

# Mayor's SUMMER LEARNING Playbook



NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
of CITIES 

  
national summer  
learning association

# Mayor's SUMMER LEARNING Playbook



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## NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING DAY IS THURSDAY, JULY 14TH!

National Summer Learning Day is an annual national advocacy day led by the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) to elevate the importance of keeping kids learning, safe, and healthy every summer.



### DID YOU KNOW...

- Research shows that summers without quality learning opportunities put youth at risk for falling behind – year after year – in core subjects like math and reading. The math and reading skills low-income students lose each summer are cumulative and contribute significantly to the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income kids.
- Research on summer youth employment programs shows that participation increases school attendance and academic success in the following year.
- Only 1 in 7 students who receive subsidized meals during the school year receive these meals during the summer, despite available funding. Poor nutrition and unhealthy habits are exacerbated during the summer months without access to structured activities and subsidized meals.

## Five Things Mayors Can Do For Summer Learning Day

- 1 Proclaim Summer Learning Day** in your community!
- 2 Place an op-ed in your local paper** describing why keeping kids learning, safe, and healthy is important to your community.
- 3 Kick off a summer of Flashback Fridays.** Share your favorite summer photo and/or memory via social media (#fbf), and pay a visit to a local summer program. Challenge friends and leaders in your community to do the same all summer long!
- 4 Spread the word about your community's summer learning resources to families.** Promote summer school, parks and recreation summer camps, and community-based programs and direct families to sign up. Publicize subsidized summer meals sites for low-income children and direct families to sign up. Download and distribute NSLA's family tip sheets with learning and healthy living ideas for the summer months.
- 5 Set a goal to #KeepKidsLearning all summer long.** Set a goal for your city to reach more kids than ever before this summer and ask your community to add summer programs to NSLA's SummerLearningDayMap.org. Be among the top 25 cities that serve the greatest number of children this summer and be recognized by NSLA as a summer learning champion!



[SummerLearningDayMap.org](http://SummerLearningDayMap.org)

**SAMPLE  
PROCLAMATION**  
for Summer Learning Day

**July 14, 2016**



**Whereas:** Summer Learning Day is a day to reflect on the importance of keeping youth learning, safe, and healthy every summer, ensuring they return to school in the fall ready to succeed in the year ahead; and

**Whereas:** Summer learning loss is a significant contributor to the achievement gap — a gap which remains constant during the nine months of the school year but widens during the summer months; and

**Whereas:** Summer learning programs are proven to maintain and advance students' academic and social growth, keep children safe and healthy during the summer, and send young people back to school ready to learn. Additionally, summer youth employment programs engage older youth in meaningful activities that allow them to explore careers of interest, take on new responsibilities, contribute to their community, and earn money for the future; and

**Whereas:** A wide array of public agencies, community-based organizations, schools, libraries, museums, recreation centers, camps, and businesses in our community contribute to the well-being of youth through summer programming; and

**Whereas:** Summer learning is a critical component of our collective effort to ensure all students graduate from high school prepared for college, careers, and life;

Now, therefore, I \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby proclaim July 14, 2016 as **SUMMER LEARNING DAY** in \_\_\_\_\_, and do commend this observance to all of our citizens.

## SUMMER LEARNING OP-ED FRAMEWORK

Note: The framework below is intended to spark ideas as you draft an op-ed that best captures a perspective anchored in a timely, fresh new way and your personal connection to the summer learning issue.



**PLACEHOLDER HEADLINE THAT IDENTIFIES KEY FOCUS OF OP-ED** (Editors typically write their own headlines but this should give them a good sense of what the piece is about.)

By AUTHOR NAME(S)

**OPEN WITH AN ATTENTION-GRABBING STATISTIC, PERSONAL ANECDOTE OR CLEAR STATEMENT OF YOUR MESSAGE – THE MORE ENGAGING THE BETTER.** For example: Despite rapidly growing jobs in sectors demanding advanced skills, too many youth fail to make it through the workforce pipeline with the skills and education needed to succeed. While there are many reasons for this alarming trend, it's time we stop overlooking the largely untapped potential of summer to boost learning and develop our next generation of business leaders.

