

Summer Enrichment Fair offers opportunities to avoid summer learning loss

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Admission Possible partnered with LearningWorks and the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership to put on the third annual Summer Enrichment Fair on March 6. The fair offered low-income students from the Twin Cities metro area access to summer programs to keep them learning over the long break from classroom activities.

Held at the Blake School, the fair gave more than 200 high school students a chance to explore 23 different summer programs encompassing diverse interests such as camping, student journalism, entrepreneurship, theatre performance and social justice.

The opportunity to stay mentally active over the summer isn't just for fun: it actually helps students be better prepared for learning in the fall. Research from the Center for Summer Learning at The Johns Hopkins University shows that teachers spend a good deal of time in the fall re-teaching skills lost during the summer, sometimes called "summer slide."

The loss of learning acutely affects low-income students like those who participate in Admission Possible, a free after-school college prep program, because they are less likely than their higher income peers to participate in organized activities over the summer. Admission Possible's two-year curriculum requires that juniors apply to at least one summer enrichment opportunity, and many students apply for more.

"It's important for all students and critical for low-income students to continue learning throughout the summer," said Mee Cheng, Admission Possible's coordinator for the enrichment fair. "Summer enrichment programs give low-income students the chance to gain more knowledge about future careers, learn about themselves and ultimately gain better access to the types of experiences colleges look for in the admission process."

LearningWorks, the fair's hosting organization, offers Minneapolis middle school students a challenging academic enrichment program to start them on the path to college. LearningWorks Alumni Outreach and Programs Director Steffen Foss wants to be sure that alumni of his program – now high schoolers – stay on track to go to college by finding new and challenging experiences.

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"LearningWorks is committed to helping our alumni connect with quality summer enrichment opportunities as they enter high school," said Steffen Foss, LearningWorks' coordinator for the Fair. "The Summer Enrichment Fair allows students to find and pursue opportunities that align with their passions and goals as they make the journey to college."

Issa Ali, a junior in the Admission Possible program at Columbia Heights High School, is glad he had the opportunity to start thinking early about what to do this summer. "If I hadn't gone to the summer enrichment fair, I wouldn't have a plan for this summer," Ali said. "I would have just thought of summer as time off from school, but now I have something to look forward to."