentage,” says Ackerman. “I think a student from the middle can have the best on-base percentage if we focus on them. We aim at the middle 60 percent in our program and by doing that we’ve seen that these students can be pushed up pretty quickly. It’s really wonderful.”²¹

To recruit students, the PUEO staff networks with principals at 30 schools on Oahu, which often leads to discussions with teachers and counselors at those schools. Additional recruiting trips are made to states such as California, Arizona and Washington where there are schools who frequently send students to PUEO.

PUEO works to maintain relationships that students make during the six-week summer program, by organizing events during the academic year. They include the Lacy Veach Day of Discovery, featuring activities of interest

to budding scientists, engineers, astronomers and astronauts. Other events include a poetry workshop, a spring lu'au for new students to the PUEO program and field trips stressing environmental stewardship.

PROGRAM CONTENT

PUEO was started in 2005 when James Scott, president of the Punahou School, wanted to create a program similar to Summerbridge, a tuition-free academic enrichment and advocacy program for motivated but underserved middle school students at University High School in San Francisco, according to Ackerman.

PUEO focused on middle school students in its beginning, but then extended the program into high school to ensure its effectiveness.

“We were concerned that after they leave us and go into high school, that we had done our due diligence,” says Ackerman. “We don’t want to feel good about ourselves for reaching out. We want to feel good because it works.”

According to Ackerman, the quality of the courses is a large reason why students are drawn to PUEO. Summer school courses address individual student needs in the disciplines of reading, writing and mathematics. But during their first two years students also take several hands-on, experiential-learning classes in which they work with robots, write code or participate in classes such as “Up, Up and Away” in which they “fly airplanes and shoot off rockets.”

In the third year they switch to more academic classes including English and math. To offset the transformation to a more academic setting during that year, PUEO offers a magic class at the end of the day. The teachers are formal magicians who show students various tricks and illusions, which they perform for other students.

“The magic class gets them to do public speaking and lose their fear of being articulate in front of a public group,” says Ackerman. “A lot of what we’re doing in PUEO is encouraging students to take certain classes in which they’re getting the

skills, but they’re getting the skills in a way they can enjoy.”

During the final four years students can take for-credit classes. By the time they finish with PUEO and start their senior year of high school, they will have taken six classes during the summer that they will not need to take at their home high school. Ackerman says they typically fill that time with electives, AP classes or employment.

Ackerman says the graduation rate from high school for PUEO scholars is 99 percent and compares that to a Hawaii average graduation rate for low income students of 80 percent and a national average graduation rate for low income students of 72 percent. He says the Hawaii average graduation rate for all students is 82 percent and the national average graduation rate for all students is 80 percent. About 85 percent of PUEO students who are accepted into college ultimately enroll.²²

THE MALCOLM COATES PREP@PINGREE PROGRAM

PINGREE SCHOOL

SOUTH HAMILTON, MA

Prep@Pingree began in the summer of 2002 with an enrollment of 14 low-income students entering the eighth and ninth grades from Lawrence, MA. Soon after, the program began accepting students from Lynn, MA and for about 12 years Prep@Pingree served primarily those two cities. By 2015, Prep@Pingree had 75 students from Lawrence, Lynn, Ipswich, Newburyport and other towns in the Massachusetts North Shore area, according to Steve Filosa, founding director of Prep@Pingree.²³

The idea for creating the summer program was greatly supported by Malcolm Coates, a trustee at the Pingree School who passed away in 2015. During a fundraiser last year, another trustee donated \$250,000 to name the program after Coates.²⁴ Tuition of about \$2,500 is covered for most students by partnering organizations and

other sponsoring groups. Filosa says that about a dozen students attend Prep@Pingree who come from “families of means” and they pay tuition of \$1,750.

The Pingree School is a private secondary day school.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Filosa says Prep@Pingree does not advertise to recruit students. Rather there is a strong link between various organizations in the geographic area it serves and the tuition assistance those organizations offer to students.

