



Inclusion of Summer Opportunities within State Plans for the Every Student Succeeds Act

A Guide for Stakeholders

Summer learning loss has a tremendous impact on students' short- and long-term academic success. Smart use of resources in the summer not only prevents the summer slide, but also ensures that students go back to school motivated, engaged, and ready to learn in the fall. Teachers also benefit from summer programs as a time to refine their practice and to develop deeper relationships with students and families. **Investments in summer learning ensure that expenditures made during the school year don't go to waste.**

The National Summer Learning Association is the only national organization exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works in the field, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and advocates for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. Each year we connect with thousands of programs serving millions of kids, in countless kinds of summer learning and enrichment experiences.

From this perspective, NSLA identifies many opportunities in ESSA to support summer learning, and recommends states include consideration of summer opportunities in creating implementation plans in three key ways:

- Promoting flexibility of funding and allowance of program delivery during the summer months;
- Fostering collaboration and coordination among partners, programs, and schools to ensure maximum impact of these efforts and seamless year-round integration of services; and
- Engaging a wide range of stakeholders who support students with education services during the summer months, including schools, teachers, libraries, community-based and faith-based program providers, public housing partners, and others.



Opportunities for summer learning explicitly established within ESSA

ESSA already contains many explicit references to summer learning and enrichment opportunities. Many of these programs were established under the previous version of the law and are continued here. States will have new flexibility to make adjustments to their administration of these programs under ESSA, and in some cases the programs may have different requirements under ESSA.

It is important to note that the language around “summer” differs across programs and may be described as “summer recess,” “out-of-school time,” “periods when school is not in session,” or “non-school hours.” Be creative about looking for these references in the law, and in your state plans.

Title I

- Summer programs are an allowable activity for Targeted Assistance Schools (Sec 1009(b)(2)(B)).
- Summer programs are an allowable activity for the Education of Migratory Children (Sec 1301(1)).

Title II

- The definition of “comprehensive literacy instruction plans” described in Sec. 2221 (Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN)) includes partnership with private and nonprofit partners, and notes that “it is not required that these activities be carried out in a classroom setting.”
- When designing comprehensive literacy plans, local entities may include activities that “are augmented by after-school and out-of-school time instruction” (Sec 2224(c)(1)(C)).
- An explicitly allowable use for these local sub-grants is “connecting out of-school learning opportunities to in-school learning in order to improve children’s literacy achievement” (Sec 2224(e)(2)).

Title III

- Community-based organizations are specified in several places as key partners for these activities, and community engagement as a strategy for engaging ELL and immigrant students and connecting families to learning.
- Community-based organizational personnel are included for professional development under this Title. Shared professional development is a key strategy for aligning school-based and community-based programming over the summer months, and connecting learning year-round.

Title IV

- The 21st Century Community Learning Center program is preserved for programming that takes place “during non-school hours or periods when school is not in session (such as before and after school or during summer recess)” (Sec 4201(b)(1)(A)).
- Community based (“external”) organizations that may be partners to LEAs and schools under this program should be those “with a record of success in running or working with before and after school (or summer recess) programs and activities” (Sec 4201(b)(4)(A)).
- Requirement of meaningful partnerships between schools and community programs ensures seamless integration of learning activities across different settings.



- Reauthorization of the Promise Neighborhoods program includes references to expanded learning time and the Summer Food Service Program (Sec 4624).
- The definition of a “full service community school” includes “access to services ... during the summer” and required services include “out-of-school-time programs and strategies” (Sec 4622).
- The Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program mentions summer programs as one type of “innovative methods and strategies” to serve these students (Sec 4644(c)(2)).

Specific recommendations to states for improving opportunities for summer learning and partnerships

Title I

Title I funds are commonly used by LEAs to provide summer school programs for students who are falling behind, are ready to move ahead, or have specialized academic needs or interests that cannot be fulfilled during the regular school year. Special populations of students can particularly benefit from targeted intervention during the summer months.

