



**national summer  
learning association**

# Summer Learning

**A Bridge to Student Success  
and America's Recovery**

**A COVID-19 PLAYBOOK**

Photo courtesy of the Miracle Makers:  
East End Community Services, 2017



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and America's Recovery

A COVID-19 PLAYBOOK



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# Message from the CEO

## Dear Education and Community Partner:

The COVID-19 health crisis has upended our lives in ways we could never imagine and has exposed, grown, and exacerbated the digital divide, food and financial instability, childcare issues, opportunity gaps and learning losses millions of underserved students and their families actually face every summer. While we cannot predict the length of this pandemic, we know demand for human support services is dramatically increasing and resources to pay for them declining.

To successfully navigate this time, education and community leaders must be hyper-creative, collaborative, and empathetic in how we tackle issues of equity and utilize summer as a critical bridge to a successful school year, particularly for students from low income families, English language learners, students with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness or foster care, and students engaged in the juvenile justice system. In doing so, we must address unfinished learning, coordinate tailored and engaging learning experiences in school and out of school, online and in-person. We must maintain social and emotional connections that help build resiliency and success for every student.

For more than 25 years, the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) has led the movement to ensure every young person in America, regardless of their background, zip code or income, can access and participate in life-changing experiences every summer. It's my belief that social entrepreneurs in education are often drawn to summer and out of school (OST) time programs because of the opportunity to develop creative solutions to communal problems and awaken young people's passions, grow their resiliency and foster learning in ways not always offered during the school year.

During this pandemic, NSLA has convened a National Summer and Continuous Learning Taskforce with two dozen national experts and partner groups focused on meeting the varied needs of families, students and communities. In this playbook, we have collected their insights and resources and combined them with NSLA tools to help local leaders and families plan for the school year and summer ahead. Now more than ever, summer is essential to the healthy development, well-being and continuous learning of every student and critical to helping America navigate this crisis and end up even stronger on the other side. We thank you for your leadership and commitment to students. We look forward to supporting you every step of the way.

Summer matters,

Aaron Philip Dworkin  
National Summer Learning Association  
Chief Executive Officer

# Introduction

## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

According to the RAND Corporation and Wallace Foundation report, [Investing in Successful Summer Programs](#), summertime can be used to support an array of goals for children and youth, including academic enrichment, physical and mental health, social-emotional well-being, and the development of interests.

The only way we're truly going to make critical summer learning and enrichment opportunities more readily available through this pandemic and beyond is through ingenuity and partnerships. It will take all of us—state and local leaders, parents, educators, and community partners—working together to ensure America's students come out of this crisis stronger.

The purpose of this playbook is to provide a long-term, comprehensive, and sustainable framework for planning, collaborating, and executing evidence-based practices and partnerships for high-quality summer and out-of-school time (OST) experiences.





## NSLA Believes Summer is a Time For:

**INNOVATION:** An opportunity for school districts, community partners, municipal leaders, and OST providers to improve school-year teaching and learning by testing new curricula, technology, and instructional strategies (particularly in virtual environments) before scaling.

**INSPIRATION:** Learning happens anywhere, anytime, and offers a chance to individualize learning and to explore project-based experiences that help students acquire deeper knowledge of themselves and the world around them.

**INTEGRATION:** An opportunity to break down systemic barriers and community silos to create a safety net that equitably supports the whole student.

**IMPACT:** Recent research offers conclusive evidence that summer is an opportunity to close academic and opportunity gaps while promoting healthy development and well-being for students to thrive.



# Policies and Funding That Advance Summer Learning

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A [survey](#) conducted in early June 2020 by the National League of Cities (NLC) of more than 1,100 cities, towns, and villages from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico found that two-thirds of cities reported that they were making cuts to summer-specific programming, including summer youth employment programs, summer camps, municipal pools, and festivals and events.

This points to the urgent need for parents, educators, advocates, business leaders, and policymakers to each take a stand to protect and expand summer learning opportunities in communities across the country.

Specifically, policymakers must implement legislation that improves the accessibility and availability of summer programs. Effective policies must address the unmet demand that families have for quality summer experiences and childcare, and improve access to critical summer nutrition programs as food insecurity needs rise.



**District-level summer program leaders may be able to promote summer learning program sustainability, scale, and quality by setting a board policy on summer programming; authorizing a central body to carry out decision-making; measuring and communicating the impact of summer programming to justify spending and support; cultivating relationships with district, city, state, and federal decision-makers; and advocating for clear funding messages from state agency staff.**

**RAND Corporation/Wallace Foundation Research Brief:**  
[Navigating Federal, State, and Local Program Support Opportunities](#)





Educators across the country agree that summers matter and “offer opportunities for social and academic growth, but can also put disadvantaged children at risk for worse outcomes,” according to the first cross-sector report, *Shaping Summertime Experiences: Opportunities to Promote Healthy Development and Well-Being for Children and Youth*, released by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS).

The NAS Committee on Summertime Experiences and Child and Adolescent Education, Health, and Safety identified nine recommendations to address obstacles that disadvantaged children can face during the summer, including lack of access to quality programs, food insecurity, and exposure to unsafe and dangerous conditions, and to help all children develop positively and stay connected to community resources.

### Key Recommendations Include:

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** Local governments (e.g., county, city) should establish a quality management system (QMS) to identify and provide positive developmental summertime experiences for children and youth, experiences that advance academic learning, improve health and well-being, and promote safety and social and emotional development.

**RECOMMENDATION 2:** Foundations and other philanthropic organizations should augment their funding, technology, and in-kind supports to intermediaries that are creating systems, platforms, and communication vehicles for—and promoting promising and effective practices focused on—summertime experiences for children.

**RECOMMENDATION 3:** Governors and mayors should convene local public and private employers to leverage and support employer policies, practices, and programs to expand the capacity of, and access to, quality summertime experiences for children and youth, particularly those in underserved communities.



 [READ FULL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS HERE](#)

## Opportunities for Summer Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Within the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and the coronavirus relief bill, investment opportunities exist to support summer learning and student well-being through existing and new programs.

The RAND/Wallace Foundation report *Investing in Successful Summer Programs* states that many ESSA funding streams, referred to as Title I, Title II, etc., provide latitude to states, districts, and schools in the form of flexible block-style grants to support specific student populations. The report acknowledges that although summer programs can benefit children and youth, not all programs have demonstrated evidence of improving youth outcomes. The report provides a review of summer interventions that meet ESSA evidence requirements and offers policymakers and funders guidance for making evidence-based investment decisions.

