

Natural Born Champions

Natural Born Champions Inc (NBC) is a community intervention program that aims to provide direct educational and professional enrichment services to the inner-city youth, educators, and communities. Some of our services are youth-specific such as before & after care, tutoring, summer camp, and entrepreneurship. We have community services such as parent & teacher workshops, holistic therapy, recreational sports, and transportation. Our mission is to serve as an educational or professional enrichment to create successful opportunities for our youth and sustain healthy communities. NBC's staff consists of a team of Baltimore youth, residents and educators who are leaders in their community with a commitment to serving youth. The Baltimore City Public School (BCPSS) system is often regarded as inferior to their suburban counterparts. NBC is uniquely designed to bridge the learning gap by providing resources to enhance the college & career readiness of youth in Baltimore City.

In 2019, the homicide rate was the 2nd highest reported since 1993. Students who fail in the school system, often fall into the justice system, creating a school-to-prison pipeline. To combat the school-to-prison-pipeline, some Baltimore City Public Schools have adopted "Community Schools," a program that allows students to be productive during their breaks out-of-school or after school time. Initially this strategy was effective by remedying underlying barriers of interventions between teacher-to-student, student-to-school, and school-to-community relationships but many locations have failed to stay consistent and build appropriate trust for such relationships to prosper.

NBC explores and extends the opportunities "Community Schools" attempted to provide students. NBC provides workshops for both teachers and parents. NBC assesses schools demographics and then tailors BCPSS curriculum and strategies to support those students. Moreover, NBC offers opportunities that will affect the lifetime of BCPSS students. Within NBC curriculum, students are strategically trained to becoming entrepreneurs and leaders in their communities. Students must demonstrate accountability, responsibility, and integrity in order to find their purpose. Once students have an idea of who they are, they are better equipped to make others around them better and to improve their community. NBC has hosted multiple summer programs allowing underprivileged students to build their own businesses. Over the past 7 summers, NBC's campers have opened 3 student-owned and operated businesses. These businesses sell products and services, such as baked goods, clothing accessories, home decor and more. NBC has also built positive relationships with the community to support each entrepreneur and to help their businesses grow. The most valuable achievement of the NBC program is to provide accelerated support through academic intervention.

Engaging Youth in Enrichment Programs

*“PERHAPS WHAT MATTERS WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE IS NOT WHO PUTS US DOWN BUT WHO PICKS US UP.”
— KATE DICAMILLO, LOUISIANA'S WAY HOME*

School-age children and youth spend 80 percent of their waking hours outside of school, while 1 in 5 young people in the U.S. are alone after the school day ends (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). High-quality after school programs promote positive youth development and offer a safe space where youth can explore their potential. Effective enrichment programs provide learning settings that bring a wide range of benefits to youth, families, and communities. Enrichment programs can support social, emotional, cognitive, and academic development, reduce risky behaviors, promote physical health, and provide a safe and supportive environment for children and youth.

The elementary & middle school years are a crucial juncture in young people's lives during which they go through several important developmental changes and form behaviors that will greatly impact their future. Students in grades 6-8 face unfamiliar experiences under their newfound independence that can lead them toward a life filled with achievement and/or tribulation. Fortunately, many scholars are establishing paths leading toward success with the help of proven, effective enrichment programs. The 1.4 million children in grades 6-8 who benefit from after school programs show immense positive growth in their academic and social development (Benefits for Youth, Families, and Communities | Youth.gov, 2021). However, millions of other students have no enrichment programs available to them. Right now, more than 3.7 million middle school students are unsupervised after the school day ends, while another 3 million children would attend an after school program if one were available to them (2021). The supply of these productive programs is not meeting the demand.

Enrichment programs for elementary and middle school students, are a prime example of gains through learning experiences outside the classroom. Whether through supplying students with tutoring, science learning, opportunities for recreation or paths to higher education, the potential impact of enrichment programming goes far beyond the widely recognized benefit of providing safe, supervised environments. Despite the effectiveness of these programs, limited funding have forced local communities to make difficult choices, often leaving Baltimore City students with few options.

Natural Born Champions believes there is a need to expand enrichment programming so its available to every child who needs it, especially here in Baltimore City. The best way to support enrichment programs is to educate the political, social, and civilian community of its benefits. This compendium pulls together both research and promising programs demonstrating the value of having engaging activities for students before, during, and after school. Natural Born Champions approaches enrichment program revitalization by providing small group project-

based learning activities that is focused on STEM, health and wellness and pathways to higher education and career readiness.