**DISCUSS THE PROBLEM OF SUMMER LEARNING LOSS.** Summers without quality learning opportunities put our nation's youth at risk for falling behind – year after year – in core subjects like math and reading. By fifth grade, cumulative years of summer learning loss can leave low-income students 2.5 to three years behind their peers.

**OUTLINE THE RESEARCH CASE FOR SUMMER LEARNING.** For example: Research shows that high-quality learning opportunities of all kinds during the summer can make a difference in stemming learning loss—and ultimately, close the country's achievement gap between lower- and higher-income kids and better prepare our future workforce.

**GIVE EXAMPLES** (if applicable) of successful programs, opportunities and, if possible, include a real person or details.

**DISCUSS LACK OF ACCESS.** Unfortunately, most children and youth do not have access to high quality learning opportunities that will keep their hard-earned academic skills fresh.

**SUMMARIZE A KEY POLICY GOAL OR SOLUTION.**

**CONCLUSION:** If we want to effectively prepare children to become our next CEOs and high-skilled workers, we must invest in summer.

.....  
*One sentence bio about author.*



## Supporting Points on Summer Learning

Consider the following data and message points when making the case for summer learning.

### **Points about summer learning loss and access to opportunities**

- Research shows that summers without quality learning opportunities put our nation's youth at risk for falling behind – year after year – in core subjects like math and reading.
- Every summer, low-income youth lose two to three months in reading achievement while their higher-income peers make slight gains.<sup>1</sup> And, most youth lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in math skills in the summer. Year after year, these losses accumulate.
- By the end of third grade, four out of every five low-income students fail to read proficiently, making them four times more likely to drop out of high school.<sup>2</sup>
- By fifth grade, cumulative years of summer learning loss can leave low-income students 2.5 to three years behind their peers.<sup>3</sup>
- The size of the achievement gap remains constant during the nine months of the school year but widens during the summer months.<sup>4</sup>
- Only about one-third of households participate in a summer learning opportunity. Of those opportunities, many are not designed to stem summer learning loss.<sup>5</sup>
- It's like a faucet. During the school year, the faucet is on and all children have access to learning opportunities and resources because of equal access to public education. But during the summer, the faucet is turned off for low-income children.

### **Points about how summer learning makes a difference**

- High quality learning opportunities of all kinds during the summer (they can be voluntary or mandatory, at school, community organizations or at home) can make a difference in stemming learning loss, and ultimately, closing the country's achievement gap.
- High-quality summer learning works. Research is emerging and there are examples of effective programs across the country.
- High-quality summer learning programs have been shown to improve reading and math skills, school "attachment," motivation, and relationships with adults and peers.
- "Quality" is well-defined and rooted in research. A major study from RAND Corp. shows that individualized academic instruction, parental involvement, and smaller class sizes are a few components of high-quality programs that are making a difference.<sup>6</sup> Quality programs also often provide access to opportunities that support health and nutrition.

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, H., Nye, B., Charlton, K., Lindsay, J., & Greathouse, S. (1996). The effects of summer vacation on achievement test scores: A narrative and meta-analytic review. *Review of Educational Research*, 66, 227-268.

<sup>2</sup> Hernandez, D. (2012). *Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation*. Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, H., Borman, G., & Fairchild, R. (2010). "School Calendars and Academic Achievement." In J. Meece & J. Eccles (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Schools, Schooling, and Human Development* (pp. 342-355). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

<sup>4</sup>Thernstrom, Abigail and Thernstrom, Stephan. (2003). *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*. New York: Simon and Shuster.

<sup>5</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *America After 3pm*. Washington, D.C.: Afterschool Alliance.

<sup>6</sup> McCombs, J., Augustine, C., Schwartz, H., Bodilly, S., McInnis, B., Lichter, D., Cross, A. (2011). *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Education.

### ***Points about Summer Learning Day***

- The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) and its national network of partners will join together for Summer Learning Day on July 14) – an annual national advocacy day led by NSLA to elevate the importance of keeping kids learning, safe and healthy every summer.
- In 2015, NSLA partnered with First Lady Michelle Obama in a video message about the importance of summer learning. Watch it at [summerlearning.org/SLD](http://summerlearning.org/SLD).
- In 2016, hundreds of events are expected to take place when communities across the nation celebrate Summer Learning Day on July 14.

