



INTERVIEWS

How BellXcel Helps the YMCA of Southern Nevada Develop Impactful Programs

The YMCA of Southern Nevada has been partnering with BellXcel in meaningful ways since May 2020.

Jordan Sommaggio, the community development director at the YMCA of Southern Nevada, shared that unfortunately, Nevada consistently ranks in the bottom five states for education. “Only 41.4% of Nevada students ended the 2020-2021 school year proficient in English language arts and only 26.3% were proficient in math,” said Sommaggio. “While the pandemic was a major contributing factor to these statistics, pre-pandemic, only 48.5% of Nevada students were proficient in English language arts and only 37.5% were proficient in math, based on the 2018-2019 school year.”

He further elaborated on the awareness of students’ mental health. “During the pandemic in particular, our state saw a doubling of youth suicide,” he said. “Our students deserve a higher quality, more holistic education. As one of the nation’s leading providers of youth programming, the YMCA is proud to partner with BellXcel and the fifth largest school district in the nation, Clark County School District to deliver just that.”

Below, Sommaggio shares more about the YMCA of Southern Nevada’s partnership with BellXcel:

Why did you decide to partner with BellXcel — what problem were you looking to solve or what solution were you looking to incorporate?

The BellXcel model is one of the strongest academic and social-emotional interventions in the nation. It’s one of only 43 summer intervention models and one of only 16 afterschool intervention models in the nation that meets the highest level of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act’s evidence-based standards. It’s no surprise YMCAs across the country leverage this model to develop meaningful programs that serve vulnerable youth within under-resourced communities.

What are the benefits to your organization as a result of this partnership? Our partnership with BellXcel fuels our mission. We have been able to leverage this model to develop a truly impactful program that addresses an urgent need in Southern Nevada. This partnership

also opened the door for the YMCA of Southern Nevada to establish a formal partnership agreement with the Clark County School District. This allows us to provide wraparound programs that promote holistic school environments and student success directly on school sites. This was a multi-year effort that was accomplished thanks in large part to the strength of the program that we developed using the BellXcel model.

What does your staff enjoy most about utilizing BellXcel? Our teachers love that the curriculum is both complete and customizable. Not having to lesson plan is a major draw to this model for our teachers. They also love how engaging the model is. This model is delivered in the afterschool and summer setting, where students are burnt out from a full day or year of learning. The BellXcel model makes continued learning fun.

Our administrative staff love how comprehensive the model is. It incorporates English language arts and math supports, as well as social-emotional learning and family engagement resources. They also love that the model incorporates easy-to-use data collection tools, such as for pre- and post- testing and attendance.

Our school partners love that the model is aligned with what schools are teaching, and that the model is evidence-based and externally validated.

Have you been pleasantly surprised by working with BellXcel in any way? While the BellXcel model is externally validated to be effective, we were still in awe after we saw the results of our pilot program. The impact this model has on the staff, students and parents is beyond our expectations. It is actually helping kids in profound ways.

Why should other YMCA professionals consider partnering with BellXcel? Partnering with BellXcel is an amazing experience. This group of individuals genuinely cares about uplifting the lives of at-risk youth in intentional and meaningful ways. They are incredibly knowledgeable, responsive and effective in their roles. Plus, they invest in the partnership much beyond the initial pitch, contract and delivery. ✨ **by Brittany Howard**

YMCA of Southern Nevada
• Las Vegas, Nevada