



launch

newsletter

Third Quarter 2019



Ready to Go Back to School? We Are!

Some of our Launch students are about to make one of the biggest transitions in their lives thus far: kindergarten. They'll be in a big school with big kids and new expectations, and for most five-year-olds, that can be very intimidating.

Leap Ahead, our summer program for kids who will start kindergarten in the fall, aims to help with this change. All summer long, Leap Ahead students have been getting familiarized with elementary school and getting used to the kindergarten schedule and expectations. They're eating in the elementary cafeteria, visiting classrooms, playing on the school playground, and getting to

know the older kids.

Our teachers have spent the summer creating fun activities and field trips to make sure kids are ready to start kindergarten. Last summer, 91% of our Leap Ahead campers were ready to enter kindergarten by the end of the August, a 22% increase from June. We hope to see similar positive results this year!

To hear from a very articulate and fun Leap Ahead kid herself, head to the back of this newsletter for an exclusive interview with Ema!

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A Note from the Executive Director

We recently drafted an update to our strategic plan for 2019-2021. This plan focuses on two big questions we believe will impact our work, and includes specific strategies and tactics to address the questions.

Question #1 is *“How do we best adjust our business model to accommodate changing landscapes while maintaining our mission?”* Our strategies to address this question are 1) develop new early learning programs in Seattle and South King County, located outside School District buildings that align with our mission; 2) expand our Expanded Learning Opportunities to locations in South King County that align with our mission in partnership with local organizations; 3) retain quality, onsite Expanded Learning Opportunity programming and maintain a positive partnership with Seattle Public Schools; and 4)



operate a quality, mission-aligned, financially-viable summer program.

Question #2 is *“How do we recruit and retain high quality staff?”* Our main strategies are 1) define Launch’s workplace culture; and 2) continue to improve and deepen the ways we recruit and retain qualified staff.

It’s exciting to think about implementing this plan! Our hope is that this work will help us continue providing the same high quality care to our current families while also expanding to meet the need for programs like ours. The full plan is available on our website. I look forward to hearing your thoughts!

Brianna Jackson
Executive Director

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Pints for a Purpose!

On August 3rd, Launch held its second annual Pints for a Purpose event at Ounces Taproom. It was a beautiful sunny day to spend building and growing our community. We were delighted to see some new faces alongside the kids, families, and donors in attendance!

We did some of our favorite Launch activities so guests could see what kids do at our programs, including button-making and Magna-Tiles. Teacher Mr. Andre also lead a fun science activity by using balloons to teach about static electricity.

Thanks to Ounces Taproom for hosting our event in their beautiful welcoming space and to Panda Dim Sum for providing the truly incredible food!

Changing for the Better: Operations Restructure

This summer, Launch made some changes to our Operations Department to better support our sites, teachers, and families. As a result, some of our staff have taken on new roles.

Our Program Site Managers will be supported by one of five Regional Program Directors. We’ve also added

new positions: the Early Learning Director and the Expanded Learning Opportunities Director will help sites coordinate curriculum and lesson plans, assess children, and develop individual child learning plans. The Enrollment Coordinator will support the enrollment process and help answer family questions about

enrollment. And the Training & Events Director will help coordinate staff training and professional development as well as support sites with planning their family engagement events.

This structure will add more support for our programs so sites can focus on creating an amazing experience for children and families.

Summer Camp Stories

During the summer, our twelve Launch locations consolidate into six regional camp sites. It's been wonderful to watch kids from different schools get to know each other, build friendships and find ways to express themselves in new environments and social dynamics. And it's also been an awesome experience for our teachers, who have gotten to collaborate with and learn from teachers at other sites.

All of our programs went on a field trip to DANCE This at the Moore Theatre, which showcases different dances from around the globe. This is a summer Launch tradition - we've been going for over a decade! Our campers loved the event, and cheered wildly when Flow, Launch's own Finance Supervisor, performed with his breakdancing group, the Massive Monkees!

