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In This Issue:

Inner-city Youth Discover New Path to Knowledge



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Pioneer Academics Magazine, June 2017, Issue 4
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Pioneer Co-founder Addresses Educators at Yale Center Beijing



Matthew Jaskol, third from right, at Yale Center Beijing, advocates education that prepares youth to become global players.

Yale Center Beijing, an extension of Yale University School of Management, invited Pioneer Academics Program Director Matthew Jaskol to join a symposium on May 19 to speak about the future of K-12 education. The panelists, all education thought-leaders, discussed changes schools and parents must make to prepare youth for success in a future full of uncertainty.

Jaskol shared his experience in developing the Pioneer Research Program, an innovative approach to education that unleashes students' passion to discover and learn by mentoring them to dive deeply into researching their own interests.

Jaskol challenged schools, educators and colleges to focus on innovative learning models that prepare young people to become global players with intellectual readiness to solve complex problems.

Pioneer Academics Speaks to Teens Around the World



Thousands of teens rely on TeenLife.com for the latest news and trends in education and educational activities, as well as college and university directories.

On May 12, 2017, Pioneer Academics Program Director Matthew Jaskol was featured guest blogger on TeenLife's website: How to Find a Teen Summer Program That's Right for You.

"I work with hundreds of inquisitive young people like you, day in and day out, helping them find their academic way. Frequently that means discovering the right summer program. My advice: Look inside yourself. Discover your interests. Listen to your heart..."

Read the whole blog [here](#).

Jaskol co-founded Pioneer Academics in 2013 with the intent of offering deep, intellectual exploration opportunities to outstanding young people of geographic and cultural diversity. He believes that passionate young scholars can reach remarkable heights through intelligence, imagination, and determination.

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2016 Pioneer Research Program: Selected College Admission Results

The following is a list of results of 168 Pioneer students who reported results after applying during the 2016 admissions season.

Average SAT Statistics: Critical Reading = 728, Mathematics = 785;

New SAT: Evidence-Based Reading=708, Mathematics = 769

Average ACT Statistics: 33

Average TOEFL Score (International Students): 111

(Note: Above scores are final scores students used in their college applications. 72% of students reported these final test scores to Pioneer.)

U.S. Universities (alphabetical Order)	U.S. Liberal Arts Colleges (alphabetical order)	Non-U.S. Schools (alphabetical order)
Brown University (5)	Amherst College (3)	Chinese University of Hong Kong (2)
California Institute of Technology (1)	Barnard College (1)	Hong Kong Univ. of Science and Technology (3)
Carnegie Mellon University (8)	Bowdoin College (2)	Imperial College London (3)
Columbia University (6)	Carleton College (3)	King's College London (3)
Cornell University (15)	Claremont McKenna College (3)	London School of Economics (3)
Dartmouth College (2)	Colby College (3)	McGill University (4)
Duke University (1)	Colgate University (5)	Queen's University (1)
Emory University (7)	Colorado College (6)	The University of Hong Kong (1)
Georgetown University (1)	Davidson College (1)	University College London (8)
Johns Hopkins University (5)	Grinnell College (1)	University of Bath (1)
New York University (15), Stern (2)	Hamilton College (1)	University of British Columbia (4)
Northwestern University (4)	Harvey Mudd College (2)	University of Cambridge (2)
Princeton University (4)	Haverford College (2)	University of Edinburgh (3)
Rice University (9)	Macalester College (6)	University of Manchester (2)
Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology (5)	Oberlin College (4)	University of Oxford (2)
Stanford University (1)	Pomona College (2)	University of Toronto (4)
Tufts University (5)	Smith College (7)	Yale - NUS College (1)
University of California - Berkeley (16) Los Angeles (14)	Swarthmore College (1)	York University (1)
University of Chicago (8)	Vassar College (2)	
University of Pennsylvania (5)	Wellesley College (5)	
University of Southern California (20)	Wesleyan University (5)	
University of Virginia (20)		
Vanderbilt University (7)		
Washington University in St. Louis (7)		