The first source of students for Prep@Pingree are “partnering organizations” of the program, primarily schools in the Lawrence and Lynn area. Students enrolled in those schools who would like to attend the summer program go through an application process. If accepted, they go tuition-free. Partnering organizations include Community Day Charter School in Lawrence, the Lawrence Family Development Charter School, Esperanza Academy, a private girl’s school in Lawrence; the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence, and the Boys & Girls Club of Lynn. About 60 of the 75 attendees of Prep@Pingree do so through those partnering organizations.

A second way to locate students is through “sponsoring organizations.” This group differs from partnering organizations because the organizations send money to Prep@Pingree through their operating budget, but do not yet have as deep a relationship with Prep@Pingree as the partnership programs do. However, they may send up to a dozen students per summer to the program.

SquashBusters in Boston,²⁵ a sports-based after-school youth enrichment program, is a sponsoring organization. Filosa says two students will attend the summer program in 2016 through SquashBusters. The organization will send \$750 per student to Prep@Pingree. Other sponsoring organizations have very specific missions that are not usually academic. Elevated Thought, an after

school arts program for students in Lawrence, is another conduit to Prep@Pingree.

A third way students may enroll at Prep@Pingree is through a direct tuition payment of \$1,750, which Filosa says is a small number of students. They could be Pingree School students or youths from a school in another community who heard about the summer school and whose families can afford the tuition.

Filosa stated that there are benefits to having students of means attending the summer program alongside lower-income students. First, it creates diversity of socioeconomic status and often ethnicity. Furthermore, it benefits both groups of students “because they learn through experience that stereotypes that both sides have about each other are just wrong.”²⁶

PROGRAM CONTENT

Historically, Prep@Pingree has been a five-week program during which students study math, English, engineering design, and history, as well as co-curricular topics such as public speaking, application and interview skills. The students also take weekly exploratory day trips to places such as the Ipswich River, the New England Aquarium and Boston’s Museum of Science. They play on Pingree’s athletic fields and use their state-of-the-art facilities. Classes are taught by Pingree faculty as well as experienced public school faculty and Prep@Pingree alumni.

In 2013, a program director was hired to extend the program for 12 months for the same students who attend during the summer. Programs were also added for Prep@Pingree high school and college age alumni. During the school year they meet once or twice each month, often on Saturdays. Courses include workshops in public speaking, financial literacy and writing. College tours are arranged, as is a day trip to Ellis Island. An April vacation “civil rights” trip is also organized in which students travel to Atlanta, Birmingham, Selma and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

“We try to program things that academically are going to support their learning during the school year, but also just to open their eyes up to the world,” says Filosa. “For a lot of students the trip to the South will be their first time on a plane, first time in a hotel room.”

Filosa says the program was extended through the academic year because there was dissatisfaction with ending the relationships they were creating during the summer. But during the early years that was all the program could afford to do. Around the tenth year the strategic planning was focused on keeping the relationships strong to address the needs of students in middle school, high school, college and beyond.

“Five weeks was enough for what we thought we could do in those five weeks, but we knew there were more opportunities for students,” says Filosa. “We wanted to see how much further we could push what we were programming.”

With only three years of experience and limited investment made to measure results, Prep@Pingree has not compiled any statistical data to judge the success of the 12-month program. However, anecdotally they know that people remain connected to the program and have maintained relationships they’ve established in the summer. Attendance has remained at 95 percent or more during the program.²⁷

NORTHFIELD MOUNT HERMON SCHOOL

MOUNT HERMON, MA

The summer session at Northfield Mount Hermon (NMH) began in 1900 when classes were created for students who were part of the general academic program. In 1960, there was a desire to attract more students to the program and the doors were opened to others from outside of NMH. Today only 10 percent of the students enrolled in the summer program attend the main school. While international students make up about 25 percent of the academic year population,

that figure jumps to nearly 60 percent in the summer, according to Greg Leeds, director of the summer session.²⁸

Tuition for middle school or college prep boarding students is \$8,200 and \$2,900 for day students. Tuition for English as a second language boarding students is \$8,700 and \$3,700 for day students.