Recommendations

- The LEA’s identified for comprehensive support and improvement “shall, for each school identified by the State and in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers, and parents), locally develop and implement a comprehensive support and improvement plan for the school to improve student outcomes” (Sec 1111 (d)(2)(B)(i)). States should also require inclusion of community partners, which are named as stakeholders for LEA and SEA planning in other Titles of ESSA.
- Clarify summer as an allowable use of additional funds for Direct Student Services (Sec 1003A), which in particular names many learning activities that take place in the summer such as advanced coursework, credit recovery, and career and technical education.
- Where states are required to include at least “one indicator of school quality or student success” (Sec 1111 (c)(4)(B)(v)) in their accountability systems, look to summer and other out-of-school time partners and stakeholders for input on high-quality, meaningful indicators of student engagement and success. These programs are experts in supporting and measuring student social-emotional development.

Title II

Pre-service and practicing teachers benefit from summer opportunities to engage more deeply with students and refine their teaching practice, particularly for students with targeted skill gaps and needs. Overall, schools should be encouraged to combine Title II with Title I funding to offer summer school programs that can pay dividends in skill growth for both teachers and students. Conversation among the NSLA New Vision for Summer School (NVSS) network of districts providing exemplary summer school programs reveals that a key element for success is positioning summer school teaching as a professional



development experience, resulting in the district's best teachers applying for these positions. These teachers consistently report positive professional growth and development as a result of these activities.

Recommendations:

Part A – Supporting Effective Instruction

- Clarify that summer school is a rich opportunity for pre-service training, career advancement training, and professional development for teachers and principals (Sec 2101(c)(4)). This section specifically calls out blended learning and career and technical education, which are common instructional strategies and areas in summer programs. (Sec 2101(c)(4)(B)).
- Emphasize that summer offers focused opportunities for principals and teachers to develop and refine their knowledge and practices, particularly around these activities (community engagement, parent engagement, and coordination of community services). (Sec 2103(b)(3)(E)).
- Allow that school library programs may take place in the summer months (Sec 2103(b)(3)(k)).
- Note that Sec 2103(b)(3)(M) and (O) respectively call out STEM and CTE programs, which are common instructional topics in the summer months.

Part B, Subpart 2: Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN)

- Strengthen the language stating that literacy plans may include activities that “are augmented by after-school and out-of-school time instruction” (Sec 2224(c)(1)(C)). For many students, summer learning is a critical component in catching up students who are at-risk or have fallen behind in reading, and many states include summer programming as a key strategy for fostering literacy achievement.
- Clarify that summer and other out-of-school time learning opportunities allowed under this program may be different than traditional summer school that many states have mandated for students who are reading below grade level. Summer learning should not be a punishment, but rather a time when learning is driven by students’ interests as well as their needs. As required by LEARN, summer programs should be informed by collaboration with teachers, but this should not translate only to a summer school model. Schools, library programs, and other community providers should be able to utilize these funds for activities beyond summer school.
- Clarify that library-based reading programs are an allowable use of these funds and are an ideal strategy for achieving the two goals of “connecting out-of-school learning opportunities to in-school learning in order to improve children’s literacy achievement; [and] training families and caregivers to support the improvement of adolescent literacy” (Sec 2224(e)(2) and (3)). While school librarians are called out as stakeholders for state and local plans, consider including public librarians as additional resources particularly for OST programming, and especially in communities where school libraries may be under-resourced or closed for the summer.
- Note that the language of “integrat[ing] comprehensive literacy instruction into a **well-rounded education**” (Sec 2224(d)(4)) for older youth suggests potential coordination with grants under Title IV Part A, which also reference a well-rounded education.



Sec 2226 – Innovative Approaches to Literacy

- While we are glad that these grants may go to “programs that provide high-quality books on a regular basis to children and adolescents from low-income communities to increase reading motivation, performance, and frequency” (Sec 2226(a)(3)), we encourage states to recognize research showing that book distribution programs alone are insufficient to improve literacy skills.¹ For these programs to be effective, they must be coupled with comprehension scaffolding which can come from teachers, guides for parents, library staff, community-based programs, and many other resources. Therefore, plans for these type of programs should include support structures and resources that are combined with distributed books.

Title III

Summer programming is an ideal time to offer rapid, focused, and intensive English-language instruction, and many of the provisions for ELL and immigrant students (and their teachers) fit perfectly with a summer instructional and/or partnership model. Additionally, by integrating ELL summer schooling with other mandated summer school activities, schools and districts can leverage two critical funding streams into one overarching activity that serves overlapping populations with similar needs and also maximizes resources.

