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**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Power Scholars Academy™: I AM THE FUTURE**

Erie, PA - All kids have potential.

And, the YMCA of Greater Erie is working alongside educators at Pfeiffer-Burleigh Elementary School, a Community School, to help students discover theirs through a new summer academic enrichment program called Power Scholars Academy™.

Power Scholars Academy™ is a pilot partnership between the Y, the national nonprofit BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) and Pfeiffer-Burleigh School.

Statistics show that a large number of children – especially from low-income environments – experience summer slide - more commonly known as an achievement gap. Despite progressing at the same rates during the school year, gaps widen each summer and students fall behind their peers. The gap culminates in low high school graduation and college attainment rates, limited job prospects, and a negative economic impact for millions of youth as they enter adulthood.

The Power Scholars Academy™ program, built on BELL's evidence-based model, blends rigorous, small-group academic instruction with high-quality camp-like enrichment and community engagement activities. In addition to the academic impact of summer learning, scholars are strengthening their social-emotional skills, building a positive self-image, transitioning from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset where anything is within reach and participating in physical activities and enjoying nutritious meals.

“The program supports K-5 students in literacy, math, enrichment activities in STEM and the arts, along with a health curriculum,” said Richelle Roman, Power Scholars Academy™ program director. “The goal of this pilot program is to increase students’ academic success and boost self-confidence, while also engaging families in the education process. The summer learning

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program is designed to address summer learning loss for children in low income households living in under-resourced areas and thereby enhance overall youth development, academic performance, and graduation rates in our community.”

Approximately 50 students in grades K-5 attend the Power Scholars Academy™ five full days per week for a total of six weeks where they receive instruction from certified teachers in the areas of literacy and mathematics.

Summer programming was open to all Pfeiffer-Burleigh students; however students who scored in the intensive range on end of year benchmark assessments were targeted. “Our Community School Director, Interventionists, Title One Teachers, and Family Engagement Specialists worked to contact families and personally invite them to the program. We also targeted our refugee and immigrant students,” said Karin Ryan, principal at Pfeiffer-Burleigh School. “An event was held with translators, our English Language Learner teachers and Community School Director to explain the program and register the students. We believe that six weeks of full day enrichment will provide an amazing opportunity for these students’ continued language development.”

The BELL program uses research-based curricula aligned to Common Core standards as well as best practices in instruction, learning and student engagement.

BELL partnered with Scholastic to develop customized activities, materials and resources in both English Language Arts and Math. Each content area provides educators on whole group, small group and data driven individualized instructional methods in an engaging and student-centered environment.

Power Scholars Academy™ utilizes the STAR Enterprise Pre and Post-Test Assessments process. STAR Enterprise Assessments is a web-based, computer-adaptive suite of assessments that cover Reading, Math, and Early Literacy. The pre-assessment data is utilized to delve into scholar data to best support teaching staff in providing data-differentiated instruction.

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“Over the past two summers, we have offered half day programs and the attendance was not consistent. This year, due to our collaboration with the YMCA, we are able to offer six full weeks of academic support and enrichment activities to our students,” continued Ryan. “I believe the research based curriculum and program format has positively impacted the quality of programming. The full day program assists working parents by offering academic and enrichment opportunities while they are at work.”

The partnership between the Y and Pfeiffer-Burleigh School is an example of the type of collaboration stemming from the Community Schools model – one that brings social service into the school.

Meghan Easter, Pfeiffer-Burleigh Community School Director commented, “The Community Schools model focuses on leveraging school and community resources for student success- year round. This partnership with the Y’s Power Scholars Academy builds on this foundation by bringing a much needed academic support resource right into the school during the summer, when these children are at risk of sliding behind. With the Academy, they will be ready to start the new school year prepared for success.”

Students arrive and receive breakfast and gather as an academic community where they set the tone for the day by reciting the Power Scholar Pledge which reinforces their individual potential and uniqueness.

Academic learning consumes the morning with literacy and math lessons before breaking for lunch aboard the Y’s Food + Fun bus.

The afternoon is spent taking part in enrichment activities in which students rotate between an arts experience, STEM/STEAM and gardening.

Fridays are special field trip days where the week’s learning is reinforced by an excursion that wraps their learning into a practical hands-on experience in a fun setting.

“It has been such a pleasure to work with these amazing scholars and to watch them grow. They have such outstanding potential and I feel so fortunate that I am part of providing them with the experiences and tools

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that they need to blossom into the intelligent, unique, and educated leaders of the future. The scholars push themselves so hard every day, facing new challenges, to reach their goals. They leave the program each day feeling accomplished. The success of the program is evident in the scholar's and parent's commitment. The scholars and families have dedicated their summer to growth and progress. Pfeiffer-Burleigh administration and staff have been so supportive of the program and have greatly contributed to its success," commented Roman.

The Y was able to leverage YMCA of the USA national resources including the BELL curriculum and \$15,000 in grant funding which required local match funding sources for a total program budget of \$30,000.

Power Scholars Academy™ began in communities across the United States in 2014 and by the conclusion of the 2016 summer, had 4,681 scholars enrolled in 60 program sites reporting an average 82 percent daily attendance. More than 90 percent of parents report their scholar was more prepared for school in the fall. Program outcomes cite that scholars had gained 1.5 months average grade equivalent in math and 2.0 months average grade equivalent gain in reading.

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*Editor's Note: Below are some quotes from current Scholars:*

"Power Scholars is important to me because it helps me concentrate and to learn better."

"We feel special and loved and we are lucky because not everybody gets to come here to learn and have fun dancing, doing science experiments, gardening, and going on awesome fieldtrips."

"Power Scholars makes the future come alive!"

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