Decades of research support the notion that cumulative years of summer learning loss contribute to the achievement disparities in academics between low-income students and their wealthier peers. Although summer and OST experiences may have looked different this season, the summer months remain a critical time for leveling the playing field and prioritizing smart allocation of resources to ensure expenditures made during the school year don't go to waste.

NSLA's Funding Resource Guide provides a snapshot of available federal funding. In addition to the funding streams found in this guide, NSLA joined other OST partners to advocate for summer learning and after-school programming as allowable uses of the bipartisan CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act. This unprecedented funding includes a \$30.75 billion Education Stabilization Fund that will run through the U.S. Department of Education to states.

### Key Recommendations:

Follow the money; creatively braid federal, state, and local funding streams; and know the policies shaping summertime experiences.

### FUNDING AND POLICY RESOURCES:

- [NSLA Funding Resource Guide](#)
- [The Impact of COVID-19 on State Education Funding: A State-by-State Analysis](#)
- [CARES Act Funding Brief](#)
- RAND/Wallace Foundation report [Investing in Successful Summer Programs: A Review of Evidence Under the Every Student Succeeds Act](#)
- [2019 NSLA State Policy Snapshot](#)







## Equity at the Center of High-Quality School Day and Out-of-School Learning Opportunities

The Education Trust— a national nonprofit that works to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income families—recommends the following actions states should take to ensure high-quality and equitable learning opportunities for students during extended school closures:

- Create and maintain centralized, clear, and regular communication to community stakeholders.
- Maintain and strengthen critical supports for students and families in need.
- Provide guidance and resources to districts on educational services for vulnerable populations.
- Support districts to develop plans with short- and long-term solutions to address COVID-19 challenges.
- Ensure federal stimulus funds are distributed and used equitably.

Read their full report:



**FIVE THINGS STATE LEADERS SHOULD DO TO ENSURE STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES DURING COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURES**



*“While every state is different, our job is to look at summer learning opportunities and figure out how to leverage them. Removing barriers and being that influencer and broker and connector is a role all state chiefs play.”*

**Jillian Balow**

Wyoming state schools superintendent and president of the board of the Council of Chief State School Officers

# A New Vision for Summer School

NSLA’s New Vision for Summer School Network (NVSS Network) is an affinity group of school district members and national partners committed to a broad vision for summer learning—one that engages more children and youth, boosts academic achievement, and influences teaching and learning throughout the year. Together, they connect and collaborate with other school districts in the country working to harness the power of summer for student success.

Within the network, its leaders envision a future where school districts and schools include summer learning and enrichment as part of a 12-month plan for learning. Together with their community partners, districts will close deep opportunity gaps and ensure that all young people have access to high-quality summer learning experiences that help them succeed in college, careers, and life.



*“Summer learning is not summer school. In fact, the most successful summer experiences often feel as different from formal schooling as possible. They provide the freedom for students to explore new ideas, new interests and new activities in ways that can be difficult to do during the constraints of regular schooling.”*

**Matthew Boulay, PhD**  
NSLA Founder

## NVSS CORE PRINCIPLES:

- Increase and enhance the scope of traditional summer school.
- Target participation by students who would benefit the most.
- Strengthen systems-level supports through community-wide partnerships and coordination.
- Provide innovative professional development for staff.
- Embed summer learning into the district’s strategic plan.



**DOWNLOAD NVSS NETWORK OVERVIEW**



# What the Research Says...



## “On Parents”...from Learning Heroes

As parents look to the next academic year, they report increased expectations from schools and deeper engagement with teachers and their children, according to a nationally representative survey released in May 2020 by Learning Heroes, a nonprofit organization that supports parents and guardians as their children’s most effective advocates.

The “Parents 2020: COVID-19 Closures—A Redefining Moment for Students, Parents, and Schools” report shows that now, with more of a front row seat, roughly 7 out of 10 parents said they plan to get a better understanding of what their children are expected to learn in the new grade level, find more time to communicate with their children about their daily assignments, and seek a better understanding of where their child stands academically. Another 64 percent of parents said they plan to talk with the teacher about what they noticed about their children’s schoolwork during school closures.

 **DOWNLOAD SURVEY REPORT AND PARENT TOOLS AT [BEALARNINGHERO.ORG](https://www.belearninghero.org)**

The survey also found that parents’ concerns about their children’s education are weighing more heavily on them than even economic worries.

## On the “Summer Slide”

Following U.S. students across five summers between grades 1 and 6, shows that a little more than half (52 percent) experienced learning losses in all five summers and that students in this group lost an average of 39 percent of their total school-year gains during each summer, according to a large national [study](#) published July 2020 by the *American Educational Research Journal*, a peer-reviewed publication of the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

According to AERA, the average student loses between 17 and 28 percent of school-year gains in English language arts during the following summer. In math, the average student loses between 25 and 34 percent of each school-year gain during the following summer—results analyzed from the Northwest Education Association (NWEA) database, which includes more than 200 million test scores for nearly 18 million students in 7,500 school districts across all 50 states, from 2008 through 2016.

 **FULL REPORT: SCHOOL’S OUT: THE ROLE OF SUMMERS IN UNDERSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT DISPARITIES**



## On the “COVID-19 Slide”

According to the Northwestern Education Association (NWEA), preliminary COVID-19 learning-loss projections suggest students will return in fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year. However, in mathematics students are likely to show much smaller learning gains, returning with less than 50% of the learning gains, and in some grades ending nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions.

### NWEA Key Considerations:

- Learning loss will be greater for younger students.
- Learning loss will be greater for math.