Every Friday, **Highland Park** campers celebrate Wheels Day! The kids get to bring their bikes, trikes, and scooters from home and roll around the blacktop. They've also had a number of special guests visit the site this summer! In early July a break dancer came to show off his moves. After performing, he helped the kids learn some techniques of

their own. The Woodland Park Zoo sent an ambassador in the form of a kookaburra. Best of all, though, was the ice cream truck that came on one of the hottest summer days.

Hawthorne campers have been having dance parties, playing musical chairs, and making tons of art! The kids have been painting, making collages and clay sculptures, and covering the blacktop in chalk. For the week themed "On the Move," they made cars out of cardboard boxes and drove them to the "drive-in theater" (the school multi-purpose room) where they got to watch A Goofy Movie!

Kimball kids visited the Pacific Science Center, where they saw a detailed artistic representation of the human brain. It was animated and reacted to the movements of our campers. The butterfly house was beautiful and very engaging for our kids. They were fascinated by signs inviting guests to help the science center learn which butterflies prefer which plants by taking photos of butterflies on plants they saw in the community and posting it to social media with the hashtag #CitizenSci.

Our **Maple** campers have kept busy with obstacle courses that

their teachers build for them, self-guided Dungeons & Dragons campaigns, and of course lots of outside play time including visits to the Georgetown Playfield spray park. The highlight of each week is the field trip. A favorite was the trip to Alki Beach during a low tide of -1.38, where they met a huge crab and watched canoes from the Intertribal Canoe Journey row by.

Leschi campers enjoyed a performance from magician Nate Jester. His illusions got the kids jumping out of their seats! Creation Station also stopped by with a ton of found and recycled objects. The kids let their imaginations run wild, and repurposed the materials into awesome art projects! An activity the kids get to do every day is tend the elementary school garden, which they've been doing since the spring.

Miller Annex school-age campers have recently been to MOHAI and the Museum of Flight, which they loved so much they didn't want to leave. The preschoolers spent their week of Fantasy & Creativity building blanket forts. They have also been messing around with slime and oobleck!

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New Director of Finance

We are excited to introduce our new Director of Finance, Shannon Thomas! Shannon comes to us with a wealth of nonprofit experience, most recently as the Finance/HR Director at KidsQuest Children's Museum. She has a Master's degree in Nonprofit Leadership & Management from Seattle University. Welcome, Shannon!

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Summer Family BBQ

Our annual potluck family BBQ gathers families and staff from all of our sites so they can get to know each other and celebrate our amazing community.

This year we met at Jefferson Park on Saturday, July 27. In spite of the dramatic sky and threat of rain, plenty of families came out!

We had games like cornhole, soccer, and badminton, plus the kids also enjoyed the park's huge playground (there was a super cool zipline!). Our Executive Director's daughter volunteered to do face painting for the kids and did an amazing job. And of course there was tons of delicious food that families brought to share. We can't wait for next year's event!

Meet a Leap Ahead camper: Ema, Age 5

Ema attended preschool this past year with Launch at Beacon Hill. This summer she's been a Leap Ahead student at Maple, where she will be starting kindergarten this fall! Her older brother Jaime (5th grade) and sister Maddy (2nd grade) are also Launch students at Maple.

Are you having fun this summer?

Yes. Every Friday is movie day. *[We spoke on a Friday.]*

Oh really? What's your favorite movie?

The Charmander Movie. But not the really sad part in the rain. That almost made me cry.

What's your favorite thing to do at Launch?

Play with Maddy - not my sister, a different Maddy.

What's something you want to learn how to do?

I want to learn to put my legs on the bar *[on the playground]* and my hands too. My sister can do it. I can do backflips, but I'm scared to do it on the bar.

What was your favorite field trip at Launch this summer?

[The Center for] Wooden Boats. We got to make our own boats, but not our own kind of boats. We had to do the same design.

Does Leap Ahead feel different from preschool?

It's a little different. There are big kids here.

Do you feel ready for kindergarten?

Yes, I'm so excited.

Do you think it'll be hard or easy?

Easy. But you have to learn how to spell.

