bellxcel

BELLXCEL & THE Y · 2013-2026

The power of partnership.

A decade of evidence, trust, and local impact.



Power Scholars Academy

THE ORIGIN

Where it all began.

In 2013, BellXcel and the Y set out to test a bold idea: could a proven, evidence-based academic model be delivered by a different organization - with its own history, culture, and relationships - and get the same results?

The answer became Power Scholars Academy (PSA), built to help children without access to enriching summer activities keep learning. The program addresses summer learning loss and the opportunity gaps children face.

PSA combines academic growth with enriching experiences, professional development for staff, and family engagement. The pilot started small: three Y associations, 276 scholars, one summer. It became an example of what two organizations can build when they combine what each does best.

135

Y associations partnered since 2013

147,000+

youth served, cumulatively

42 states + D.C.

reached to date

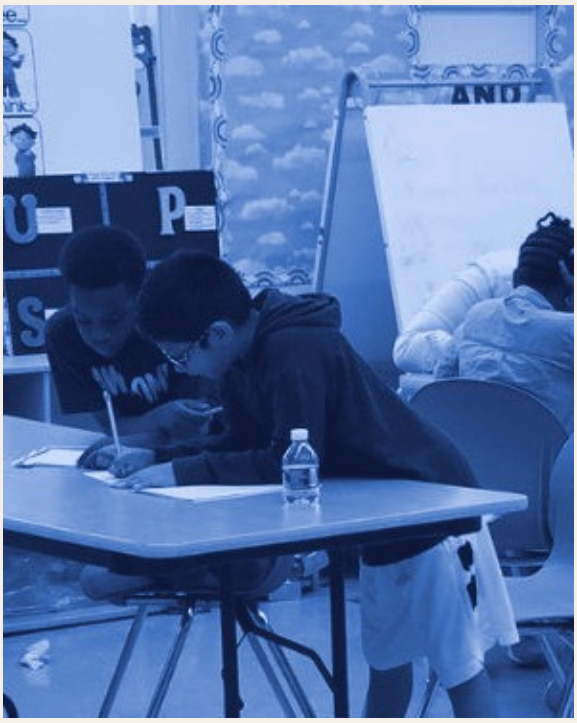
+2.0 months

average literacy and math growth

THE MODEL

What neither of us could do alone.

Community trust meets evidence-based education.



THE Y BROUGHT

Deep community roots, decades-long trust with families, and a national network to reach more of them.

BELLXCEL BROUGHT

An academic model developed over decades and proven through randomized controlled trials.

TOGETHER

They brought proven academic programming into neighborhoods through an organization families already trusted.

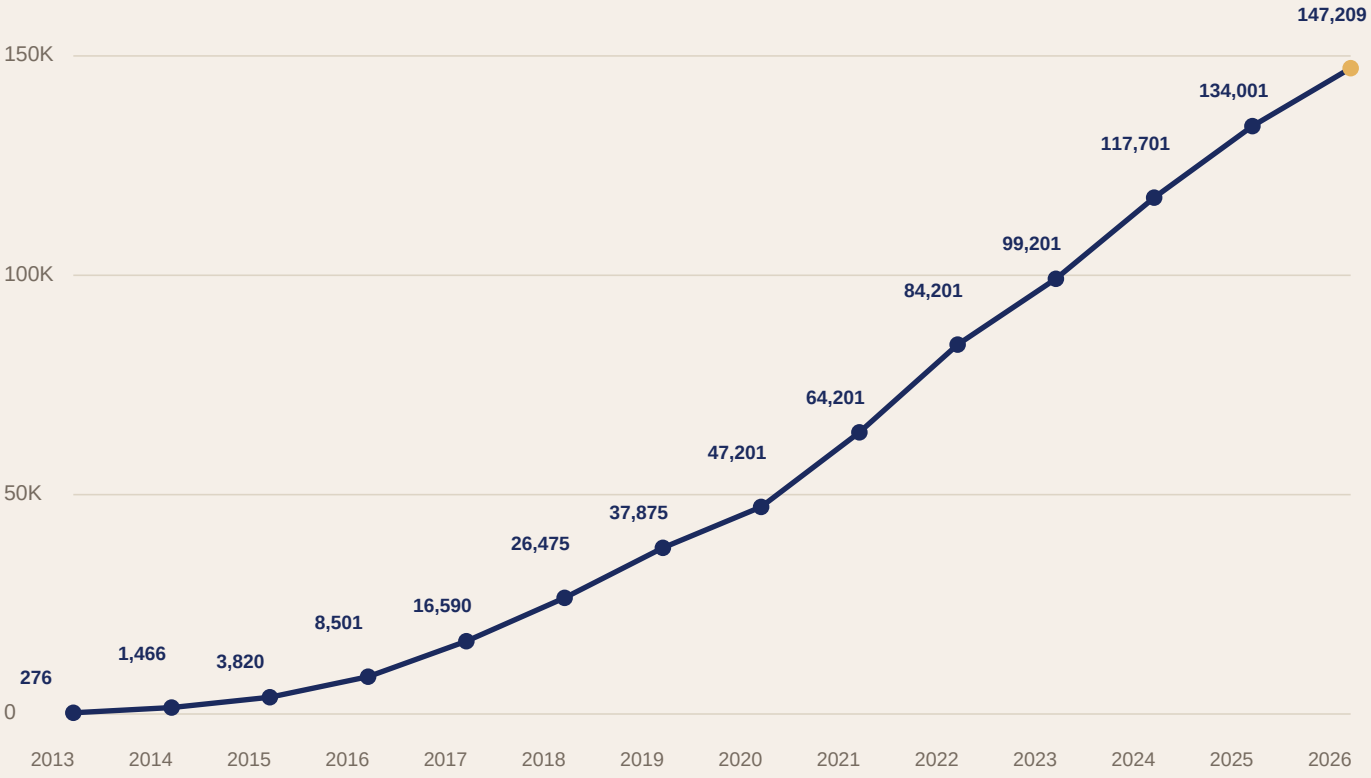
> “BellXcel provides an evidence-based framework and high-quality resources, while the Y brings the relationships, community knowledge, and commitment that make Power Scholars come alive.”
>
> **Alicia Roberson · Director of Education, YMCA Central NY**

PROGRAM REACH

From three cities to a national footprint.

