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## **YMCA-DC and BELL Partner to Provide Summer Learning Program for Kids Grades K-8**

[Washington, July 2, 2014] – In an effort to curb learning loss when the school year ends, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington is partnering with BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) to pilot Power Scholars Academy™. The summer learning program will help 120 kids in grades K-8 in Washington, DC increase their academic achievement during the summer months, so they return to school in the fall ready to succeed.

Studies show that without access to summer learning activities, such as camp, travel, and visits to libraries and museums, kids from low-income environments can experience more significant summer learning loss than peers from middle- or upper-income households. Over time, youth continue to lose ground and by the fifth grade, many are two to three school years behind their middle- and high-income peers.

“During summer months, many youth are not as engaged in reading and math activities as they would be while in school,” said Janice Williams, the Y’s Senior Vice President of Program Development. “Power Scholars Academy will help ensure youth stay on track over the summer with strong reading and math skills so they can achieve when the new school year begins.”

Power Scholars Academy, which will be offered free-of-charge in local public schools, is a full-day summer learning experience that combines small group, rigorous academic instruction with fun, hands-on enrichment activities, field trips and service projects. The program model is based on BELL’s proven approach, and is designed to help students enhance skills in subjects such as reading, writing, math and science, while also engaging families in the education process. This summer, Power Scholars Academy is being implemented at Ys for 1,000 kids in eight cities across the country.

Nationally, the Y and BELL worked with nearly 280 youth who participated in Power Scholars Academy last summer. Initial results show strong gains in reading and math skills. In addition, at least 90 percent of parents and teachers reported improvements in students’ self-confidence, attitudes toward school and social-emotional skills.

“Student achievement comes from opportunities to explore, grow, create and learn,” explains Tiffany Gueye, Ph.D., BELL’s Chief Executive Officer. “Our partnership with the Y and Seaton Elementary School will deliver rich summer learning experiences that increase scholar achievement.”



The Y is committed to nurturing the potential of every child and teen and is addressing the academic achievement gap through pilot programs on afterschool, early learning readiness and summer learning loss prevention. The programs, which are underway in nearly 40 states across the country, are designed to not only increase success in school, but to also foster social-emotional development and physical health and well-being. As part of the national initiative, the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington is one of eight Ys across the country selected to pilot Power Scholars Academy. The Y will work with BELL and Seaton Elementary School to identify students, whose eligibility will be based on test scores, grades and teacher recommendations.

For more information, please contact Jackie Dilworth at 202-797-4497 or visit [www.ymcadc.org](http://www.ymcadc.org).

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### **About the Y**

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofits strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the U.S., 2,700 Ys engage 21 million men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. [ymca.net](http://ymca.net)

### **About BELL**

BELL is a nonprofit organization that partners with schools to expand learning time for students in grades K-8. Its mission is to transform the academic achievements, self-confidence and life trajectories of children living in under-resourced, urban communities. BELL's summer and after school programs serve more than 12,000 scholars in CA, MD, MA, NJ, NY and NC. Their blend of academic rigor, hands-on enrichment, and community engagement inspires students to become scholars and succeed in school and in life. For more information, visit [www.experienceBELL.org](http://www.experienceBELL.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).