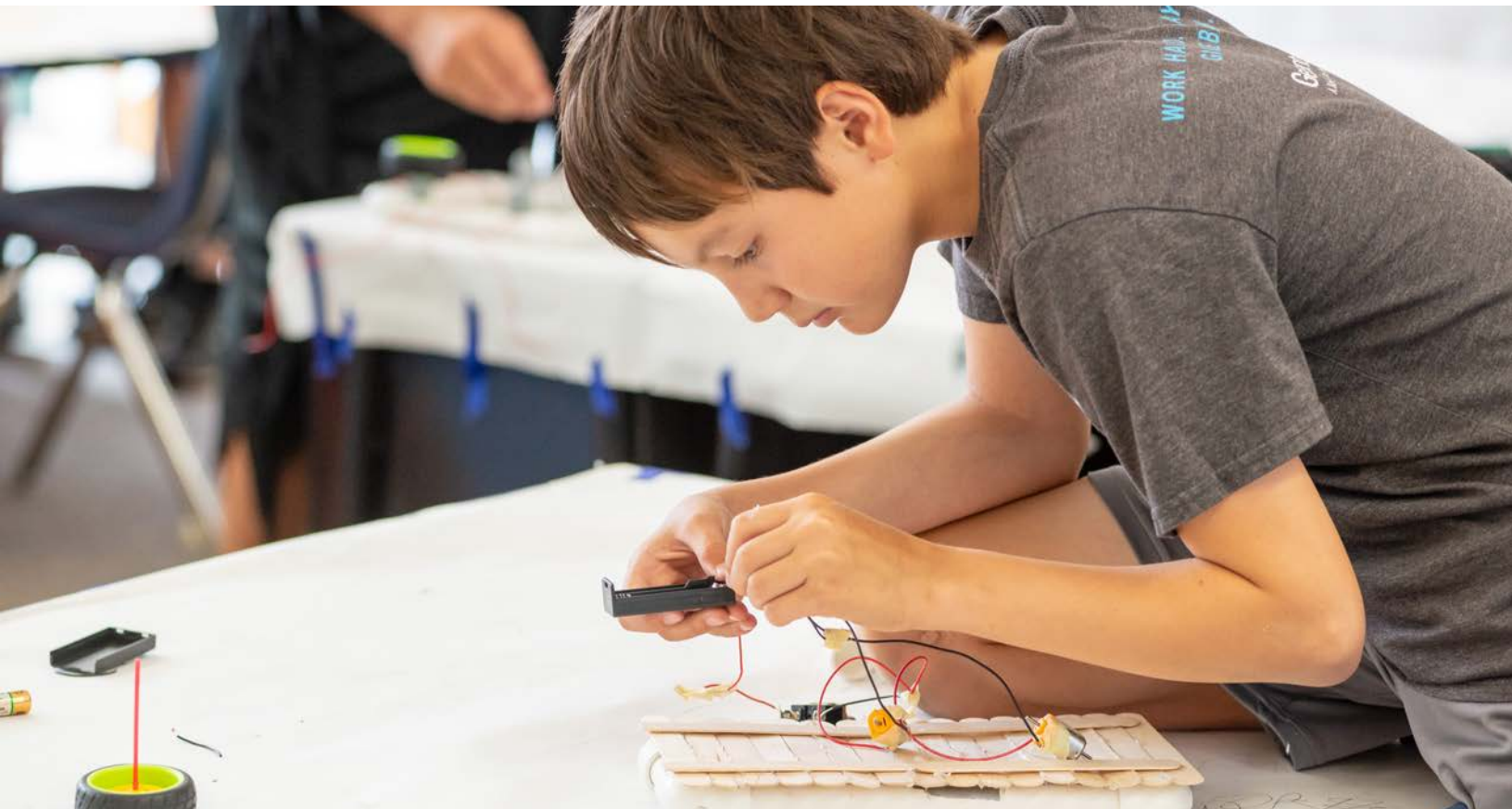
### NWEA Key Policy Recommendations:

- Make up lost instructional time. More time with teachers—whatever it takes.
- Create very clear, strategic restart plans for schools.
- Surround kids with learning outside the classroom.
- Use the demand for distance learning as a catalyst to create more blended learning options.



### MUST READ:

- [The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do about Summer Learning Loss](#)  
*Alexander, Karl, Ed.; Pitcock, Sarah, Ed.; Boulay, Matthew C., Ed. Teachers College Press*





# NSLA's Signature Initiatives

We believe summer is a unique, underleveraged and powerful time to transform the lives of under-served students and improve education in America. Building on extensive research and NSLA's recent strategic plan, we have been working to invest in and support **Programs, Partnerships, Policies, Public Awareness** and **Leaders** necessary to make seismic change happen. As part of this work, NSLA leads the following signature initiatives:



## NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING WEEK

(Annually in July)

National Summer Learning Week is an advocacy celebration aimed at elevating the importance of keeping kids learning, safe, and healthy every summer, ensuring they return to school in the fall ready to succeed in the school year.



## EXCELLENCE IN SUMMER LEARNING AWARDS

(Annually announced in October)

The Excellence in Summer Learning and NSLA Founder's Awards honor exemplary programs that provide high-quality summer learning opportunities to children and youth in traditional and non-traditional settings.



