



Evidence Summary:
Rigorous internal and
third-party evaluations

Built on Proven Research, Designed for Greater Impact

Arly is a powerful platform that enables any program, anywhere, to implement high-quality learning experiences. Developed by BellXcel, a nationally-recognized leader in youth programming for over 30 years, Arly's purposeful design unifies all of BellXcel's independently validated programming components into one complete solution.

With Arly, program providers gain research-backed resources, training, and support to create enriching programs that drive measurable outcomes.

Independently-Validated to Meet ESSA Evidence Standards

The following cites key conclusions from third-party assessments validating Arly's foundational model meets the ESSA evidence standards for high-quality summer and afterschool programming.



The RAND Corporation's independent review of summer programs nationwide confirms the program model meets the highest levels of evidence – one of only 43 summer programs in the U.S. with that distinction.¹⁹



Research for Action's independent study found that the model meets the highest levels of evidence – one of only 16 academically-focused afterschool programs nationwide.²⁰

These are examples of the rigorous internal and external evaluations that create Arly's evidence base to strengthen youth programs and drive meaningful impact.



Evidence of Participant Success and Family Engagement

Arly is built on research-backed methods that have demonstrated measurable gains in youth academic performance, social-emotional development, and engagement. Findings show:

- **Continued academic progress during the summer.** On average, students gain 2 months of academic gains in literacy and 2.5 months in math during the summer.^{1,2}
- **Improved school-year standardized assessments.** Youth perform higher on fall and spring national standardized test, such as Dibels, NWEA MAP, and iReady.^{3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9}
- **Increased school year attendance.** Summer participants have higher school attendance in the fall than their peers*.^{2, 7, 8}
- **Reduced school year behavioral referrals.** Participants have less school year behavioral referrals.^{2, 8}
- **Boosted school year academic performance among various student groups.** Youth in key subgroups gain literacy and math skills and/or perform higher on school-year assessments*:^{3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10}
 - Pre-kindergarten
 - Elementary grades K–4
 - Middle school grades 5–8
 - Special education needs
 - Hispanic/Latino students
 - Dual language learners
 - Students receiving free and reduced price meals
- **Increases engagement and interest in learning.** Summer participants enter the school year with improved attitudes toward learning and increased eagerness to learn.¹ Additionally, participants spend less time on screens.⁹
- **Strengthened key social-emotional skills.** Youth experience growth in key social-emotional competencies such as growth mindset, self-regulation, self-awareness, responsible decision making, and self-confidence.^{1, 17, 18}
- **Increased family engagement** in participant's learning. Parents/caregivers increase their involvement in their child's education, including reading to their children* and encouraging their child to read more frequently.^{1, 9}

* Comparison group of similar children who did not participate in a summer or afterschool program. See each individual study for more details on the comparison group.

Evidence of Strengthened Educator Practice

Educators participate in Arly's professional development, learning, and coaching while gaining relevant learning experiences that positively impacts their school-year teaching. Findings show:

- **Enhanced school year teacher practices and confidence.** Educators start the school year with new and enhanced approaches to teaching and more confidence to implement new practices, particularly in the areas of growth mindset and supporting positive behaviors.^{11,12}
- **Increased energy and passion for teaching.** Educators start the school year with increased energy and passion for teaching.^{10,11,14}
- **Expanded use of student-centered practices.** Summer educators are more likely than teachers not employed in a summer program to improve their use of student-centered practices.¹⁴
- **More opportunities for coaching and feedback.** Summer educators receive important feedback and coaching about how to improve instruction and classroom practices.¹⁴



Evidence of High-Quality Program Outcomes

Strong positive outcomes for youth, families, and educators are closely linked to high-quality program implementation. Internal quality assurance and external third-party findings show:

- **National quality standards alignment.** The summer model is implemented with strong fidelity and with high quality relative to national program quality standards developed by the RAND Corporation and National Summer Learning Association (NSLA).^{2,5,13}
- **Educator experiences that increase satisfaction and decrease burnout.** Programs powered by Arly create high-quality staff experiences by incorporating strong relationships, support, collaboration, a positive environment for teaching, flexibility, autonomy and readily available resources.²¹
- **Professional development supported.** Arly's professional development and activities are recognized for strengthening staff professional skills and supporting educator growth.^{5,10,11}

Evidence of Systems Change for Provider Organizations

The influence of OST supports and partnerships on evidence-based practices in youth programs were examined.²² Most providers sought help in key areas like program planning, staff management, enrollment, attendance tracking, curriculum use, instruction, culture, family engagement, and data utilization. Findings show providers using Arly saw improvements in:

- **Enrollment**
- **Program evaluation**
- **Workplace culture**
- **Community engagement**
- **Family connections**
- **Philanthropy and funding attraction**
- **Program design and daily operations**

* Comparison group of similar children who did not participate in a summer or afterschool program. See each individual study for more details on the comparison group.

