



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **YMCA of Central Florida and BELL Partner to Provide Summer Learning Program for Kids Grades K-5**

**ORLANDO, JULY 21, 2013** – In an effort to curb learning loss when the school year ends, the YMCA of Central Florida is partnering with BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) to pilot BELL Summer Learning with the YMCA. The program is helping 100 kids in grades K-5 in at Orlando's McCoy Elementary School increase their academic achievement during the summer months so they return to school in the fall ready to succeed.

Studies show that without access to summer learning activities, such as camp, travel, and visits to libraries and museums, children from low-income environments can experience more significant learning loss than their more economically stable peers. Over time, these children continue to lose ground and by the fifth grade, many are two to three school years behind their middle- and high-income peers.

"A combination of extended learning and enrichment activities is essential to increasing children's success in school, and we are dedicated to helping more kids achieve their potential," said Shannon Matthews, YMCA Vice President of Education. "This program ensures that children at McCoy Elementary School have the opportunity to participate in out-of-school learning opportunities to strengthen their skills and keep them on track during summer."

BELL Summer Learning with the YMCA is based on the BELL Summer program model, which is a full-day learning experience that combines small group, rigorous academic instruction with fun, hands-on enrichment activities, field trips and service projects. The model is designed to help students enhance skills in subjects such as reading, writing, math and science, while also engaging families in the education process. The program is proven to result in three- to six-month learning gains in literacy and math.

As a leading nonprofit focused on youth development, the Y nurtures the potential of every child and teen. Together with BELL, the Y will explore opportunities to further the quality of summer learning services for its partner schools.

"At a time when we are all challenged to do more with less, schools and communities have to work together if we're ever going to eliminate the opportunity and achievement gaps that persist among disadvantaged students," explains Tiffany Gueye, Ph.D., BELL's Chief Executive Officer. "Smart collaboration enables us to provide more time for learning for more of the students who need it most. We are excited by the potential of this pilot partnership and proud to work with the Y and Orange County Public Schools to serve scholars and families this summer."

The YMCA of Central Florida is one of three Ys across the country offering BELL Summer Learning with the YMCA, which complements the Y's other educational programs, including YMCA Summer Camp, and after school programs that serve more than XX elementary and middle school students per year.

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### **About the YMCA of Central Florida**

The YMCA of Central Florida is one of the area's largest nonprofits committed to strengthening the local communities it serves. It is a diverse organization of men, women and children joined by a shared commitment to nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility. Each day 25,000 Central Florida residents are impacted by the Y when a mentor inspires a child, individuals make healthy choices and a community comes together for common good. In 2012, this YMCA Association of over 1,800 employees across 6 Florida counties impacted over 225,000 residents and invested, during a down economy, \$10.2 million in its local communities through neighborhood improvement projects. Also, this Y provided \$9.2 million in financial assistance to children and families that resulted in lasting personal and social change.

### **About BELL**

BELL is one of the nation's leading nonprofit providers of quality expanded learning programs for children in grades K-8. Its mission is to transform the academic achievements, self-confidence, and life trajectories of children living in under-resourced, urban communities. BELL serves more than 15,000 students – whom BELL recognizes as "scholars" – in public schools throughout Baltimore; Boston; Charlotte; Detroit; Newark; New York City; San Jose, CA; San Rafael, CA; Spartanburg, SC; Springfield, MA; and Winston-Salem, NC. BELL partners with more than 100 public schools and employs more than 2,000 teachers and tutors across the nation. Visit [www.experienceBELL.org](http://www.experienceBELL.org) for more information.