Financial aid is available, though usually reserved for students from the United States. Like most schools Northfield Mount Hermon awards financial assistance based upon a family’s need. Need is determined by taking the cost of tuition minus the family’s contribution. The financial aid budget for the NMH summer session typically does not allow 100 percent of need for all families to be covered.²⁹ About 55 of the 285 students attending the summer session in 2016 will receive some level of financial aid.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Leeds says NMH works with several domestic and international programs to select students for the summer session including Reach Memphis and Summer Search. The American Farm School, an independent nonprofit educational institution and Anatolia College, both located in Thessaloniki, Greece, send students each year to the NMH summer session. Students from low-income families primarily live in the Northeast, especially Franklin County in Massachusetts, where NMH is located.

The cultural enrichment that comes from being exposed to students from around the world is one of the pluses of the NMH enrichment program and a reason students apply there, says Leeds. He says that many of the domestic students, regardless of their family wealth, may be sheltered in terms of learning other ways of life. During the summer session they’re surrounded by those other ways.

“It’s impossible to not experience it,” he says. “We do meaningful things to try to give students a chance to teach others about their way of life and their stories.”

Those include a campus meeting every Monday in which students sing, perform or give a talk about a subject of their choosing. Leeds says there are frequent on-campus student activities and events in which students can share their experiences with others.

PROGRAM CONTENT

The summer session at NMH includes the College Prep Program for students entering grades 10-12 and the Middle School Program for students entering grades 7-9. Classes are small, averaging 10 students who also spend a few days participating in a work program that includes chores on the campus such as working on the school farm.

Leeds says the enrichment program is designed to provide the students with a “rigorous and intense academic experience.”³⁰ Classes meet six days per week and students receive an average of two to three hours of homework per night.

“When students come to us from backgrounds where they’re not challenged in school or they’re not provided a structure that is conducive to learning or they’re coming from schools where they only get 10 minutes of homework per night, they thrive,” says Leeds. “They get a lot out of it. They write us letters and tell us how transformative it has been and good preparation for college.”

Students in the College Prep Program take one major course that meets for three hours, Monday through Saturday mornings. They attend an additional 90 minute afternoon class four days a week if the major class is a for-credit course. Those students taking only morning major courses take a minor course in the afternoon, four days a week. Students also participate in a sport during the afternoon four days each week.

College Prep for-credit courses include algebra, geometry, precalculus, biology, chemistry and physics. Non-credit courses include creative writing, academic writing, Chinese and a history course on the Cold War.³¹

Middle School students take two half-morning major courses or one full-morning major course. They also take a minor course and participate in sports in the afternoon. Half-morning major courses meet for 75 minutes, while full-morning courses meet for three hours, Monday through Saturday.

Though the daily schedule is busy for all students, NMH makes time for students to relax or join in recreational activities. On-campus options include dances and talent shows, while there are off-campus trips to Boston, New York City and Six Flags amusement park.

NMH also organizes an annual summer college fair that brings representatives from more than 100 colleges and universities throughout the U.S. to NMH.

HORIZONS NATIONAL

WESTPORT, CT

Horizons National is a non-profit organization that partners with private schools and colleges across the U.S. to use their facilities for summer programs for low-income students. Horizons offers students a six week schedule of academics and enrichment, five days per week, six hours per day.

The concept began in 1964 when the head of New Canaan Country School wanted to do more for his community by opening the campus to disadvantaged students while the campus was dormant during the summer. Since then, Horizons has grown to about 4,500 students in 47 programs in 17 states. Historically the program was connected to small independent schools. But in recent years, it has grown beyond that to include large colleges such as the University of Rochester, the University of Mississippi and Georgia Tech University.

Students join Horizons in the summer before kindergarten and stay with the program each year through the 12th grade. The per-pupil cost for the summer school is about \$2,000. Tuition is free; however, families are asked to make a

small payment based upon a sliding income scale. None pay more than \$50 and the family average is about \$25, according to Jose Oromi, chief operating officer for Horizons National.³²

Corporations and foundations support Horizons National. Funds raised are used to launch local programs that eventually become self-sustaining and actually produce a return. Donor partners include the Aetna Foundation, Facebook, Newman's Own Foundation, JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A. and the Xerox Foundation.³³

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

When Horizons and a partner school open a new program they try to create a different environment for students. Part of that process is drawing students from at least two local feeder schools, because putting a student into a new environment includes creating a new community. If the students were put into a classroom with the same students with whom they spent the academic year, it becomes harder for teachers to introduce new behaviors.