### ***Points about federal and state policy***

- Many states are taking action to improve access to high-quality summer learning programs. In 2015, states introduced over 175 bills that touch on summer learning opportunities across many states.
- Congress has work to do to fund summer learning, afterschool and extended learning programs in a way that adds to, rather than competes with, other student services provided by schools.
- The Senate's action to preserve the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program in ESEA is a good first step. NSLA urges Senate and House leaders to agree that maintaining the only federal funding for out-of-school time programs is a vital investment in youth and their outcomes in school and in life.
- School- and community-based summer programs play a critical role in child nutrition, serving as feeding sites for the federal summer meals program. Summer meals ensure that low-income students who rely on subsidized meals during the school year do not go hungry in the summer, and draw students to attend learning and enrichment programs.
- Summer learning programs keep kids safe and engaged during the summer. Compared to their more affluent peers, many low-income students are stuck at home in less meaningful activities or in caregiving for younger siblings. Structured programs give these students supervision and engagement that keeps them off the streets and engaged in meaningful learning.



## SUMMER LEARNING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MAYORS

Help spread the word to  
#KeepKidsLearning by  
taking the National  
Summer Learning  
Association's pledge:  
<http://bit.ly/SLDPledge>.



### Tweets for Twitter

- #SummerLearning loss is a significant contributor to the #AchievementGap. #KeepKidsLearning [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- Low-income kids experience lack of quality learning during the summer. #KeepKidsLearning [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- U.S. cities turn away 1000's of teens every summer due to lack of #SummerLearning opps & jobs.
- Studies confirm youth continue to decide where/whether to attend college during summer. #KeepKidsLearning [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- #SummerLearning CAN make a difference in college access and completion. #KeepKidsLearning [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- #SummerLearning is a key strategy to get kids @readingby3rd grade. #KeepKidsLearning #GLReading

### Posts for Facebook

- By 5th grade, cumulative years of summer learning loss can leave low-income students 2.5 to 3 years behind peers. [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- Size of the achievement gap remains constant during the 9 months of the school year but widens during summer. [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- The highest-income families spend five times more than lower-income families on enrichment opportunities year round. [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- 6 out of every 7 students who receive free- and reduced-price lunches lose access to them when school lets out. [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- Research shows that children gain weight twice as fast over the summer than during the school year. [summerlearning.org](http://summerlearning.org)
- See how school superintendents are using the @WallaceFoundation National Summer Learning Project's near-term findings. Video, report and more are available at [wallacefoundation.org/readyforfall](http://wallacefoundation.org/readyforfall)

# WE SHOULD ALL BE CONNECTED

Together we can make it happen.

The Internet belongs in the home. It has the power to connect families to a world of knowledge and opportunities, including greater access to education, healthcare, employment, news, and information.

Internet Essentials<sup>SM</sup> from Comcast brings high-speed Internet home to low-income families for **\$9.95/month**. Families may qualify for the program if they have at least one child eligible for the National School Lunch Program.

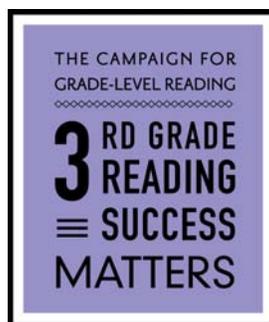
Since the program's launch in 2011, Internet Essentials has helped more than 500,000 families get connected.

And we couldn't do it without our amazing partner organizations. Together we can bring the Internet home to even more families across the country and help transform even more lives.

Visit [InternetEssentials.com/Partner](http://InternetEssentials.com/Partner) to learn more.



We are thankful for our national summer learning partner organizations:



Follow NSLA on Twitter at [@SummerLearning](https://twitter.com/SummerLearning) and on Facebook at [facebook.com/SmarterSummers](https://facebook.com/SmarterSummers)



national summer  
learning association

# SUMMER LEARNING DAY AND BEYOND

The National Summer Learning Association calls upon mayors across the country to lead efforts to combat summer learning loss and ensure that children do not fall behind over the summer months. Summer Learning Day is July 14, 2016, but summer learning must be planned throughout the year. How will you stand up for summer learning and put your community on the map?