Inner-city Youth Discover New Path to Knowledge

Pioneer Academics offers the world's brightest, but disadvantaged high school scholars a jump-start to college success

When 17-year-old Esther Reyes was growing up in Brooklyn, NY, the idea of going to college, let alone being accepted to an Ivy League university, could easily seem like pure fantasy. In fact, it was the last thing on her young mind after her father was deported back to Mexico, leaving her undocumented mom to raise her three daughters and support the family. Despite the hardships, however, her mother was determined to make sure her girls received the best education possible.

Not too far away in the same New York City borough, Tyler Bennett, also 17, was resolutely pursuing her dream of getting a quality education. Her quest had the full support and encouragement of her father, who became a minister after retiring from the military; her mom, a retired bank employee, and her older sister.

Winning the Lottery

Thanks to their families' involvement, both Esther and Tyler got lucky. They won

the lottery to attend Achievement First Brooklyn High School in the Crown Heights neighborhood, one of only two free non-profit public charter schools in New York City. The big advantage for its students is its unique college preparatory mission: In order to receive their high school diploma, every student must be accepted to a four-year college. Mission accomplished: This fall Esther goes to Yale; Tyler to Princeton.

Soon after their freshman year began, Monica Debbeler, the school's dean of college, realized that two rising academic stars were shining in the 800-student body galaxy.

Destined for Greatness

"I could tell immediately that Tyler was a student who was destined to go above and beyond – who was truly motivated by her desire to learn, not just by grades or social pressures (she had a 4.16 cumulative GPA), but by a very deep desire to know and understand more," she said. "And Esther impressed me from day one with the seriousness with which



Achievement First Brooklyn High School in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, NY, is a vital part of the local community. (Photo by Francis Dzikowski/Otto for Robert A.M. Stern Architects)

she approached her education. She has not only contributed more than perhaps any other student in this school's history, she has gone above and beyond in her academics in ways no student has before."



Monica Debbeler

The Pioneer Research Program

That is why Debbeler did not hesitate to recommend both of her prize pupils to participate in the Pioneer Research Program. Designed to offer college-level research opportunities to exceptional high school students worldwide, the research program, run by public benefit corporation Pioneer Academics, allows students to conduct research one-on-one with faculty from prestigious US colleges and universities. It was through Pioneer Research that both star students explored and expressed their passion and identity in a creative and academic way.

According to Pioneer Academics "spokesperson" Bob Wittenburg, "our program is conducted entirely online during the spring and summer months. It allows students to overcome geographic, cultural, ethnic and socio-economic barriers to education. Since its founding in 2013, more than 436 students from 23 countries have benefitted from this unique educational experience."

Beyond High School

Debbeler said she found out about Pioneer Academics from a former staff member at Achievement First Brooklyn High School. "They had a connection to the Yale University business school and were looking to recruit some of our most talented students. At the time, I was working as our summer programs coordinator and when I heard what Pioneer Academics was all about, it immediately stuck out to me as an opportunity that would really push our most intellectually curious students to a level beyond what our high school could offer."

She added that "the opportunity to do research before even enrolling in college is something that our students are hungry

for. I knew immediately that Esther and Tyler would be a great fit for the program."

Need-based Scholarships

As expected, both were eager to take advantage of the offer and add the new learning opportunities to their already robust resume of summer courses – Tyler participated in programs at Cooper Union, Exeter and Smith universities, while Esther spent three years in the Andover University Math and Science for Minority Students program. And both were awarded full need-based scholarships to attend Pioneer Academics. Scholarship candidates are referred to Pioneer by its five non-profit partners – A Better Chance (US), The Afghan Girls Financial Assistance Fund (Afghanistan), the Jane Goodall Institute (US), Kepler University (Rwanda) and Next-Genius (India) – as well as through coordination with high school financial aid offices.