A large part of the recruiting process involves a meeting with families to explain that the program goes beyond a single summer. For established programs, one of the recruiting challenges is asking families to commit to the full term of the program.

"It does sound a little strange," says Oromi. "They're looking for a summer camp. We're telling them they need to come back every year for the next nine years. We tell them we're offering an opportunity for their student to catch up and maybe get ahead, but the only way we can do that is by focusing on the long-term."

The pitch becomes easier the longer the program is in existence in a certain area. After a couple of summers, parents with students in the program form impressions, speak to other parents and word spreads. At the end of summer, exit interviews are conducted with each family. Though their spots are reserved for the following year, there is a renewal process.

PROGRAM CONTENT

The Horizons approach has been to work with students early, stay with them until they get to the eighth grade and prepare them to succeed in high school. Oromi says the goal is to address summer learning loss at a young age, instill a love of learning in students and establish relationships. The academic focus is on literacy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) programming.

"Research tells us that students of low-income backgrounds, even before they attend school, are likely to have already fallen behind," says Oromi. "Their vocabulary had not developed as well because they weren't in an environment where they participated in discussions or read books or were even taken outside as much. By starting early we can address the achievement gap issues early."³⁴

Through the years many of the students who graduated from the Horizons program returned to work as interns or volunteers. Oromi says their desire to maintain their commitment to Horizons sparked the idea to extend the summer program into the high school years. That meant helping students with academic coaches, college visits, SAT prep, financial planning, the college application process and college selection guidance.

"All of that goes back to the philosophy of having long-term engagements and long-term outlooks," says Oromi. "It's not just a single summer. It's about that kindergartener, once they come into our program and have a long-standing relationship with faculty and staff and continued support and exposure to a positive environment that leads to success."³⁵

Horizons programs use Star Reading and Star Math assessments to conduct pre- and post-summer school tests of students to determine placement and progress. Oromi says they are "adaptive tests," meaning that if a second grade student takes the test and they are at grade level they'll get second-grade questions. If they're

struggling with the questions they'll get slightly lower level questions.

"The whole idea is to zero in on where the student is at," he says. "Once we have zeroed in on the pre-test, it helps us understand what kind of skill-based work they need during the summer months."

Once the skill level is determined, a reading specialist works with the faculty team to design a curriculum for their students. At the end of the summer, a post-test is given and the faculty can identify a rate of change.

"What we're looking for is six weeks' worth of growth," says Oromi. "What we've been happy with is that historically, our rate of growth has exceeded six weeks and been somewhere around eight to ten weeks."

About 86 percent of Horizons students return each year. The program's high school initiatives have improved graduation rates. In 2015, 99 percent of students who went from kindergarten through high school graduated on time and nearly 100 percent enrolled in college, according to Oromi.

THE STEPPINGSTONE FOUNDATION

Boston, MA

The Steppingstone Foundation³⁶ is a not-for-profit organization that develops and implements programs that prepare underserved students for educational opportunities that lead to college success.³⁷ The Steppingstone Academy focuses on preparing Boston-area students for acceptance into local independent, Catholic and public exam schools before their fifth and sixth grade year. The College Success Academy, which is a separate program, is limited to middle school students enrolled at three K-8 schools in the Allston-Brighton section of Boston and one K-8 School in East Boston.

Students, known as "scholars" at Steppingstone, attend summer sessions at Milton Academy in Milton, MA. The cost per student at the

Steppingstone Academy and the College Success Academy is about \$2,000. Both are tuition free, though Steppingstone families are asked to make a \$75 payment and the fee to College Success Academy families is \$89.

The programs are largely supported by individual foundations and corporations, according to Sarah Conrad, chief program officer at the Steppingstone Foundation. In 2015 the foundation received its first federal grant for services offered to college students through the Social Innovation Fund and the Boston Foundation.³⁸

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The original mission of the Steppingstone founders was to provide support for underserved students to apply to independent schools. They soon realized that just getting accepted wasn't enough. Those students needed help to be successful in those private schools, which led to an expansion of the scope of service offered by Steppingstone. In the late 1990s, a law suit against exam schools in the Boston Public School system prompted another revision of Steppingstone's program, this time to assist students when taking the exam for Boston Public Schools.