Recommendations:

- Clarify that summer school and more generally, summer learning, are appropriate and effective uses of these funds to support students under Sec 3115(a), (d), and (e).
- Allow summer teaching as a professional development model that well aligns with the requirements of Sec 3115(c), particularly the requirement that such models be “of sufficient duration and intensity... to have a positive and lasting impact on the teachers’ performance in the classroom” (Sec 3115(c)(2)(D)).
- Emphasize that innovative digital badging models are an ideal use of these funds for expanding ELL learning beyond the classroom in the summer, in accordance with Sec 3115(d)(7)(B).

Title IV

The preservation of the 21st Century Community Learning Center program for out-of-school time programming is a critical step in ensuring states and districts have the resources to provide students a truly well-rounded education, particularly those who most lack these opportunities at home. This Title acknowledges that schools cannot and should not do this work alone. Community-based partners like libraries and nonprofits provide high-quality programming and expertise in youth development, expanded learning after the bell rings. Extending these programs into the summer months ensures that students most at-risk do not fall behind peers due to summer learning loss, and allows students to have

¹ Kim, J. (2006). The effects of a voluntary summer reading intervention on reading achievement: Results from a randomized field trial. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 28, 335-355.



greater voice in their own learning path—building motivation and engagement that carries over into the school year. Meaningful partnerships between schools and community programs ensures seamless integration of learning activities across different settings.

Part A – Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants.

The language describing coordination and integration of this program is critically important. We applaud the wide range of named allowable activities that fall under Well-Rounded Education, and the call for partnerships and “coordination with community-based services and programs” (Sec 4107(a)(1)).

Recommendations:

- Clarify that these activities need not take place during the school day or school year (Sec 4101), particularly as other programs under this Title specifically recognize the allowable use of summer and OST (e.g., Secs. 4201, 4624, 4625, and 4644).
- In the description of STEM programming and activities under this program, clarify that summer activities are an allowable use of these funds and that summer providers should be included in these collaborations (Sec 4107 (a)(3)(C)(v)).
- Take advantage of the call for coordination, and emphasize the need for a community systems-approach to learning that includes school year and summer providers and stakeholders. Such coordination will also maximize use of smaller pots of funding by pooling them toward common goals and strategies.

Part B – 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Recommendations:

- Programs must demonstrate “active collaboration with the schools that participating students attend (including through the sharing of relevant data among the schools)” (Sec 4204(b)(2)(D)). In practice, programs often have difficulty accessing these data and creating meaningful partnerships with schools due to district capacity and lack of understanding about allowable data-sharing agreements. We ask states to give clear guidance to LEA’s in the allowable and appropriate use of data for these purposes.
- In requiring states to specify performance indicators and measures for these programs, we encourage states to consider integration of their non-academic accountability measure under Title I with these evaluation options (Sec 4203(a)(14)(A)). Out-of-school time programs are often well-suited to developing youth outcomes beyond academic performance, and we hope that under the new law, states will look to community and OST programs as a critical resource for helping students, schools, and districts meet these new, nonacademic measures of accountability.
- Sec 4204 offers a different definition of Expanded Learning Time than Sec 8002. In absence of clarification from ED, we encourage states to adopt the best parts of both definitions: requiring ELT programs to conduct the types of activities as laid out in Title IV, while allowing ELT to mean “a longer school day, week, or year schedule to significantly increase the total number of school hours” (Sec 8002(6)). The most critical aspect of expanding learning time is to ensure that this



learning time feels different from the school day, which increases student engagement and makes this time more effective. Community partnerships and instructional models that address learning through enrichment activities are best suited to meet this need.

- We encourage states to allow current 21st CCLC grantees to finish out their current 3 to 5 year grants rather than terminating them and requiring them to reapply under a new ESSA 21st CCLC RFP, to minimize interruptions in program planning and to make best use of funds that have already been distributed to launch new programs.
- To date, 19 states have made summer programming either a requirement or a priority for these subgrants. We ask that more states actively support summer activities under this program.

Please contact the National Summer Learning Association with any questions or comments on this guide, or policy issues related to summer learning.