## Summer Learning Loss

Research shows that summers without quality learning opportunities put our nation's youth at risk for falling behind – year after year – in core subjects like math and reading. The math and reading skills low-income students lose each summer are cumulative and contribute significantly to the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income kids.

Many kinds of high-quality learning opportunities during the summer can make a difference in stemming learning loss and ultimately, closing the country's achievement gap.

## What Mayors Can Do

- **Use the bully pulpit:** Parents and community members need to know that summer learning loss erodes the academic gains that students make throughout the year. Take every opportunity, including op-eds and media interviews, to speak about the problem and point families to effective school, agency, and community-based programs.
- **Use the conference table:** Pull together city agencies, community partners, and funders to coordinate summer learning planning and service delivery. Support their development of common tools, messages, data-collection, and evaluation efforts to increase reach, impact, and quality.
- **Use the lunch table:** Summer nutrition programs ensure that children who rely on school for breakfast and lunch do not go hungry in the summer months. Meal programs can be combined with learning opportunities so that both minds and bodies are nourished.
- **Use your political influence:** Summer learning is an integral part of a child's education and ensures education investments implemented during the school year do not go to waste. However, summer is often overlooked in state education budgets. Speak to your legislators and policymakers about the importance of summer learning programs in your community.
- **Use the business roundtable:** Summer employment programs for older students pay dividends to youth, businesses, and the community. Students earn money for their future, learn new skills, and explore career interests. Businesses have an early opportunity to tap into their future workforce. And communities benefit from youth contributions to public projects and lower incarceration rates as youth remain engaged throughout the summer. Promote a summer youth employment program and ensure agencies and businesses have meaningful opportunities for summer youth workers.
- **Use your imagination!** Recall what was meaningful to you about the summertime: Reading a good book? Attending sports camp? Exploring nature? Visiting museums? Learning a new skill? Create or sponsor local activities and partnerships that ensure low-income children have access to the same fun and enriching experiences that made your own summers meaningful and memorable.



# Summer Learning Day

JULY 14



#KeepKidsLearning

## SUMMER LEARNING IDEAS AT HOME AND IN YOUR COMMUNITY

All kids need to keep learning over the summer. If they don't, they lose what they've learned during the school year, and those losses add up year after year. Following are some ways you can help your child learn during the summer months and send them back ready for the new school year.



### Read at home every day.

Help your child pick books that interest them, set reading goals, and reward their efforts. Start a family book club. Read a book, watch the movie, and talk about the differences with your child.



### Visit a library.

Libraries have more than just books. Your child can experience technology, create new things, and often get a healthy meal at some local libraries. Sign you and your child up for your library's free summer programs so you can explore and learn new skills together.



### Keep a summer journal.

Have your child keep a journal about the books they are reading, their favorite summer events or activities, and the new friends they've made.



### Look for free or low-cost activities near you.

Take trips to your local museum, aquarium, zoo, park, or nature center. Encourage kids to write about their trip and what they thought about it in their summer journal.



### Plant a garden.

Start simple with a tomato container garden or fresh herbs grown on your kitchen window sill. It's a great way to encourage healthy eating with your child.



### Use counting skills in daily activities or errands.

Baking a cake? Let your child help count out the ingredients or minutes to mix the batter. Turn a grocery trip into a math lesson. Use coupons and help your child determine the discount.



### Volunteer together.

Volunteering builds life skills and compassion. Help spruce up a school or local park, collect supplies for a shelter, or serve food at a soup kitchen.



### Be active.

Get outside with your child. Visit a park for a nature walk, ride bikes, or check out your community's parks and recreation programs that may offer many fun options.



### Get creative.

Let your child's imagination soar. Turn everyday household items like cardboard tubes into rockets or old socks into hand puppets. Let them make up their own songs or dances.



