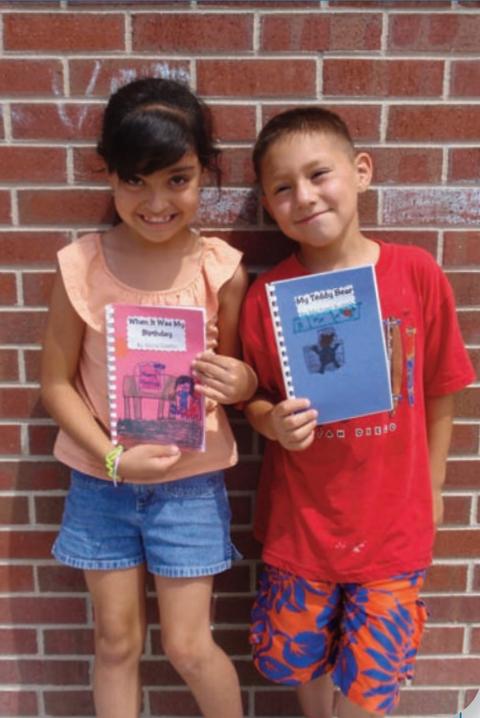


Excellence in Summer Learning



AWARD-WINNING PROGRAMS MAKE THE MOST OF SUMMER



STANDARDS OF QUALITY

Excellence Award winners are chosen based on quality indicators in the Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP). Here are a few of its important indicators:

- Focus on project-based and experiential learning
- Relevance to youth interest and academic and developmental needs: Youth choice and voice in planning
- Commitment to family engagement and application of stakeholder feedback
- Strong summer culture: traditions, unifying themes and program principles
- Continuous focus on outcomes, evaluation and quality improvement

The best summer learning programs of 2010 don't just teach. They transform.

At Sadie Nash Leadership Project in New York, high-school girls become empowered leaders, accustomed to discussions of gender politics and labor conditions more often heard on a college campus. At Horizons National's programs like its affiliate Horizons at Colorado Academy, special outings such as overnight camping trips or excursions to a Broadway show give the young people lucky enough to attend the sense that anything is possible. These programs stood out as winners among the dozens of high-quality summer programs that submitted applications in the National Summer Learning Association's 2010 Excellence in Summer Learning Award competition.

The Brooklyn-based Sadie Nash program provides leadership development for low-income high school girls in New York City and Newark, N.J. Horizons National, based in Norwalk, Conn., supports a network of 19 affiliate programs based in private schools across the country. One of these affiliate programs is Horizons at Colorado Academy, which serves approximately 120 rising first to ninth grade students in the southwest metro Denver area. The National Summer Learning Association believes that excellent summer programs meet the needs of youth in their community with intentional, focused, life-changing opportunities for learning and development. Excellence Award winners are determined by a process that considers a program's history, mission, goals, operation, management, staff development, partnerships, results, and sustainability.

In the following stories, compiled from interviews with staff at the three program locations, several themes emerge about these winners:

- Both programs use a six-week, full-day model that combines rigorous academics, cultural and community enrichment projects, and creative or athletic activities.
- Both programs maintain that children and youth are best served when staff is enthusiastic, well-supported, and carefully selected. Because of the support and care they devote to staffing, both SNLP and Horizons programs have impressive staff (and in turn, student) return rates.
- The Sadie Nash and Horizons programs emphasize the importance of community and networking. No one runs a successful summer program without help — whether from area teachers who commit to teaching a seminar in the Sadie Nash Leadership Project institute, or from the owners of the neighborhood swim club near a Horizons site.

"These exemplary programs are making a real impact on the lives of children from low-income families," said Ron Fairchild, CEO of the National Summer Learning Association. "In a highly competitive field of applicants, they have demonstrated that they can both improve academic achievement and engage the young people who participate in a way that can be life-changing."

Girls become leaders at Sadie Nash summer program

Sadie Nash Leadership Project's Summer Institute began in 2002, with a goal to help New York City high-school girls recognize themselves as empowered leaders. Through relevant seminars that explore social and political issues, college and career preparation workshops, and mentoring relationships, the six-week summer program fosters healthy self-confidence, academic growth, and creative expression that helps young women find their voices at what can be a very vulnerable time in their lives.