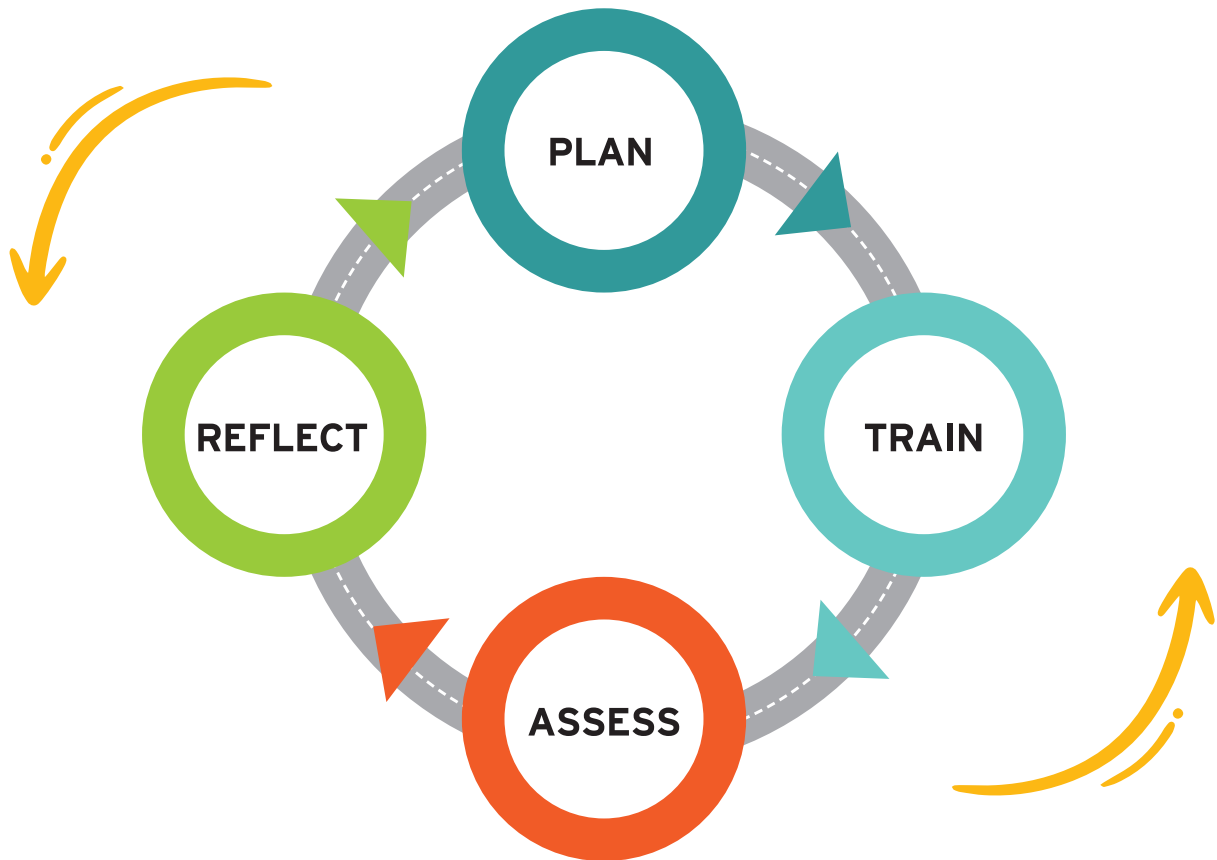
## SUMMER CHANGES EVERYTHING™ NATIONAL CONFERENCE

(Annually in October/November)

Summer Changes Everything™ is NSLA's national convening bringing together the nation's top thinkers to share and discuss the newest research, partnerships, policies, and programs driving impact in the out-of-school time (OST) field.

# Planning for Summer Success

As a distinct field in education and youth development, summer learning is intrinsically and critically connected to broader K-12 education improvement efforts. It is important to include summer in the conversation of building out a year-long plan for holistic youth development, well-being, and academic growth. NSLA supports programs and networks to continuously improve their programs through a four-part annual quality improvement cycle. This is why we like to say “Summer Starts in September,” because the process of planning, delivering, and improving summer learning programs is continuous. Just as the summer program ends, planning for the next year should begin.



NSLA'S SUMMER STARTS IN SEPTEMBER  
PLANNING GUIDE - SAMPLE PAGES



The learning strategies that are developed and practiced during the summer can help to support learning during the school year, while principles from the school year can help inform priorities for the summer. This year, we've been faced with the longest summer ever, making the connection and continuity between summer and the school year even more urgent and essential to schools' reopening and recovery plans.

A six-year study supported by [The Wallace Foundation](#) and conducted by the RAND Corporation, called the National Summer Learning Project (NSLP), was launched to gain insight into the impact of summer learning programs and their ability to mitigate the effects of summer learning loss. The data collected is based on their work with five urban school districts (Boston; Dallas; Duval County, Florida; Pittsburgh; and Rochester, New York) and their partners. Today, that data has been aggregated into a knowledge product called the [summerlearningtoolkit.org](https://summerlearningtoolkit.org).



DOWNLOAD THE SUMMER LEARNING TOOLKIT VIDEO

In taking a long view on summer and looking beyond the pandemic, the toolkit offers a foundational and tactical framework for shaping effective summer programs, and focuses in five areas: planning, academics and enrichment, staffing, site climate, and student recruitment and attendance.

Supportive learning environments are also key to helping young people shape their voices and their sense of purpose. The new America's Promise Youth Engagement Guide aids caring adults in their efforts to uncover youth perspectives about how learning happens.



AMERICA'S PROMISE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

# Quality Matters

Quality is well-defined in summer programs—whether in-person or virtual. The RAND Corporation (McCombs, et Al., 2011) synthesized evidence from research about summer learning loss and the effectiveness of programs, and found the following four areas of quality to be integral to preventing summer learning loss:

- High-quality instruction (hiring effective and motivated teachers and providing professional development).
- Aligned school-year and summer curricula.
- Engaging and rigorous programming.
- Maximized participation and attendance.

Studies show several additional program components that are related to improved achievement for summer program attendees:

- Small-group or individualized instruction.
- Early intervention during the primary grades.
- Parent involvement and participation.
- Careful scrutiny for treatment fidelity, including monitoring to ensure that instruction is being delivered as prescribed.



**Mizzen by Mott is an innovative tool designed to help programs plan and deliver engaging courses, lessons and activities. With high-quality content, organizational tools and Pro Tips from education experts, Mizzen makes it easy for you to create exciting learning opportunities for students.**



NSLA's Summer Starts in September guide presents nine domains of quality indicators, based on research, for programs to consider both in developing the infrastructure and the delivery of services to students.



## Quality Infrastructure

1. **PURPOSE:** Program has mission and vision statements that are grounded in the needs of its community. Program sets annual goals for youth and for the organization that drive a continuous cycle of data collection, evaluation, and quality improvement. Program has evidence that it is meeting its goals and the needs of stakeholders.
2. **PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY:** Program develops and implements a clear strategic plan and aligned fundraising plan. Program shares information about the program with key stakeholders to promote sustainability.
3. **PLANNING:** Program is designed to allocate enough time, staff, and resources to promote positive academic and developmental youth outcomes. Program has a proactive summer-program planning process that is inclusive of all key stakeholders and connected to the goals of the program. Program has a comprehensive structure in place for all programming throughout the summer, in advance of the session.
4. **STAFF:** Program's recruitment and staffing process intentionally yields culturally competent staff with relevant skills. Program staff is empowered to manage the program and has a voice in organizational decisions. Program provides extensive opportunities for staff development and advancement before, during, and after the session.
5. **PARTNERSHIPS:** Program builds and maintains strong linkages with partners, including community organizations, the public school system, and government agencies that are supportive of its mission and have a vested interest in the program's success. Program has a formal structure for communication and data sharing with all key external partners. Program builds and maintains strong linkages with families.