The Right Research Topic

For Tyler, who is passionate about literature and writing, meeting her assigned Pioneer Academics teacher for the first time was "really cool," she said. "I enjoyed talking about what I wanted to major in at college. I told her I definitely wanted to study something that relates to the sciences and African American studies."



Tyler Bennett

Among the many research opportunities available through Pioneer Academics, beyond science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), are social sciences and humanities. And humanities is the direction Tyler chose to follow with her research topic: Comparing Ta-Nehisi Coates' "Between the World and Me" and Tony Morrison's "The Bluest Eye". "At first, I didn't realize that the connections I found in those two books could be something to research, but after further brainstorming and coming up with different ideas, I knew it was the right topic for me," she said.

When asked what were the most important skills learned during the 16-week summer

program, Tyler said they were time management and communications.

"I honestly believe that my Pioneer Academics research experience has made me a better writer. It has built up my confidence to the point that I now believe in my abilities and feel that I deserve to attend a premier university with the highest academic standards."



Esther Reyes

A Voice for Others

Esther's research mentor was a professor from NYU's Program in International Relations. Esther chose as her Pioneer Academics research topic: the challenges Muslims face in a modern France. "I have been interested in this subject for a long time, ever since my sister visited Turkey last summer during her junior year," she said. "I wanted to learn more about Muslim women and more specifically about the issue of Muslims in Europe, the rise of terrorist groups and populism in general. I feel that there are some similarities between my own Mexican heritage and those who identify as Muslims.

"In my writing and discussions, I want to talk not only about what it means to be Mexican, but also what it means to be from all different cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds," she added. "It made sense for me to research this topic through Pioneer Academics because the program prepared me well for building relationships with Muslims and other world religions and cultures," Esther said. "My high school is predominantly African-American with only about 20 Latina students. I feel it is my obligation to other under-represented minorities to voice their opinions or talk about their cultures – and Pioneer Academics allowed me to do that."

Yale and Princeton, the Ivy League elite of America's higher education, are a long way from Brooklyn but do not need to be fantasies. Just ask Esther and Tyler.

Pioneer Open Dialogue Series

Justice and the Arab Spring - A Guide to the Arab Street



An Egyptian woman celebrates in Tahrir Square, the day after former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, the country's first democratically elected president, was ousted from power on July 4, 2013 in Cairo, Egypt. (Photographer Ed Giles/Getty)

Pioneer Academics held its first Pioneer Open Dialogue Series (PODS) of 2017 on Saturday, April 22, led by Dr. Lawrence Rosen, Ph.D., the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Anthropology at Princeton University. Dr. Rosen is a distinguished anthropologist and attorney.

The Arab Spring of 2011

Leading students on a virtual walk down an Arab street, Dr. Rosen introduced them to individuals who typified elements of Arab culture in North Africa and throughout the Middle East. "By understanding Arab culture," Dr. Rosen said to the students, "we can begin to understand the Arab Spring, and learn important lessons from it."

The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and, in some cases, armed rebellions that spread across the Middle East in early 2011. But their purpose, relative success, and outcome remain hotly disputed in Arab countries. The Arab Spring is frequently referred to in the West as "the Arab Street", a metaphor used to describe popular opinion in the Muslim world.



Students from around the world participate in Pioneer Academics online open dialogue.



A young Egyptian woman stops in front of the Kasr Al Nile bridge that leads to Tahrir Square, on the fifth anniversary anniversary of the 2011 uprising, in Cairo, Egypt, on January 25, 2016. (Photographer: Narimanel Mofty)