Sarah Pitcock, senior director of program quality at the National Summer Learning Association, says that Sadie Nash gives young women “a safe space to question, grow and mature, and in the process, practice the analytical and professional skills they will need to succeed in college and in life.”

Sadie Nash stresses that leadership and community go hand-in-hand, but it is careful not to define community in geographic terms. “We want to show young women that you can create a sense of community and sisterhood that’s broader than a shared neighborhood,” says Program Director Shreya Malena-Sannon. That’s why Sadie Nash deliberately serves a diverse group of young women from all religious, cultural, academic, and geographic backgrounds. It is also why potential “Nashers” must apply and be interviewed to be accepted into the program. Promiti Islam, program assistant and deputy director of the summer institute, stresses the importance of this process, since it encourages young women to be heavily invested in the program. “The value of the application is to show their own desire to participate in the program. And the interview gives us a chance to know them and the girls a chance to know us.”

With about 16 staff members in the New York City program, eight of whom are full-time during the summer, SNLP is a small operation. Nevertheless, Malena-Sannon encourages small programs to be proud of what they can do with good staff and a strong mission. Another key to the program’s success, Malena-Sannon says, is its holistic approach: “A lot of people focus on just one thing, and it’s hard to sustain that intensity for the entire summer. We’re really intense all day, every day, but we’re doing 100 different things.”



ORGANIZATION **Sadie Nash Leadership Project**

LOCATION NEWARK N.J., AND NEW YORK CITY

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY 100

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:3

PARTICIPANT AGE 14 TO 18

Among the “100 different things” are interactive, fun classes that illuminate and challenge worldviews—like Power, Identity, and Privilege, which explores the ways power is distributed in society, or Behind the Label, which looks at the garment industry, labor exploitation, and the environmental impact of manufacturing. With compelling subject matter like this, students become actively involved in their own emotional and scholastic growth. This summer’s courses also included a “glocal” dance class (thinking globally and acting locally) and Nasher monologues, in which students wrote and performed dramatic monologues.

This commitment pays off. In the nine years since the start of the summer program, Sadie Nash has heard wonderful things from its alumnae. “Many are doing incredible things,” Islam says. “The first groups of alumnae are in their mid-20s now. Several are in law school, and many have finished four year degrees, or they’re out in the workforce.”

AWARD-WINNING PROGRAMS GET RESULTS

Ninety-two percent of Sadie Nash students feel more excited about or interested in going to college, and 100 percent feel more confident.

Swimming to Success:

National program partners with private schools to make memorable summers for low-income kids

Horizons National, located in Norwalk, Conn., oversees 19 Horizons programs from Atlanta to Dedham, Mass., and as far west as Denver. But in order for any Horizons program to flourish, it must relate to its surrounding area. That's why you'll find the kids in the bayside Chestertown, Md., program working with a local environmental group to sustain the Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem, or kids in the urban Brooklyn, N.Y., program exercising on a rooftop playground. "We want each program to feel like its community," says Deputy Director Jose Oromi. "[Each] takes up local culture."



ORGANIZATION **Horizons National**

LOCATION NORWALK, CONN., WITH 19 AFFILIATE PROGRAMS

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY MORE THAN 2,000

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:5

PARTICIPANT AGE FIRST TO NINTH GRADE

Although Horizons' six-week academic and experience-focused program model is well-established, its growth model is deliberate and gradual. Each site begins with a rising first-grade class of 14 to 16 students and adds a new class every summer. By the time the kids finish the program after eighth grade, each program has filled out at 120 to 150 students. This manageable size, in addition to a typical student and staff return rate of 80 percent, is a critical part of creating the close learning community that distinguishes a Horizons program. Year after year, "You know the students, volunteers, and teachers," Oromi says. Sarah Pitcock, senior director of program quality at the National

Summer Learning Association, agrees. "The opportunity to attend the program throughout elementary and middle school creates a sense of place and an ongoing system of support and accountability for youth to achieve their academic, social and developmental goals."

