



## **News**

**Contact:** Jennifer Golia  
Marino  
212-402-3492  
[igolia@marinopr.com](mailto:igolia@marinopr.com)

### **New York Edge to Expand Afterschool Program for Underrepresented Gifted & Talented Students in NYC**

***Excellence Project to reach diverse populations of students in schools in under-resourced communities;***

***Program overseen by Advisory Board of academic leaders from across the U.S.***

**NEW YORK, NY – May 19, 2022 –** [New York Edge](#) – the largest provider of school-based afterschool and summer programs in New York City – announced it received a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s Jacob J. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program to expand its Excellence Project, an afterschool program for underrepresented, diverse students, in which young people, in addition to their teachers and parents, have the opportunity to nominate themselves.

The Excellence Project – which currently supports a unique population of students at P.S. 189X in the Bronx – builds skills, knowledge, positive attitudes and behaviors, while promoting academic achievement, social emotional learning, and healthy development after school hours among diverse students who perform or have the capability to perform at higher levels. New York Edge is expanding upon its initiative to identify exceptional students in schools in under-resourced communities, and provide 275 scholars with opportunities and support to six additional elementary and middle schools. The program will be evaluated by leaders in the academic community who joined the Excellence Project Advisory Board.

“It is vital that gifted and talented students in under-resourced public schools gain access to the accelerated learning resources they need to thrive, and there is a tremendous opportunity for afterschool programs to lead in this space,” said **Rachael Gazdick, CEO of New York Edge**. “We are proud to expand New York Edge’s Excellence Project, and look forward to working with the diverse and exceptionally skilled higher education leaders on our Advisory Board to help youth throughout the five boroughs discover and nurture their talents. We believe the Excellence Project will serve as a national model for policy makers, researchers, and practitioners on what truly works for students.”

Unlike traditional after-school programs where educators serve as the sole decision-makers for students' participation, the Excellence Project marked by accelerated learning allows for self-identification among youth, as well as parents and caregivers. Through this initiative, English language learners, first-generation Americans, special education students, and other diverse populations of young people can recognize and nominate themselves as gifted and talented, and gain access to the tools, resources, and support that will enable them to perform at a higher level and achieve their utmost potential.

“The Excellence Project’s curriculum combines social emotional development and academic advancement, offering resources for gifted students to tap into their talents and excel both personally and academically. This is an incredibly unique initiative that is reaching diverse populations of high-performing students who may not otherwise have access to accelerated learning experiences, and empowering them to make decisions for themselves that will greatly benefit their education,” said **Dr. Courtne Thomas, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for New York Edge’s Excellence Project and member of the Advisory Board.**

Members of the Excellence Project Advisory Board include: **Rachael Gazdick**, CEO of New York Edge; **Marisol De La Rosa**, Chief Program Officer of New York Edge’s premier school-based Champions Club programs; **Dr. Timothy Eatman**, Dean of the Honors Living-Learning Community at Rutgers University; **Dr. Janelle M. Johnson**, Assistant Professor in STEM teaching and learning in Secondary Teacher Education at Metropolitan State University of Denver; **Robert L. Jarvis, Ph.D.**, Director of the Penn Coalition for Educational Equity; **Colin Seale, Esq**, Founder/CEO of thinkLaw; **Lauren Birney**, Professor, Pace University; **James Bellon**, Principal of 189X Cornerstone Academy for Social Action; and **Dr. Stephanie Rowley**, Provost, Dean, and Vice President for Academic Affairs of Teachers College, Columbia University.

Excellence Project Principal Investigators include: **Dr. Marcia Gentry**, Professor of Educational Studies and Executive Director of the Gifted Education Research and Resource Institute at Purdue University; **Dr. Jennifer Ricahrdson**, Professor of Learning Design and Technology at Purdue University; and **Dr. Pavan Antony**, Associate Professor of Special Education at Adelphi University.

### **About New York Edge**

New York Edge is a non-profit organization and the largest provider of afterschool and summer camp programs in all five boroughs of New York City. With thousands of students in more than 100 schools in grades K-12, New York Edge bridges the opportunity gap faced by students in underinvested communities by strengthening academic performance, health and wellness, self-confidence, and leadership skills for success in life. [www.newyorkedge.org](http://www.newyorkedge.org)

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