



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Laura Johnson

ljohnson@summerlearning.org

410-300-6468

AWARD-WINNING ACTOR AND AUTHOR, HILL HARPER, TO KEYNOTE SUMMER CHANGES EVERYTHING™ NATIONAL CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 12-14

Kansas City, MO to serve as host city to nearly 1,000 out-of-school time leaders committed to summer learning as a solution to closing the achievement and opportunity gap in America

(Baltimore, MD – August 28, 2018) – “How was summer break?” That’s the question teachers across the country often ask at the start of a new school year. Depending on a child’s zip code, these answers will vary, as not all summers are created equal. Decades of research, tracked and curated by the [National Summer Learning Association \(NSLA\)](#), reveals that summer learning loss constitutes a most significant, if largely unrecognized, threat to academic achievement in America. It is primarily during the summer months that tens of millions of American children go backwards academically, causing the achievement gap between rich and poor to increase dramatically. Recent research, however, shows that high-quality summer learning programs maintain and advance students’ academic and social growth, keep children safe and healthy, and send students back to school ready to learn.

With this as a backdrop, NSLA takes its national conference, Summer Changes Everything™, to The Heart of America - Kansas City, MO, November 12-14, 2018 and is pleased to announce Hill Harper as its keynote speaker. Hill Harper is an award-winning actor, author, and Founder of the Manifest Your Destiny Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to helping underserved youth succeed through education, mentorship, and grant programs. Hill Harper currently stars as Dr. Marcus Andrews on TV’s #1 new drama, The Good Doctor on ABC, and is a four-time New York Times best-selling author.

Harper will be joined by a who’s who of speakers and industry influencers, including Maxine Clark, creator of the Blueprint4Summer app and Founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop®, scientist and Miss USA 2017 - Kara McCullough, along with Miss Teen USA 2017, Sophia Dominguez-Heithoff of Kansas City – individuals all committed to education and expanded access to summer learning opportunities.

“We are thrilled to host the 2018 Summer Changes Everything™ national conference. Summer learning eliminates the ‘summer slide’ and enables students to return to school in the fall ready for new material rather than spending valuable classroom time reviewing lessons from the previous year,” said Mayor Sly James. “I look forward to meeting key stakeholders and leaders from across the country to share sustainable solutions that translate to more positive outcomes for our students.”

As the foremost authority on summer learning quality practices, policy and research, NSLA's national conference aims to elevate the essential role that summer and afterschool programs have in closing the achievement and opportunity gaps in America. Bringing together stakeholders from across the country to share different perspectives, NSLA is striving to formulate a national action agenda to propel out-of-school time learning to the forefront of education improvement efforts and to maximize the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). ESSA includes provisions that help ensure success for students and schools while upholding critical protections for America's disadvantaged and high-need students. The law offers new opportunities for states to build on partnerships and proven strategies such as summer learning.

Attendees can expect creative and dynamic workshops that will enable the growing field of out-of-school time professionals to build, strengthen and expand life-changing summer opportunities for all young people. These sessions will advance evidence-based practices, effective partnership strategies, and leadership development at every level, as well as examine learning trends and policy implications that will have a direct impact on all students.

"I'm proud to have been selected as the honorary chair for the National Summer Learning Association's host committee," said Maxine Clark, Founder of Blueprint4Summer, Build-A-Bear Workshop® and Clark-Fox Family Foundation CEO. "It is our responsibility to develop programs, solutions and strategies to combat the summer slide and make inspiring summer opportunities accessible for all."

NSLA will also honor the winners of the coveted 2018 New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning Award for model summer program practices that promote healthy development for low-income children and youth during the summer.

To register for the conference visit [here](#). To learn more about becoming an exhibitor or sponsor visit [here](#).

#####

About National Summer Learning Association

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works in summer learning, develops and delivers capacity-building offerings and convenes and empowers key actors to embrace summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org.