## Program Delivery

1. **INDIVIDUALIZED:** Program assesses young people's assets and needs early in the program and develops individualized strategies for meeting program goals.
2. **INTENTIONAL:** Activity planning and execution shows intentional focus on meeting learning goals and use of research-based instructional methods.
3. **INTEGRATED:** Programming builds skills, knowledge, and behaviors that promote academic success and healthy development. Activities show a blend of academic strategies and social/emotional development strategies throughout the day.
4. **UNIQUE PROGRAM CULTURE:** Program creates a "summer culture" that is different from the school year and promotes a spirit of community and pride through traditions that bond staff and youth.





# Safety First During a COVID-19 Era

## SUMMER PROGRAM SAFETY GUIDELINES

In an effort to assist youth and summer program providers in making re-opening decisions in the midst of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed a tool that offers a series of key considerations and questions that serve as indicators for whether or not a youth-serving program is prepared to open. Considerations include, but are not limited to, alignment with state and local health department guidance, protections for [high-risk](#) employees and children, hygiene and social distancing actions, and procedures for monitoring and screening children and employees.

 **CDC'S YOUTH PROGRAMS AND CAMPS READINESS AND PLANNING TOOLKIT**



### American Camp Association (ACA) Camp Operations Guide:

For over 100 years, [acacamps.org](http://acacamps.org) and their network of camp professionals have worked to ensure that children and families have quality summer experiences. They believe that camp is essential to every child's growth and education. Quality camp experiences help children develop the healthy emotional and social skills necessary for them to grow into strong, considerate, competent adults. Even amid COVID-19, their keen focus on quality summers has not changed.

In an effort to properly equip camp directors and staff during COVID-19, the ACA [Camp Operations Guide 2020](#) is a collection of recommendations designed to be implemented for various types of camps (e.g., adventure/touring, day, resident, backcountry, weekend) and geographic locations, and pertain to camps in geographical locations under low and medium mitigation conditions, [according to federal guidance](#). Any recommendations in this guide should also coincide with a given camp's communicable disease plan.

## An Uncharted Virtual World



Although many program providers planned for a virtual summer or hybrid, it is important that the same program quality standards be upheld. The American Camp Association (ACA) strongly recommends that safety of students participating in virtual camp or enrichment programming must be a top priority, just the same as in a physical camp experience. ACA offers the following safety considerations to keep in mind in delivering online/virtual programming to campers which include:

- A suitable platform.
- Controlling who has access to your programming.
- Curtailing cyberbullying, sexual harassment, and other detrimental behaviors.

ACA has developed a dossier of [virtual program resources](#) that unpack multiple aspects of online learning.

On the Educational Digital Highway, the E-rate program is a critical program in advancing digital equity. So what is E-rate? [The Schools and Libraries Universal Service program](#), commonly known as “E-rate,” provides discounts of up to 90 percent to help eligible schools and libraries in the United States obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access. (Source: U.S. Department of Education). According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), eligible schools, school districts, and libraries may apply for E-rate funds individually or as part of a consortium.





## Council of Chief State School Officers: District-Based Virtual Summer Program Recommendations



- Prioritize vulnerable students, and those who need to meet promotion benchmarks and high school credit. Provide regular, additional support for specific students, especially students learning English, students with disabilities, and students who are homeless or migrants.
- Focus on student success in the coming school year. Rather than focus solely on remediating learning gaps from the prior year, provide summer learning activities aligned to upcoming grade-level standards to set students up for success the following year.
- Focus summer learning on a few critical areas. What are the most essential standards or knowledge and skills a student needs to gain to start the year successfully? For a shortened summer schedule, prioritize daily instruction in English language arts, mathematics, physical education, and social and emotional wellness.
- Hire effective teachers to support students. Prioritize those teachers with content and pedagogical knowledge and a track record of success teaching target grade levels of students.
- Prioritize regular communication with families and students. Consider how and when your students best engage in learning: What content can they work on independently? What type of guidance and support do they need? Do families have what they need to support their children? Engage a cross-functional team in front-end planning. Teachers, principals, and principal supervisors will be the front-line providers for and supporters of children, so ensure that their voices and needs are built into the plan.





# Power of Partnerships

The NSLA [Summer Starts in September Program Planning Guide](#) is a blueprint for summer planning and offers best practices, like the idea that the most effective summer programs clearly communicate their mission and values broadly to all stakeholders, and use them in making decisions about partnerships. Collaboration is key during this COVID-19 era, and a partnership wish list may lead to many community conversations that can hopefully meet the needs of more students.

## So who is on your partnership wish list?

Create a Partnership Wish List to help guide research and engagement of partners in these key categories. Be sure to document both what you have to offer a potential partner (in-kind support, publicity, access, etc.) and what you need from a potential partner.

### PARTNERSHIP WISH LIST EXAMPLES:

- Volunteers
- Facilities
- Staff Development
- Food Service
- Transportation
- Personal Protection Equipment Donations
- Technology
- Research and Evaluation
- Programmatic Content
- Pro-bono Marketing
- Fundraising Services



**Through support from the Broad Foundation and other community partners, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) launched summer programming for all its students, with a collaborative of eight STEM-rich institutions providing online instruction and STEM packets through the districts' Grab and Go centers, which distribute food to thousands of families.**

# Every Student Counts

The pandemic has exposed holes in schools' contact information systems, with many educators struggling to reach and stay connected with many students during the crisis. Effective communication and engagement, combined with a range of approaches, incentives, relevant, and culturally relevant instruction, goes a long way in reducing chronic absenteeism during distance learning and in-person learning. Many of these same strategies may prove successful in summer programming.

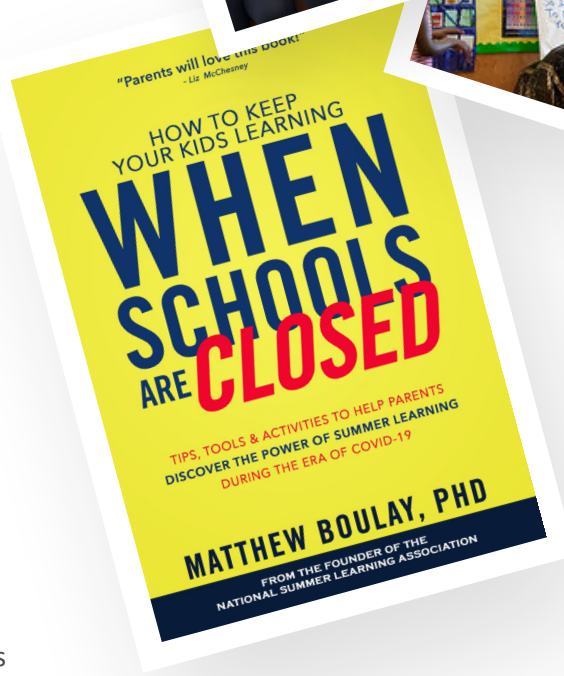


**SMART STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM**

# Families at the Core

Family engagement is consistently found to be a common practice of high-quality summer OST programs. Family engagement ranges from knowing the names of caregivers and updating them on what’s going on in the program to dedicating program resources to engaging them actively in programming designed just for them.

