



**For Immediate Release**

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**Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University Names  
Bay Area's Aim High One of Nation's Best Summer Learning Programs**

*Program Serving Low-Income Children in San Francisco, Oakland and the Peninsula*

***Editor's Note: Ron Fairchild, executive director of the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University, is available for phone interviews about the critical problem of summer learning loss and the impressive success of Aim High. To interview Fairchild, reporters should call Jeanne Johnson at (410) 516-6180.***

**Baltimore** -- The Center for Summer Learning at The Johns Hopkins University has named Aim High, serving children in San Francisco, Oakland and East Palo Alto, one of the nation's best summer programs, selecting it from dozens of applicants across the country.

The 2008 Excellence in Summer Learning Award recognizes summer programs that demonstrate excellence in accelerating academic achievement and promoting positive development for young people.

Nearly 1,000 lucky middle-schoolers are gearing up for another summer of fun and learning at Aim High. Beginning **Monday, June 30**, the students arrive and participate in a challenging, engaging five-week academic enrichment program that has proven it can change lives. They will take rigorous classes in math, science and humanities in the mornings, participate in the arts, cultural activities and sports in the afternoons, and in between hold discussions on issues and making good choices. Students are challenged to do their best, forge strong relationships with their teachers and fellow students, and have high expectations for their future success.

The 22-year-old Aim High program is the largest academic summer program provider in the Bay Area, operating at 12 sites in low-income neighborhoods in San Francisco, Oakland, East Palo Alto, and Redwood City. Four sites are located on the campuses of local private schools: Lick-Wilmerding High School and Urban School in San Francisco and Bishop O'Dowd High School and St. Paul's Episcopal School in Oakland. Aim High is free to all participants. In 2007, Aim High students were 97 percent youth of color, 89 percent came from public schools, and 69 percent spoke a language other than English at home. Their median household income was \$24,700.

"Aim High stands out as an exemplary summer learning program," says Ron Fairchild, executive director of the Center for Summer Learning. "The teachers and administrators are passionate and dedicated. This outstanding program fosters a true sense of community while setting high expectations for children."

Aim High is designed to prevent learning loss during the long summer break, a particular concern for low-income students. According to the Center for Summer Learning, research shows that all children experience learning loss when they don't engage in educational activities during the summer. Studies show students fall an average of almost 2.6 months behind in math skills, and low-income children fall behind an average of two months in reading while their middle-income peers tend to make slight gains. By fifth grade, low-income children can be as much as 2.5 years behind in reading. Johns Hopkins researchers recently found that 65 percent of the achievement gap between poor and more advantaged ninth-graders can be explained by unequal summer learning experiences during the elementary school years.

Aim High students join the program after fifth or sixth grade and participate for three or four consecutive summers, while also benefitting from extensive after-school and weekend opportunities during the academic year. They work in groups on hands-on projects and learn about issues that directly affect their lives. At summer's end, students and caregivers receive detailed narratives from their teachers, and the summer culminates in a "Celebration of Learning" night when students present exhibitions, perform learning-related activities, and describe their summer experiences. Graduates of the program often talk about "Aim High Magic," which describes the communal sense of belonging, caring, creativity and possibilities that the program provides. A feature of Aim High is that a week before the summer program begins, more than 250 faculty members – teachers, college and high school students – participate in the Faculty Institute for a week of professional development and collaborative planning.

Aim High results speak for themselves:

- 85 percent of students report that their GPAs have remained the same or gone up since attending Aim High.
- 90 percent of students say Aim High has helped them become more excited about learning new things and better prepared to learn in school.
- 85 percent of students report Aim High has helped them to be better organized, complete more of their homework assignments, and improve their classroom behavior.
- 90 percent of Aim High parents report that Aim High has helped their child improve in school and be more prepared to learn.
- The vast majority of Aim High graduates go on to graduate from high school on time and matriculate to two- or four-year colleges and universities.

"We are extremely proud to be recognized by the Center for Summer Learning with this award," said Alec Lee Jr., executive director of Aim High. "We know that offering students both academics and fun over the summer makes a big difference when school starts in the fall. Many of our parents and guardians describe Aim High as the pivotal educational experiences in their children's lives."

On Thursday, July 10, cities around the country will celebrate Summer Learning Day, a national event organized by the Center for Summer Learning to raise awareness of the importance of high-quality summer learning opportunities in the lives of youth and their families. Aim High will host a Visiting Day and luncheon at the Aim High campus at Lick-Wilmerding High School in San Francisco.

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*The mission of the Center for Summer Learning is to create opportunities for high-quality summer learning for all young people. The Center is committed to expanding summer learning opportunities for disadvantaged children and youth as a strategy for closing the achievement gap and promoting healthy youth development. Based at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education, the Center works to improve program availability and quality, build public support and influence public policy and funding. For more information, visit [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org)*

*The mission of Aim High is to provide underserved urban youth with challenging, innovative and highly supportive educational programs, most notably in our exemplary summer school. The goal of Aim High is to ensure that our students are well-prepared for success in school, have a deep appreciation for their community, and are aware of the issues – personal, local and environmental – that affect their lives. For more information, visit [www.aimhigh.org](http://www.aimhigh.org)*