Horizons also stands out for its Literacy Initiative, in which each affiliate conducts standardized pre- and post-reading skills assessments. mClass DIBELS (from Wireless Generation) is used for grades K-2, and STAR Reading (Renaissance Learning) is administered for grades 3-8. Results are analyzed by reading specialists who work with teachers to identify the most effective interventions to use with each student. A post-test is administered at the end of the summer session to measure growth and results are analyzed at individual, local program, and aggregate national levels.

Horizons programs are also known for their regular swim lessons. The swimming began in the 1960s because the original staff wanted to introduce a typical summertime activity, and community pools donated their resources to the program. "It seemed like a great opportunity, so they just did it. But it turned out to have all kinds of benefits," Oromi says. Horizons kids and staff quickly realized that learning to swim and conquering a fear of water directly relates to academic achievement. Oromi and Chief Advancement Officer Kim Fairey note that it's so empowering to learn to swim that kids immediately develop confidence: "They start to think, 'I was able to swim, and that wasn't too hard. I guess I can do this math lesson, too.'"

In addition to the emphasis on swimming, every Horizons program offers at least one field trip per week, usually divided by grade level. The goal for the trips, which vary from day-long robotics workshops in Washington, D.C., to week-long camping expeditions in Colorado, is to expose students to things that will resonate with them, teach them, and give them valuable experiences that they might not otherwise have. At Horizons, a successful field trip isn't just about going somewhere and seeing things. Instead, Oromi says, it's about inspiring kids to hone the skills they have. "It's about using your brain and your hands to figure stuff out, and to have fun doing it."

Beautiful setting is the backdrop for a season of learning

When the **Horizons at Colorado Academy** program is in full swing, you'll find the 119 enrolled children taking full advantage of the Academy's 95 acres of beautiful rolling hills, mature trees, and a pond. The rising first-grade class will be planting a garden, the rising fifth-graders will be shooting pictures under the guidance of celebrated Olympus Visionary photographer Jay Dickman, and a group of others might be playing soccer on one of the independent school's well-groomed soccer fields. The grounds of the school, formerly a horse farm, provide an idyllic learning environment for the Horizons kids, who come from primarily low-income, urban areas in the southwest metro Denver area.

But, according to Executive Director Jenny Leger, the physical setting is just part of what makes the Horizons at Colorado Academy program so special. The other components are shared by the 18 other Horizons programs throughout the nation: commitment to the program, tradition, and community involvement.

In a largely low-income, urban area in which families move regularly, the Horizons kids "know to call or come" to the program, Leger says. "Even when we can't find them because they have no forwarding address, they find us. Their parents absolutely understand the value of the program and they do what they need to do to get to the bus on time or come to parent meetings."

She attributes much of the program's success to great teachers and the way the curriculum is designed. Horizons at Colorado Academy is marked by tradition, so each grade has a special project that is well-suited to age, interest, and community engagement. The rising first-graders make salsa from the garden they plant, rising second-graders write and perform a play, and rising third-graders learn about nutrition from volunteer chefs at Share our Strength. Rising fourth-graders raise money to donate to a local charity or project. The older Horizons kids, rising sixth through ninth graders, learn outdoor survival skills and team work on overnight camping trips.



Horizons at Colorado Academy

LOCATION DENVER, COLO.

YOUTH SERVED ANNUALLY 119

STAFF TO PARTICIPANT RATIO 1:5

PARTICIPANT AGE FIRST THROUGH NINTH GRADES

Through her 28 years of teaching, Leger knows what it's like to work in an educational setting that is just getting off the ground, poorly equipped with supplies, or not funded, so she offers this advice: "The first thing is to hire a creative and flexible staff that really want to work in a summer program. Make it fun for your staff to keep morale up. Do little things that celebrate them and bigger things like professional development classes." If the staff are invested and excited about the program, then the children and the program will flourish.

AWARD-WINNING PROGRAMS GET RESULTS

- *Horizons National students gained an average of four months of reading skills during the six-week summer program in 2010*
- *100 percent of Horizons National students learn to swim*
- *Students at Horizons at Colorado Academy showed an improvement of three months using a pre- and post measure of reading skill through a standardized test over the summer. Those below grade level in reading, about 90 percent of students, demonstrated even greater improvement in reading skills*