In April 2020, Learning Heroes fielded [PARENTS 2020](#), a nationally representative survey of parents and guardians (sample size of 3600+), designed to better understand how families are supporting their children’s academic development during school closures due to COVID-19. Insights from this survey build off of five years of parent research and highlight the unique challenges faced by parents and guardians during this unprecedented moment in time.



 [DOWNLOAD THE AMAZON E-BOOK](#)

## Initial Insights:

- **PARENTS ARE ACTIVATED:** Parents are engaging deeply in their children’s remote schooling and will show up differently next school year ahead.
- **PARENTS DESERVE AN ACCURATE PICTURE:** Even with more hands-on time, parents still have an inflated view of their children’s grade-level ability— 92 percent report their children are at/above grade level in reading and math. It is closer to 37 percent (2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- **RELATIONSHIP REDEFINED:** This is a moment to establish clear expectations for parent-teacher relationships grounded in a shared understanding of the child’s progress and academic achievement.

## Additional Family Engagement Resources

- [Prepared for Success: COVID-19 Parent-Teacher Letter](#)
- [Learning Heroes: How to Make Learning From Home Fun](#)

WATCH ME  
MULTIPLY  
BY 5!

WOW!  
NEXT, TRY  
MULTIPLYING  
BY 7!

AND THEN WE CAN TAKE  
THE READINESS CHECK.  
IT GIVES US FUN  
ACTIVITIES AND GAMES!

5!  
10!  
15!  
20!



## Summer learning matters, especially this year!

It isn't always easy, but there's so much you can do to help your child learn and grow!

Go to [belearninghero.org](https://belearninghero.org) for the Readiness Check and more tools to support math, reading and life skills!

## Here's a Plan to Help Your Child this Summer

### ★ Find resources to match their needs

Take a few minutes to do the Readiness Check with your child and get (free) fun activities to support math and reading! It also shows how your child is doing with key skills needed for the next grade.

### ★ Show off what they know!

After they read or finish an activity, ask your child to teach you or a family member what they learned. This helps review important skills and build confidence. Try it, even on video!

### ★ Discover the fun in your community

There are more (free) online resources than ever before to connect you to the bigger world – whether your child wants to watch a live webcam at the local zoo, learn how to do science experiments in the kitchen or practice a new dance routine.

### ★ Strengthen life skills

Support real-world skills that help your child in and out of school. Show your child how to problem solve, learn from mistakes, and communicate well with others, especially during hard moments.

### ★ Follow their passions!

Explore your child's interests by reading and turning everyday routines/materials into learning moments – practice fractions and measurement while cooking, make bubbles with dish soap, write songs together and more!

### Set your child up for success!

It's estimated\* that students could start the school year as much as a full grade behind in math and months behind in reading due to school closures. The good news is the majority of parents nationally say they plan to share what they noticed about their child's learning during school closures and over the summer\*\*. This will help teachers best support your child in the new year.

Share your summer learning ideas using the hashtag

**#BeALearningHero**





# Nourishing the Body and Spirit of Young People



HUNGER DOESN'T TAKE A VACATION:  
2020 SUMMER NUTRITION REPORT

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), expanding the reach of Summer Nutrition Programs is more critical than ever as communities continue to respond to the impacts of COVID-19. While summer is historically a difficult time for those families that rely on school meals, unprecedented rates of [food insecurity](#) and unemployment due to the pandemic highlight the importance of increasing access to sites that are serving summer meals.

Since COVID-19 emerged, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued many [national and state waivers](#) of program requirements to ensure that children are able to participate in federally funded nutrition programs while still maintaining safety and social distancing.

## FRAC'S KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Advocates and partners can help ensure that families are connected to Summer Nutrition Programs during this time as communities continue to adjust to a new normal through the following strategies:
- Let families know how they can find meal sites in their community by sharing information on websites, social media, and across networks. USDA's [Meals to Kids Map](#) lists available meal sites and hours of operation, and FRAC's resources can help partners develop [outreach plans](#).
- Stay up to date on Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT), including whether your state has been approved to provide benefits to families. Once state P-EBT plans are approved, it is important that families are aware of the opportunity and have the information they need to access benefits quickly. P-EBT is an important complement to summer meals.
- Work with sponsors and school districts to help them fully incorporate available waiver flexibilities, which allow them to reach more kids. An overview of the approved and extended program waivers can be found [here](#).

TEXT 'FOOD'  
TO 877-877

TO FIND FREE SUMMER MEALS NEAR YOU



NOKID  
HUNGRY  
SHARE OUR STRENGTH

## Keep Kids Active

The activity levels of children during school closures and the summer months are of particular concern. Studies by Carrel, Clark, Peterson, Eickhoff, and Allen (2007) and von Hippel, Powell, Downey, and Rowland (2007) found that children may be more susceptible to obesity during the summer months. Research based on the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (focused on kindergarten and 1st grade) found that a child's body-mass index increases two or three times faster during summer vacation than during the school year, and that fitness gains made as a result of school-based health programs are often lost during summer break.

In particular, Black children, Hispanic children, and children who were already overweight at the beginning of kindergarten were at even greater risk for increased gains in body-mass index. One of the conclusions from these studies was that summer break from schools may result in less structured days for children and fewer opportunities for adult supervision, which could contribute to fewer opportunities for physical activity and a less healthy diet.

## Nourishing the Heart and Spirit of Young People



During these uncertain times, students and families are, like the rest of us, tapping into the best versions of themselves and doing the best they can to simply make it through the day. And while, yes, the measurable ways in which we interact with students and families is important, genuine concern and engagement is the most valuable service we can provide during this time.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) believes that the focus of social and emotional learning (SEL) implementation is on creating the conditions that promote social and emotional growth for all students, including building trusting relationships, welcoming learning environments, consistent routines, engaging teaching strategies, culturally relevant practices, and authentic family and community partnerships.

