

Summer Learning Project Update

*Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville visits Thompson Island

On Wednesday, August 17, the Massachusetts Secretary of Education, Paul Reville, policymakers, funders, and partners of the Summer Learning Project boarded the ferry to Thompson Island along with the 4th grade students from Orchard Gardens and John Marshall Elementary. The environment on the boat was already different than the first week of programming, as all the children were huddled into different groups playing games with their teachers and Thompson Island staff.



PREVIOUS UPDATES:

[Update 5](#): Mayor Menino visits Sociedad Latina

[Update 4](#): Superintendent Johnson visits Boston Nature Center

[Update 3](#): Spotighting Hale Reservation

[Update 2](#): Spotighting IBA & MathPower

[Update 1](#): Introduction, Spotighting Thompson Island

All of our updates and information about the Summer Learning Project can also be found on the [Summer Learning Page](#) of our website.

IMPORTANT REMINDER ABOUT ATTENDANCE TRACKERS

-Please ensure all students who have participated in this summer's program are included on the attendance tracker



Katie Pakenham from New Profit (left), Secretary Paul Reville (center), and Gil Noam from PEAR (right) observe the daily morning circle at Thompson Island's Summer Learning Program

Riding the ferry to the island and then gathering together for the morning circle has become a daily ritual for the students in the Thompson Island summer program. In the morning circle, students are given the opportunity to share stories about their afternoon block the previous day. One student shared about how he “found 5 grasshoppers just walking around the island yesterday.” The Thompson Island staff also uses the morning circle time to give affirmations to their students about the progress they have made. One teacher shared about how proud he was of his students and their leadership skills, as they had to maneuver their way through spider webs. He explained, **“They became good silent leaders using non-verbal communication to get through the spider webs.”** The morning circle ends with announcements, a schedule for the day, and the daily riddle.

Wednesday's Riddle: 20 people on a cliff fall into the water. 24 heads pop up. How does this happen?

Students began excitedly brainstorming ideas for the answer as they broke out into their morning teams. “I think some of them have 2 heads,” guessed one

throughout the entire duration of the summer (i.e. even if students end program participation early, they should still be included on the tracker each week and their cumulative totals should still be updated to reflect their overall program attendance %).

- Please ensure to continually update the cumulative totals for each student each week, along with updating the cumulative number of program hours you've offered to date.

We appreciate your cooperation in completing this important task. Tracking attendance data will be an important element in analyzing our shared success this summer and examining possible improvements.

REMINDERS:

Item	When?	Why?
Signed MOU, consent forms	ASAP	To secure funding with full assurance that students are included in all measurement activities.
		Individual student attendance, rather than average daily.

student.

As the students went off to begin their morning activities, the funders, partners, BPS and Thompson Island staff, and Secretary Reville gathered into their own circle to discuss the summer program, its challenges, and the importance of summer learning.

Addressing not only the academic obstacles, but also the social-emotional issues of the Orchard Gardens and Marshall students has been a challenge for the staff this summer. Teresa Harvey-Jackson, the principal of John Marshall Elementary, explained how the children **"don't have a lot of empathy for people because no one has empathy for them. Most of these kids come from violent communities."** This summer program has worked to not only build trust among the students, but also between the students and their teachers.

The program has been so successful, that a student who used to hate writing now says his favorite thing to do is to write. Principal Harvey-Jackson commented, **"Can we move our schools to the island?"**

In the circle of education professionals, policymakers, funders, and others, Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville outlined crucial ideas to keep in mind. He stressed the point that in suburbs and areas of higher socio-economic standing, it is taken for granted that parents will enroll their children in enriching summer programs and high-quality afterschool programs. **"Those of us who have had the advantage of privilege in our life, this is what we do for our own children,"** said Secretary Reville. Then he added, **"All means all. We should want for *all* children what we want for our own children."**

Much of the conversation centered around closing the ever-widening achievement gap between students from high- and low-income households. Secretary Reville said, **"Six hours a day, 180 days a year just isn't going to be enough to close the achievement gap. It's a failing strategy—we've got the evidence to show it is necessary but not *sufficient*."** He urged the group to find ways to enrich the lives and educations of the lowest-income students. **"We**

Student attendance (use Boston After School & Beyond template)	Every Monday	average daily attendance (ADA), is recognized as a more meaningful way to track attendance. Program dosage is more accurately captured in hours, rather than days or weeks.
Detailed budget (use Boston After School & Beyond template)	End of program, with last installment of funding	A detailed budget will reveal the true cost of this integrated approach and inform policy development and fundraising efforts.
SAYO observations	2nd and final weeks of program	This tool allows us to measure skill gain and compare results to a statewide sample.
SAYO Y youth survey completed by youth	Last week of program. (Some administered by NIOST staff; some administered by site staff. Check with your NIOST contact.)	Details students' views on the program, their sense of competence and their future goals
ANet post-assessment	By September 16	To measure gains in ELA and math, compared to entire grade levels in participating schools.

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still have this iron correlation between socioeconomic status and academic gain, so what is it about this problem that we have failed to solve? ... The idea that schooling alone will solve the problem is too narrow of a conception.”