Citations

1. BellXcel. (2018). 2018 National Summer Learning Report.
2. Waters, T., Fleming, D., Gregory, K., Peyton, R., Stevens, K. (May 2019). An Evaluation of the BellXcel Summer Program: Final Evaluation Report. Riley Institute at Furman University.
3. Baltimore City Public Schools. (January 2017). 2016 Summer Learning Evaluation. Presentation to the Teaching and Learning Committee of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.
4. Baltimore City Public Schools. (January 2018) 2017 Summer Learning Evaluation and 2018 Summer Learning Plan. Presentation to the Teaching and Learning Committee of the Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners.
5. Cooper-Martin, E., Wade, J. (January 2017). Evaluation of the Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) Summer Learning Program in Montgomery County Schools. Montgomery (MD) County Public School: Office of Shared Accountability.
6. Cooper, T. M. (2007). The effects of supplemental educational services on student achievement (Doctoral dissertation, Boston College). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database (UMI No. 3262811)
7. Kim, D., Campbell, A., Chu, R. (February 2017). Project LIFT Year Four Evaluation: Partner Analysis and Fact Sheets (BELL Summer Fact Sheet). Research for Action (RFA).
8. Waters, T., Culclasure, B., Fleming, D., Gregory, K. (2018). An Evaluation of the BELL Summer Program: Executive Summary of Interim Impact Results. Riley Institute at Furman University.
9. Chaplin, D., Capizzano, J. (August 2006). Impacts of a Summer Learning Program: A Random Assignment Study of Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL). Urban Institute.
10. Gomez, C., Cannon, J., Whitaker, A., Karoly, L. (2017). Big Lift Participation and School Entry Indicators: Findings from the 2016-2017 Kindergarten Class. RAND Corporation.
11. Bellwether Education Partners. (June 2017). Summer as an Accelerator for Teacher Professional Growth.
12. BellXcel. (2018). Results from an Internal Teacher Professional Development Survey.
13. Somers, M-A., Welbeck, R., Grossman, J.B., Gooden, S. (March 2015). An Analysis of the Effects of an Academic Summer Program for Middle School Students. MDRC.
14. Steiner, Elizabeth D., Laura Stelitano, Andy Bogart, and Sophie Meyers, The Promise of Summer as a Time for Teacher Professional Learning: Findings from a National Survey and Implications from the BellXcel Program. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021.
15. Sperling Center for Research and Innovation (SCRI). (2021). Building Bridges During Challenging Times: How BellXcel Remote Summer Programs Kept Youth, Families and Staff Engaged in Learning During COVID-19.
16. Sperling Center for Research and Innovation (SCRI). (2021). Boosting Technology Confidence Through Learning.
17. Sperling Center for Research and Innovation (SCRI). (2020). In Their Own Words: What Scholars Say About Social-Emotional Skill Development in Summer.
18. Sperling Center for Research and Innovation (SCRI). (2021). In Their Own Words, 2nd Edition: What Scholars Say about Social-Emotional Skill Development while Learning Remotely.
19. McCombs, Jennifer Sloan, Catherine H. Augustine, Fatih Unlu, Kathleen M. Ziolk-Guest, Scott Naftel, Celia J. Gomez, Terry Marsh, Goke Akinniranye, and Ivy Todd, Investing in Successful Summer Programs: A Review of Evidence Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, RAND Corporation, RR-2836-WF, 2019.
20. Neild, R. C., Wilson, S. J., & McClanahan, W. (2019). Afterschool Programs: A Review of Evidence under the Every Student Succeeds Act. Research for Action.
21. Sperling Center for Research and Innovation (SCRI). (2022). Learning from the Best: Strategies Gained from Teacher Feedback to Recruit and Retain Educators for Out-of-School Time Programs.
22. BellXcel. (2025). Measuring Partnership and Supports in Out-of-School Time: Project focus for BellXcel's partnership with the Strategic Data Project Fellowship through the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University.