With summer as a bridge to the school year, CASEL's "Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Roadmap for Reopening School" provides a comprehensive guide for leaders to create a learning environment where students and adults can "process, heal, and thrive."



REUNITE. RENEW. THRIVE. ROADMAP

The following recommendations from [childtrends.org](https://www.childtrends.org) also highlight ways to support the social and emotional well-being of children during COVID-19:

- Understand that reactions to the pandemic may vary.
- Ensure the presence of a sensitive and responsive caregiver.
- Social distancing does not mean social isolation (children need quality time).
- Provide age-appropriate information (keeps children's imagination from creating negative scenarios).
- Create a safe physical and emotional environment by practicing the 3 R's: Reassurance, Routines, and Regulation.
- Keep children busy.
- Increase children's self-efficacy.
- Create opportunities for caregivers to take care of themselves.
- Seek professional help if children show signs of trauma that do not resolve relatively quickly.
- Emphasize strengths, hope, and positivity.



# Recruiting for Summer Success




According to parent focus-group data highlighted in The Wallace Foundation’s [Summer Learning Recruitment Guide](#), parents are very protective of their children’s summer, and want their children to have fun during the summer to get a break from the “hard work” of the school year, in a normal school year.

The guide also highlights the importance of creating engaging messaging that simply communicates the value of your program as a key success factor in parents registering their children and increasing stakeholder support.

**KEY CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Be transparent about the status of your program and what parents should expect. (i.e., COVID-19 safety measures, decreased operating hours, virtual transitions, peer to peer contact plans, etc.).
- Gain an understanding of family’s basic needs as they transition their child to summer learning.
- Share available resources for at-home learning, economic relief, and community support.
- Share fun activities students and families can do together.
- Connect with your veteran families to estimate enrollment and capacity.
- Adjust program cost wherever possible.





**Parents are motivated to keep their children learning in the summer when they better understand the positive impact such enrichment has on school-year success.**

The Wallace Foundation  
Summer Recruitment Guide

#### KEY RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES:

- Understand your audience.
- Create engaging messaging.
- Create a written plan.
- Make your outreach consistent and assertive.
- Use trusted messengers.
- Build a relationship with parents and students.
- Make registration as easy as possible.

## Summer Youth Employment Programs

Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP) provide invaluable work experience for our nation's teenagers. For many, SYEP offer youth the first vocational experience of their lives. SYEP also fill a financial gap for families in challenging economic situations. As many jurisdictions began shutting down in the wake of the pandemic, SYEP quickly became expendable, leaving thousands of youth devoid of an opportunity to earn a much-needed paycheck this summer. We know anecdotally that some youth will be able to weather the storm; but, for some of our more vulnerable youth, the loss of summer income can be catastrophic, especially in cities where programs are income-based.

Summer job programs provide multiple avenues for authentic engagement as defined by the Weikart Center Pyramid of Program Quality. Youth get to work on sophisticated projects, engage in planning, content, and process choices as well as reflection and analysis. These are critical 21st Century skills that must be nurtured during the summer. Many adults have shifted to telework and distance-based options in their respective work programs. Surely youth can benefit from the same, provided that staff have the skills and competencies necessary to facilitate youth access to virtual workforce development opportunities.

During this COVID-19 period, many jurisdictions diverted funds earmarked for youth jobs to COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Others pivoted to providing innovative, distance-based vocational opportunities, like in the City of Charlotte, North Carolina, and many have leaned on corporate partners like JPMorgan Chase, whose UNITE-LA's STEAM Career Readiness initiative, for example, will help young adults develop pathways into high-growth, living wage STEAM careers focused on: engaging engineering and biotech industries, and providing virtual career awareness, exploration, and preparation programming.





# Building Community Systems for Summer Learning

Creating a community system for summer opens the door to collaboration, reduced duplication of efforts, efficient management of the community’s resources, shared standards of quality, and greater return on investments in summer opportunities.

Developed by NSLA, the Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems (CIESLS) are based on the theory that effective summer learning systems can provide more summer learning opportunities for youth, improve program quality, and improve outcomes for youth through coordinated and collaborative action at the community level.

Based on research on system-building, best practices in existing after-school and summer systems, and a survey of community intermediaries and program providers, NSLA developed a set of indicators in six domains that define the size, scope, and features of summer learning systems. These indicators are used to measure community progress in achieving system-building milestones in each of the rating scale’s six domains.

1. **Shared Vision and City-wide Coordination:** There is a shared vision for summer learning guided by a multi-year, community-wide summer learning action plan that includes defined goals and strategies and aligns with education and OST priorities.
2. **Engaged Leadership:** Summer learning work is led by a stakeholder group that represents key sectors, including city and/or county agencies, schools, funders, program providers, intermediary or coordinating bodies, and other community members (including parents and youth).

There is shared accountability for the development and implementation of the summer learning action plan. Recognized leaders within the community, such as mayors and superintendents, act as summer learning champions.

3. **Data Management System:** There are processes for data sharing, collection, and analysis across summer learning stakeholders. The system includes summer learning data on scope, scale, access, quality, and outcomes.
4. **Continuous Quality Improvement:** There is a process for quality improvement of both the summer learning system and summer learning opportunities. The system includes standards and tools for: quality assessment and program improvement; professional development and training; and opportunities to share resources and best practices.
5. **Sustainable Resources:** There are identified funding targets and strategies for scaling the system and improving quality of summer learning opportunities.
6. **Marketing and Communications:** There are strategies to: understand summer learning demand; build awareness of need and available resources; and support recruitment and enrollment.