"Around that time we recognized that the reason it was important for students to have these opportunities was not simply so they could go to the independent schools, but because this provided them opportunities to go to college, be prepared for college, graduate from college, be successful and have a community impact," says Conrad. Around 2008, the mission statement for the foundation was changed to college success.

Steppingstone recruits students by working through the Boston area schools. To be eligible for the Steppingstone Academy, students must be Boston residents in their fourth or fifth grade year and have an interest in applying to Boston Public Exam schools or independent schools. Students in the fourth grade who attend three K-8 schools Allston-Brighton or the Donald

McKay K-8 School in East Boston are eligible to attend the College Success Academy.

PROGRAM CONTENT

The Steppingstone Academy program, for students admitted before their fifth or sixth grade year, runs two summers and one academic year. The summer sessions run for six weeks. During the regular school year students also attend classes on Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays.

In a typical summer session day, a scholar would have classes in reading, science, math, writing and study skills, as well as built-in outdoor recreation time. The school day runs from about 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

In addition to the remedial work, fifth and sixth grade scholars prepare for the Independent School Entrance Exam. Students and their families receive assistance throughout the school application process, including applying for financial aid.

The College Success Academy was created in 2011 to put more Boston Public School students on the road to college. Students in grades 4, 5 and 6 who are enrolled in a partner school are eligible for admission.

Students take part in five six-week summer sessions beginning in the fifth grade and extending through the summer following eighth grade. Additionally, during the school year they attend after-school classes three days a week. During that final year, College Success Academy scholars are guided in selecting the Boston public high schools best suited for them.³⁹

“Families, are looking to understand how they can best support their students outside of school,” says Conrad. “The opportunities to have reading be a key part of a student’s summer or continuing to do math in the summer aren’t things that are as easily integrated for many families. They might have work schedules that limit the time they can spend with their children or they have limited financial resources in terms of exposing them to other educational opportunities in the city.”

“So (summer enrichment) really provides that continuation of learning in a way that we’ve seen and as research shows can be really lacking in the summer, particularly for low-income students,” she adds.

FLINTRIDGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE, CA

“Summer@Prep,” the summer enrichment program at Flintridge Preparatory School,⁴⁰ is located in La Cañada Flintridge, a city between Los Angeles and Pasadena. Since the 1970s, it has provided academic programs primarily for students entering the sixth through eighth grade, though there are a small number of programs for students as early as fourth grade and some select courses open to high school students.

“It’s really an opportunity for students to come and experience Flintridge Prep if they’re thinking of coming here,” says Barrett Jamison, director of the summer program. “It’s used as an admissions tool for the families to get to know the campus and for us to get to know the families.”⁴¹

Cost to attend depends on the number of courses a student enrolls in. Six-week courses in algebra, trigonometry and geometry cost \$1,015. On the low end, a two-week “Introduction to Photoshop” costs \$280, while the fee for a one-week arithmetic “boot camp” is \$180.

Financial aid is available, but all families pay a minimum of \$50 regardless of their award.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Enrollment is open to anyone in the community. Jamison says students within about a 20 mile radius attend Summer@Prep.

PROGRAM CONTENT

The bulk of the course programming is for fifth through eighth grade students for enrichment and fun, not for credit. Students choose classes a la carte, rather than in a cluster or in a program that requires a minimum course load.

Classes are available in math, science, arts & design, sports, English, history, languages and

leadership. Courses run from two weeks to six weeks. One-week boot camps are also available in which students sharpen their study skills in math, English and science. The school's SAT and ACT Institute offers 10-day courses to help students with reading and writing skills, and to offer insights into the makeup and strategies behind the math SAT.

For-credit courses are available for high school students from Flintridge Prep in math, art and drama. Jamison says that slightly more than half of the students who attend the summer program also go to Flintridge Prep during the regular school year and take accelerated courses during the summer.