276 scholars in the 2013 pilot. More than 147,000 served by 2026.

CUMULATIVE SCHOLARS SERVED, 2013-2026



Since its three-city pilot, PSA has expanded to Y associations across 42 states and Washington, D.C. - 135 of the Y's 750+ U.S. associations.

That growth shows how a program built to prevent summer learning loss can scale nationally while preserving local relationships and what made it work.

DURABILITY & CONSISTENCY

Partnerships that keep coming back.

45%

of associations partnered 4+ years

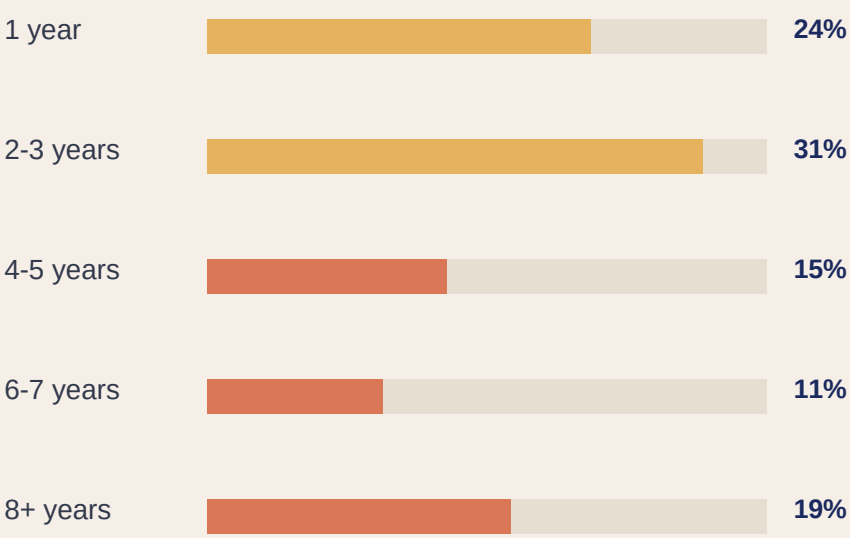
19%

partnered 8+ years

31%

partnered 2-3 years, showing growth potential

YEARS PARTNERING WITH BELLXCEL



The original 2013-14 pilot sites - Hartford, Montgomery, and Denver - remain active partners.

PSA was studied firsthand in a national RAND study of how summer learning programs shape teacher development - independent evidence that these experiences support educators as well as children.

> “Summer offers a high-impact opportunity for staff to engage in powerful, on-the-job professional development.”

RAND · National study that included Power Scholars Academy

BEYOND ACADEMICS

A place to grow. People ready to help.

Academic growth is one part of the PSA story.





YOUTH

91%

grew in confidence as learners

Made new friends	**88%**
Believe effort leads to improvement	**89%**
Improved understanding of others	**91%**

FAMILIES

95%

said their child enjoyed the program

Would recommend to another family	**96%**
Reported increased interest in learning	**87%**

STAFF

99%

built caring, consistent relationships

Developed professional skills	**91%**
Felt supported in the program	**90%**

TODAY & WHAT'S NEXT

Local ownership makes scale possible.

Local Y associations bring the relationships. BellXcel brings the infrastructure.



135

Y associations

42 states + D.C.

Today, PSA does not run through a single national contract. Since the pandemic, the Y has shifted day-to-day decisions to individual associations, and BellXcel builds relationships one Y at a time. The model shows that local ownership can support national scale.

BellXcel supports Y partners with curriculum, coaching, and technology - giving association staff the tools to deliver quality programs locally. More than a decade in, PSA's story is still being written.

At its core, PSA gives Ys the power to bring proven programming into their communities: experiences children enjoy, staff feel equipped to deliver, and families return to, day after day.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

What this partnership has taught us.

Six lessons from more than a decade of building Power Scholars Academy together.



01 **Trust comes before terms.**

Before signing anything, both organizations need to build trust with each other.

02 **Growth that lasts is staged.**

PSA started small and grew through deliberate, year-by-year targets, rather than a jump to scale.

03 **Flexibility keeps a model alive.**

When some Ys could not run the traditional program, BellXcel built a version that fit their model.

04 **Sharing power creates more change.**

The most durable version of scale is local ownership, not central control.

05 **Local ownership needs real infrastructure.**

Curriculum platforms, data tools, and training made it possible to support more than three associations.

06 **A proven model keeps reinventing itself.**

Fidelity-based delivery evolved into flexible, modular content. The version that lasts remains willing to change.

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ABOUT BELLXCEL

National experience. Local possibility.

BellXcel is a national nonprofit that strengthens outcomes for students furthest from opportunity by equipping school districts and community-based organizations with scalable supports for high-quality summer and afterschool programs.

Explore what we can build together.

bellxcel.org