



National Summer Learning Association Statement on the President's FY2011 Budget

President Barack Obama's FY2011 budget provides significant opportunities and challenges for the growing field of summer learning. While the National Summer Learning Association appreciates the overall increase in education funding, particularly during these difficult economic times, we were disappointed to see no funding or mention of summer learning programs anywhere in the President's budget. This was particularly surprising for several reasons:

- Both President Obama and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan have been long-time supporters of summer learning, with Secretary Duncan calling it, "...one of the best investments states and districts can make." (*Education News Parents Can Use*, June 16, 2009)
- Extensive research confirming the concept of summer learning loss and a recent study showing that two-thirds of the achievement gap in reading is directly related to unequal summer learning opportunities.
- Strong support from the Administration for innovative programs that can help turnaround low-performing schools and create new uses of learning time to transform the school day and year.

Despite our disappointment with the lack of funding and acknowledgment of summer learning, we applaud the Administration's focus on innovation, quality, and positive incentives. We believe that summer learning programs can help address many of the Administration's priorities and look forward to working together to strengthen the role of summer programs throughout ESEA and federal education policy.

Our Association is also concerned that the budget includes a de facto cut to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which is a significant source of support for summer learning programs throughout the nation. Extensive research confirms that children in low-income areas lose critical resources when the school doors close in June, leading to significant academic and developmental setbacks that contribute to the achievement gap. 21st CCLC programs have helped effectively address this gap by providing comprehensive services to students that bring together schools and community partners. Cutting these services during difficult economic times will only exacerbate the large opportunity gap that exists during the summer months.

Additionally, we are troubled by potential policy changes to 21st CCLC and other expanded learning funding that could result in more of the same during the summer months. Summer should be a season of innovation for schools that provides opportunities to accelerate learning and improve student and teacher engagement. Summer programs are uniquely qualified to achieve these goals by providing hands-on learning activities, strong community partnerships, and excellent professional development opportunities. Simply keeping kids in classrooms during the summer will not address student engagement issues; will not improve community collaboration; and could further reinforce the punitive stigma associated with many current summer school programs.

Aside from the issues outlined above, we are pleased by the budget's increased investment in a variety of programs with the potential to integrate high-quality summer learning programs. Specifically, we see significant opportunity to make summer learning a key component of proposed programs such as Promise Neighborhoods; the expansion of i3 and Race to the Top; School Turnaround grants; and STEM education initiatives.

Additionally, we strongly believe that more Title I funds should be invested in summer learning programs and urge the Department of Education to provide leadership and guidance to states and districts to encourage this as an allowable and recommended use of funds.

Our Association is deeply appreciative of the longtime support President Obama and Secretary Duncan have shown for summer learning programs and their unprecedented recent investments in education reform. Unfortunately, the President's budget does not currently reflect the Administration's past statements and actions on summer learning. We now look forward to working with Congress and the Administration to ensure summer learning is featured more prominently as a key component of federal policy and education reform across the nation.