# Summer Learning Day

JULY 14



#KeepKidsLearning

## TIPS TO KEEP TWEENS AND TEENS LEARNING DURING THE SUMMER

No matter their age, it's important for ALL kids to keep learning over the summer. Here are some ways to keep your tween or teen learning over the summer.



### Talk with your child's teacher.

Attend or ask for parent-teacher meetings to find out how your child can use the summer to get ready for the next grade. Find out what subjects are your child's favorite. Ask the teacher for some fun and creative ideas to practice skills during summer.



### Read with your child.

Ask if your child's teacher has a book list or ideas for reading that will interest your tween or teen. You can also check with the school librarian. Let your child choose the books they read. Start a "book club" by reading a book with your child and talking about it.



### Talk about college and career.

Summer is a great time to explore college and career options with your child. Visit college campuses. Connect your child with a mentor who works in a career that interests them. Help them write a resume. Find a summer internship or job with websites like [www.LandMe.org](http://www.LandMe.org).



### Be active.

Keep your child active in the summer. Kids gain weight two to three times faster during the summer than the school year. Play a game of basketball, visit your community pool, or take regular walks as a family.



### Get outside.

Summer is the perfect season to take advantage of outdoor resources in your community. There are a lot of learning opportunities outdoors. Contact your local parks and recreation program to learn more.



### Plan a project.

Does your child want to give his or her room a new look? Have them sketch out design ideas, plan a budget, calculate the area needed for paint, price materials, and manage a timeline.



### Make it social.

Many tweens and teens want to spend free time with friends. Talk with the parents of your child's friends and plan a group project or series of activities that involve reading, being outside to explore, or even brushing up on math through shopping, cooking, or having a yard sale.



### Let them choose.

As they become more independent, tweens and teens want more choices and input into how they spend their time. Give them ideas and options, but let them choose.



### Use rewards.

Think creatively about rewards for your tween or teen to keep them learning over the summer. Create "Dad" or "Mom dollars" to complete "learning challenges" that can be spent to purchase privileges or experiences—a sleepover with a friend or their favorite meal or treat.



# Summer Learning Day

JULY 14



#KeepKidsLearning

## KEEP KIDS ACTIVE AND HEALTHY DURING THE SUMMER

It's important for all young people to keep active and eating healthy while school is out. Without the structure and resources that the school year offer, children are at greater risk for weight gain and unhealthy eating habits during the summer months. Here are some ways you can incorporate fun activity and nutrition into your child's summer.



### Look for a local summer program that promotes physical activity and healthy eating.

Ask about the activities your child will be involved in, as well as the type of meals they will be eating.



### Encourage your child to get outside and play.

Ride a bike, join in on a neighborhood basketball or soccer game, or take a nature walk. Just make sure your child drinks plenty of water while out in the heat.



### Be active with your child.

Take a walk together or create a scavenger hunt. It's a great opportunity to not only get some physical activity for you and your child, but it's a chance to bond.



### Take advantage of local pools and recreation centers.

Many communities have free or low-cost facilities for youth. Call or check your local city or town's website to obtain more information on what resources are available for your child during the summer.



### Keep healthy snacks around the house.

Freeze some grapes or place a popsicle stick in the middle of a yogurt cup to make a frozen treat. Fill half your child's plate with fruits and vegetables daily. Select fruit and vegetables in season. They taste better and are usually cheaper.



### Turn off the TV and computer.

According to a study by the YMCA of the USA, 50 percent of parents said computers, cell phones, and the television keep kids from being active and healthy. Encourage your kids to turn off the gadgets and be active with friends or family instead.



### Give kids toys that encourage active play.

Basketballs or soccer balls, jump ropes, or kites encourage physical activity. Outdoor games that the family can play together, such as dodge ball or baseball, are a great way to get everyone moving.



### Find a summer food site near you.

Many programs, libraries, and other locations provide federally-funded summer meals through the USDA Summer Food Service Program. Visit [www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks](http://www.fns.usda.gov/summerfoodrocks) to find a summer meal site near you.



### Make healthy food with your child.

Involve your child in preparing healthy meals and snacks. Take your child grocery shopping for ingredients and discuss foods that are good for them, such as fruits and vegetables.