Courses at Summer@Prep are primarily taught by members of the Flintridge Prep faculty. Though that means the course offerings are limited to what the school year faculty is available to teach, Jamison says their presence is a major advantage to the program. They often use the summer to try out various projects or ideas that they're considering using in the school year. One of the Algebra II teachers spent a summer developing a problem-based learning curriculum and then implemented that during the school year, as an example. At times, the experimental projects don't draw the interest Jamison and his staff expected when first proposed, while other courses they think will fall flat are jammed.

"This summer we tried to launch a Mount Olympus mythology camp taught by our Latin teacher," says Jamison. "I thought it was a brilliant idea. We had to cancel it because of low enrollment. But it's worth experimenting, for individual teachers and as a school.

"The Mount Olympus course was a risk, but so was our creative writing class," he adds. "We already have three other English classes that we offer in the summer to middle-schoolers. To add a fourth English class that's focused on creative writing could have been redundant. But it was a huge hit."

SUMMARY

High quality summer learning programs have been confirmed to be time well spent for K-12 students working their way towards college and careers. These programs have proven to effectively reduce the phenomenon of summer learning loss among students, especially those from low-income families. Summer learning loss is one of the most significant causes of the achievement gap between lower and higher income students and a strong contributor to the high school dropout rate.⁴²

In many cases summer learning programs can also be life changing, as students meet peers from other backgrounds or cultures. They enroll in new courses or challenge themselves with a demanding schedule, then leave inspired to excel when they return to their academic-year school.

But attending an overnight program at an elite private school can be expensive. Fortunately, many programs are supported by private foundations and urban non-profits whose contributions offset the tuition. Many private schools also have their own robust financial aid budgets. Such additional resources provide low-income students with an opportunity to take classes at a school they could otherwise never afford and envision possibilities they might never have imagined.

FINDINGS

Partner with placement consultants. Schools interested in a national or even international summer school student population should partner with independent programs that place disadvantaged students with private schools or international students with U.S. summer enrichment programs. Placement consultants mentioned in this report include Reach Memphis, Summer Search (San Francisco), Squash Haven (New Haven, CT), SquashBusters (Boston), Minds Matter (Chicago), and the American Farm School and Anatolia College, both located in Thessaloniki, Greece. Some provide financial assistance to its students,

another advantage of partnering with these organizations.

Use academic year faculty. At least half of the teachers at the summer enrichment programs sampled in this report were also full-time faculty at their host schools. Choate Rosemary Hall, for example, notes that 75 percent of its teachers are from the winter school. Summer program directors point to numerous benefits. First, summer students gain from learning with teachers from an elite private school, who are often assisted by a college intern and graduate of the summer program. Families also have more confidence in summer sessions that are led by full-time faculty. Furthermore, teachers enhance their skills by using summer enrichment programs to experiment with new teaching strategies, course presentations and to teach different subjects.

Extend the relationship. Several programs included in this report began by allowing their relationship with students to end when their summer session was over. Eventually, they saw a benefit for the student in maintaining a connection throughout the calendar year. Horizons National runs from pre-K through high school. PUEO at the Punahou School goes seven years. Prep@Pingree is a 12-month program with students meeting once or twice each month during the academic year. By continuing to work with students beyond the summer, the programs are able to support the students academically during the school year and often prepare them for high school and college.

Diversify the student population. Directors of the summer schools interviewed for this paper agree that a diverse student population is one of the most impactful benefits of their programs. Unlike many public schools, summer enrichment at private schools bring together students from different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. Letters from graduates often refer to life-changing experiences they had through friendships they made at summer school. Conversations they had with other students opened their eyes to new possibilities, motivated

them to set goals and led them to pursue careers in unexpected fields.

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About Pioneer

Pioneer Institute is an independent, non-partisan, privately funded research organization that seeks to change the intellectual climate in the Commonwealth by supporting scholarship that challenges the “conventional wisdom” on Massachusetts public policy issues.

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Survey of Summer Enrichment Programs at Independent and Parochial Schools in Massachusetts, White Paper, June 2016

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Massachusetts Charter Public Schools: Best Practices Using Data to Improve Student Achievement in Holyoke, White Paper, March 2016

Massachusetts Charter Public Schools: Best Practices Using Data to Improve Student Achievement in Springfield, White Paper, March 2016

The Reckless Cost of MBTA Financial Derivatives, Policy Brief, February 2016



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