



**For Immediate Release**  
**October 29, 2015**

**Contacts:** Nancy Levesque, NSLA  
[nlevesque@summerlearning.org](mailto:nlevesque@summerlearning.org)  
410-856-1370 ext. 200

Lacey Siegel, New York Life  
[lacey\\_s\\_siegel@newyorklife.com](mailto:lacey_s_siegel@newyorklife.com)  
212-576-7937

**The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) and the New York Life Foundation honor winners of the 2015 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Awards**

*High-quality programs in Dallas, Pittsburgh, Rochester, and Chicago, serving a total of nearly 87,000 youth, are honored at NSLA's national conference*

Baltimore – The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) and the New York Life Foundation honored four high-quality programs -- Pittsburgh Public Schools, Project Transformation (Dallas area), Rochester City School District, and Chicago Public Library – at this year's *Summer Changes Everything™* national conference on summer learning in Baltimore, Md. on Tuesday, October, 13<sup>th</sup> at the New York Life Excellence Awards Luncheon.



2015 NYL Excellence Awards Winners

The four exemplary programs earned the coveted 2015 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Award and new Founder's Award. Both annual awards recognize summer programs demonstrating excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting healthy development for low-income children and youth, as measured by NSLA's [Comprehensive Assessment of](#)

[Summer Programs](#). The new Founder's Award recognizes drop-in or informal program models, and the Excellence in Summer Learning Award recognizes enrollment-based models.

The four winning programs demonstrate [exemplary strategies](#) that include, partnerships that integrate digital badging to equip young people with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, data sharing among cross-sector community partners to help track student progress, and using the summer as a laboratory for improvements that benefit the school year classroom.

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 of math skills during summer breaks, lower-income children also lose two to three months of reading skills without practice. The cumulative effects of this "summer slide" contribute significantly to the achievement gap, yet only one-third of households report having a child enrolled in a summer learning program. Excellence

Award winning programs strive to curb these losses, but also employ research-based practices to build 21st Century skills for college and career success.

"It's an honor to have been able to personally celebrate and award these four exceptional programs at NSLA's recent conference," said Heather Nesle, president of the New York Life Foundation. "We understand the importance of the Excellence Awards program and its impact on the out-of-school time field as a whole, as communities work to close opportunity and achievement gaps across the country."



Summer Dreamers Academy

### 2015 New York Life Excellence in Summer Learning Award Winners

Pittsburgh Public Schools' [Summer Dreamers Academy](#) is a free academic and enrichment camp designed to combat summer learning loss among rising first to eighth grade students. Since 2010, the program has provided 2,100 campers with engaging classes in reading and math, as well as high-quality enrichment programming ranging from fencing and judo to creative and performing arts, technology development, and community service.

[Project Transformation](#) provides holistic, multi-faceted, comprehensive educational and leadership programming for 1,021 first through twelfth grade youth in underserved communities in Dallas, Texas. The summer program's four pillars are literacy development, leadership cultivation, diversity appreciation, and community service.



Project Transformation

[Rochester Summer Scholars](#) in Rochester, N.Y. is a voluntary, free, district-run summer program that includes academics and enrichment activities aimed at eliminating summer learning loss among 600 elementary students living in the fifth poorest city in the entire country. Since 2011, Rochester Summer Scholars has distinguished itself from a traditional district summer program by providing a variety of enrichment activities, including performance and visual arts, physical activities, and sports.



Rochester Summer Scholars

### NSLA Founder's Award Winner

NSLA's first Founder's Award winner, [Rahm's Readers](#)

[Summer Learning Challenge](#) is a 24-hour a day online, drop-in, and take-home program by Chicago Public Library to promote increased literacy, 21st Century skills, and STEAM (Science Technology Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) learning for 83,000 young people in Chicago, Ill. from pre-kindergarten to twelfth grade.



Chicago Public Libraries

Read more about the winning programs in [NSLA's awards bulletin](#). The 2016 New York Life Excellence Awards applications process is now open. Learn more at [summerlearning.org/SummerExcellence](http://summerlearning.org/SummerExcellence).

The Excellence Awards and Founder's Award given to the winning programs were designed and manufactured by Connecticut Pre-Engineering Program (CPEP) students from New Britain, Conn.

CPEP is an innovative out-of-school program whose mission is to serve as a catalyst to significantly change underrepresented students' knowledge, attitude, and behaviors relating to the pursuit of STEM careers.

####

**About the National Summer Learning Association**

*The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works in summer learning, develops and delivers capacity-building offerings and convenes and empowers key actors to embrace summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. For more information, visit [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org).*

**About The New York Life Foundation**

*Inspired by New York Life's tradition of service and humanity, the New York Life Foundation has, since its founding in 1979, provided \$200 million in charitable contributions to national and local nonprofit organizations. The Foundation supports programs that benefit young people, particularly in the areas of educational enhancement and childhood bereavement. The Foundation also encourages and facilitates the community involvement of employees, agents, and retirees of New York Life through its Volunteers for Good program. To learn more, please visit [www.newyorklifefoundation.org](http://www.newyorklifefoundation.org).*