According to the Secretary, a significant part of the job of the leaders in the education field is “**generating the will in society to say ‘We’ve got to have a twenty-first century system of education.’... All of us leaders in the field need to find ways to talk about it and make it resonant.**” At this point in the discussion, Teresa Harvey-Jackson, Principal of the Marshall School, added, “**This is not rocket science, but how do we get it? *That* is rocket science.**”



Secretary Reville observes student work inside a classroom.

The students spend their days gathering data on the island and then bring it back to the classroom to graph and observe.

They have graphed daily temperatures and created charts about different bugs.

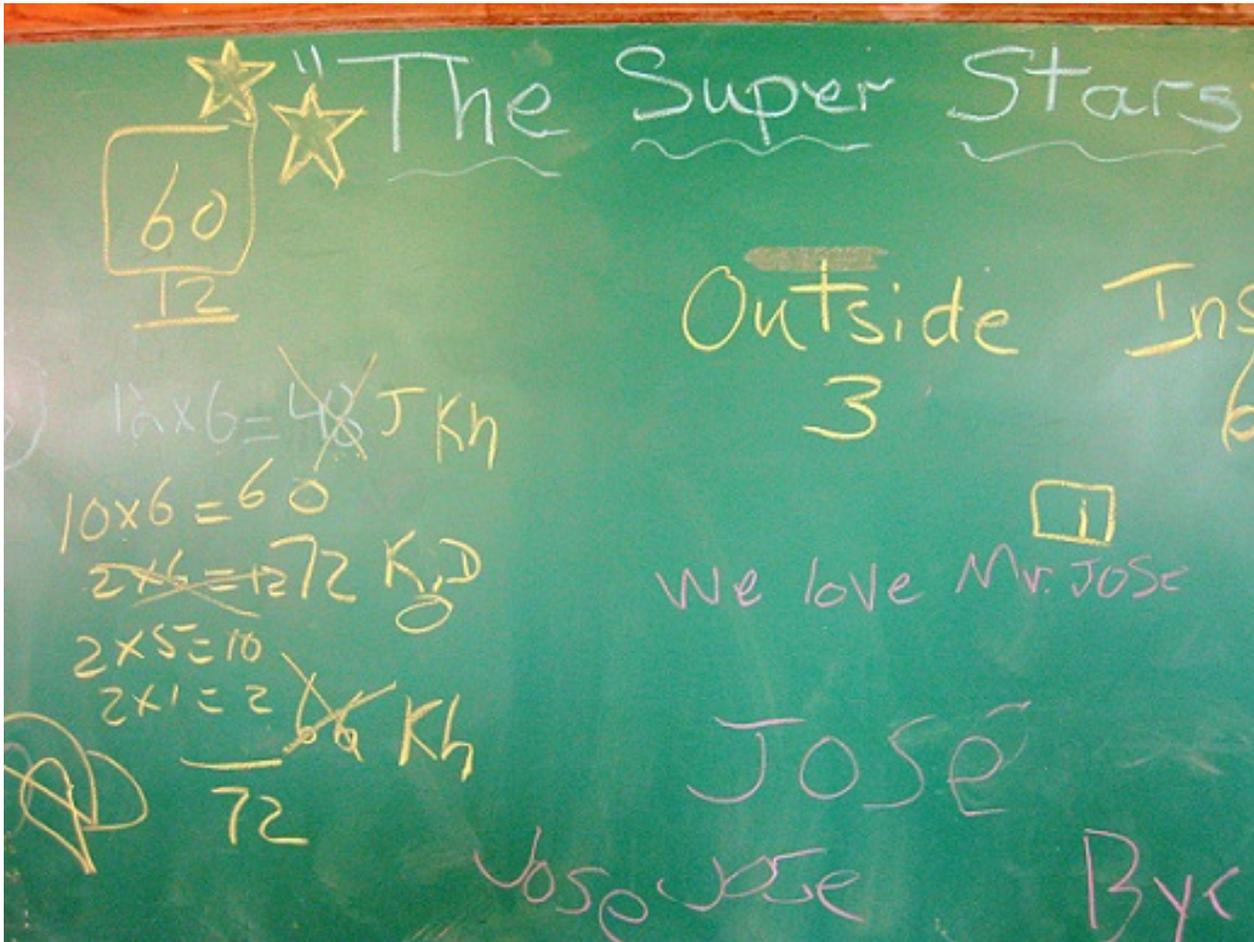
They journal about what kind of bug they would want to be, and draw pictures from the point of view of a creature on the island.

Students have also been reading Robinson Crusoe this summer.

Check out the [Summer Learning Project Resource Library](#) for academic and socio-emotional tools from ANet and PEAR! Materials include presentations from the June trainings. Also be sure to check out PEAR’s contact information sheet in case you would like consultation by phone. Don’t miss out on these great resources!

To stay connected on the most up-to-date Summer Learning Project news:

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Students display their math work on the chalkboard. They also show much appreciation to their teachers!

If you have questions, comments, or ideas for future updates,
please contact **David McAuley** at dmcauley@bostonbeyond.org.