The Arab Street

"In Arab culture," according to Dr. Rosen, "it's every man's responsibility to constantly overcome his passions and to develop his capacity to reason. He must also forge a network of obligations (indebtedness) to other people. This is what binds people together in the Arab world, and is the foundation of Arab social order. It can be more important than family or tribe," says Dr. Rosen. Each of the people the students met along the Arab Street, revealed Arab social norms embedded in Arab culture, and very different from those of the West. "Unless we understand the cultures," explained Dr. Rosen, "the conclusions we draw about each other can be dangerously wrong." The professor explained how Arab culture, in which reason and the necessity of forging a network of relationships are paramount, dramatically influences the Arab concept of justice and democracy. "Justice on the Arab Street," asserts Dr. Rosen, "means how you treat people according to the network you have built up, in other words, what are the social repercussions to the network of the person being judged." The Arab courts of law provide a powerful example of this concept of Arab justice. There, judges routinely ask, "Who are you?" and "To whom are you connected?"

Tahrir Square

The Arab Spring rebellion in Tahrir Square in Downtown Cairo in the spring of 2011 was a plea from the people to stop unreasonable, ubiquitous petty corruption (bribery), that made them feel deeply dirty; and to stop the government interference that was starving them and preventing them from living their Arab culture. The people in Tahrir Square in 2011 wanted more from the system, not to destroy it. That's why bread became the symbol of the rebellion.

Justice Served

Arab culture manifested itself profusely during the rebellions of the Arab Spring, and in many ways for a while, Arab justice was served. A couple was married in Tahrir Square during the rebellion, proving a young man's manhood, made possible because it was

a private space (belonging to the people) and he was "free."

The people, not the government, cleaned up Tahrir Square after the rebellion, also because it was a private (not government-controlled) space, and they were responsible for it. But because demonstrators thought of the square as their space, and not as an opportunity to forge new political relationships, the rebellion ultimately failed. The rebellion in Tahrir Square eventually led to the fall of President Mubarak; but others stepped in and took over. Throughout the Arab Spring across the Arab world, Muslims hoped for government based on deep-seated cultural features. Unfortunately, the rebellion did not deliver. It was successful in Tunisia, but reinforced the monarchies elsewhere. Democracy in the Arab world remained elusive. "In the end, only by understanding these features of Arab culture and Arab history," explains Dr. Rosen, "can Westerners begin to understand the Arab Spring and learn from it."

Students' Reaction

Students from US, India, Canada, Qatar, South Africa, Turkey, Taiwan, and Mainland China reacted enthusiastically to the Pioneer Open Discussion Series. "It was a great presentation and it really invoked a lot of thoughts for me," said one student. "The session was enlightening, and has helped me understand the situation of the Arab Spring from a different point of view," explained another. The Pioneer Open Dialogue Series is free to high school students from around the world. "PODS provide additional educational opportunity to Pioneer's greater community," Pioneer Academics Program Director Matthew Jaskol states, "It's a way of sharing great ideas," Jaskol explained, "without regard for anything but the joy of learning."

Professor Rosen teaches courses in law and anthropology, comparative religious systems, the American Indian and the law, and the theory of cultural systems. He received the Presidential Distinguished Teaching Award in 1997 and was a Phi Beta Kappa Visiting Scholar for 1997-98.



Did you know?



Maru the cat was tricked into being a wig model. The YouTube superstar became famous for his love of squeezing into boxes, so his owner decided to take it a step further. She attached various hairstyles to a hole in a cardboard box and waited, knowing Maru wouldn't be able to resist poking his face through.



There's a plant that grows in the shape of tiny bunnies making peace signs. *Monilaria obconica* is a flowering succulent, but its sprouts resemble little rabbit ears before they start growing longer and larger, which makes it look like a family of green bunnies posing for a photo.



The oldest living tree ever found was a bristlecone pine named Prometheus. It had been around since before the Egyptian pyramids were built. Someone cut it down in 1964.



When white-faced capuchins say hello, they simultaneously stick their fingers into each other's noses and gently sway back and forth in a trance-like state for several minutes until they're satisfied.



People used to think manatees were mermaids. Christopher Columbus once mistook a sighting of three manatees for an encounter with real mermaids and wrote in his journal that they were '...not so beautiful as they are said to be, for their faces had some masculine traits.'



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