Link to [Sparks Community System Building Brief and Examples of System Building Reports](#)







# Special Thanks to the NSLA 2020 Summer and Continuous Learning Task Force Member Organizations



The Education Trust



# Resource Guide

## Health, Wellness & Safety

### HEALTH & SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

#### Afterschool Alliance

[Well-Being in the Time of COVID](#)

[Helping Children Stay Active & Eating Healthy](#)

[Restart & Recovery: Supporting SEL and Mental Health During COVID-19](#)

#### Alliance for a Healthier Generation

[Moving More at Home](#)

[Healthy Day Checklist](#)

[Choose Your Own Active Family Adventure](#)

#### Association of California School Administrators/Partnership for Children & Youth

[Schools and Summer Meals: Prioritizing Child Nutrition During COVID to Ensure Students Succeed and Thrive](#)

#### Food & Research Action Center

[Take a Fresh Look at Community Eligibility for the 2020-2021 School Year](#)

#### YMCA of the USA

[PEAR Institute of Harvard: Holistic Student Assessment Tool](#)

## SAFETY

#### Afterschool Alliance

[Quick Brief: Tools to Help Plan for Summer Programs](#)

[Reopening Programs](#)

[State Guidance](#)

#### Alliance for a Healthier Generation

[COVID-19: Resources & Updates](#)

[Healthy Out-of-School Time Roadmaps](#)

#### American Camp Association

[Camp Operations Guide Summer 2020](#)

#### Council of Chief State School Officers

[Restart & Recovery: Addressing Building Safety, Cleaning and Monitoring Resource](#)

#### National AfterSchool Association

[Let's Talk the Future of Afterschool: Scenario Planning](#)

**National Recreation and Park Association:**

[Slowing the Spread of COVID-19](#)  
[Using Parks Safely Infographic](#)

**YMCA of the USA**

[Virtual Code of Conduct](#)  
[Planning Ahead for Your Y: Day Camp Supplement](#)

**Equity, Policy, Funding & Research**

**EQUITY**

**Afterschool Alliance**

[Afterschool and Summer COVID-19 Response: Helping to Meet Students' Learning Needs](#)

**Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)**

[Digital Equity Initiative Toolkit](#)

**Digital Bridge K-12**

[Connectivity Toolkit](#)

**HundrED**

[Quality Education for All During COVID-19](#)

**International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)**

[Questions for Proactive and Equitable Educational Implementation](#)  
[Providing Effective and Equitable Digital Learning for all Students: Key Considerations for Districts](#)  
[Building Blocks for Equitable Remote Learning](#)

**KQED**

["14 Tips For Helping Students With Limited Internet Have Distance Learning"](#)  
[NCLD: Questions for Proactive and Equitable Educational Implementation](#)

**Race Forward**

[Racial Equity Impact Assessment](#)

**POLICY & FUNDING**

**Afterschool Alliance**

[CARES Act: Opportunities for Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs](#)  
[Making the Case to Local Education Leaders to Leverage Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs to Meet Students' Learning Needs](#)

**Learning Policy Institute**

[The Impact of COVID-19 on State Education Funding: A State-by-State Analysis](#)

**National League of Cities (NLC)**

["Cities are Making Unavoidable Cuts in Response to COVID-19 Fiscal Pressures"](#)



**National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)**

[Six Questions State Boards Should Ask to Foster Effective Digital Learning](#)

**National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**

[State Action on Coronavirus](#)

**Strive Together/Policy Link**

[Accessing Federal and State Funding Amidst COVID](#)

**YMCA of the USA**

[Engaging Public Officials Supplement: COVID-19 Crisis](#)

**SUMMER AND OUT OF SCHOOL TIME COVID-19 RESEARCH**

**American Institute for Research**

[Recognizing the Role of Afterschool and Summer Programs and Systems in Reopening and Rebuilding](#)

**Education Week**

[Data: When Will School Start This Fall? A guide to states' dates for starting the 2020-21 school year](#)

**McKinsey & Company**

[COVID-19 and Student Learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime](#)

**The National Academies of Sciences**

[Shaping Summertime Experiences: Opportunities to Promote Healthy Development and Well-Being for Children and Youth](#)

**Northwest Education Association (NWEA)**

[The COVID-19 Slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement](#)

**Family Engagement**

**Learning Heroes**

[Summer Stride](#)

**MetaMetrics**

[Just Right Learning Tools for Your Child](#)

**Springboard Collaborative**

[Family Educator Learning Accelerator](#)

**School Re-Opening Recovery Plans**

**The Afterschool Alliance**

[Partnering with Schools to Reopen and Meet Students' Needs](#)

**Council of Chief State School Officers**

[Restart and Recovery: Considerations for Teaching and Learning](#)

## Special Populations & Settings

### The Aspen Institute for Community Solutions

[Digital Summer Youth Employment Toolkit](#)

### National Center for Learning Disabilities

[A Parent's Guide to Virtual Learning: 4 Actions to Improve Your Child's Experience With Online Learning](#)

[Parent Advocacy Toolkit: Using Resources to Help School Districts Serve Students With Learning and Attention Issues During COVID-19](#)

### Partnership for Children & Youth/HousED

[Becoming COVID Capable: Addressing Food and Meals Access for Housing Communities](#)

[Becoming COVID Capable: Preparing for a New Kind of Summer](#)

## Virtual Learning

### TEACHING & DESIGN RESOURCES

#### Apple Education

[K-12 Education](#)

#### BellXcel

[Remote Quality Reflection Tool](#)

#### Common Sense Media

[Wide Open School](#)

#### Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

[Restart Recovery: Virtual Summer School State Guidance for District and School Leaders](#)

#### Khan Academy

Daily Schedule for School Closures in [English](#), [Español](#)

Keep Everyone Learning Resources for Parents, Teachers, Schools & Districts in [English](#), [Español](#)

#### International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

[Online Learning: Creating transformational learning experiences online](#)

#### The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR)

[Coronavirus Tips & Resources for Mentoring](#)

#### Quality Matters

[From Remote Instruction to Online Design Quality \(K-12\)](#)

[Emergency Remote Instruction \(ERI\) Checklist](#)

[Emergency Remote Instruction: Accommodating Student Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) & 504 Plans\\* in K-12 Education](#)

#### Student Privacy Compass

[Student Privacy Training for Educators](#)

## STEM Resources

### Discovery Education

[Virtual Field Trips](#)

[Daily DE](#)

[Discovery Education Resources](#)

### Khan Academy

[Get Ready for Grade Level Courses](#) available in English and Español

[Weekly Math Learning Plans for Grade Three through Algebra 2](#)

## SEL Resources

### Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

[Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Roadmap for Reopening School](#)

### International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

[SEL Resource Center: Whole Child Approaches](#)

## Literacy Resources

### American Federation of Teachers: Share My Lesson

[Capstone Projects: All About Me for K-2](#)

[Capstone Projects: We're All Connected for Grades 3-5](#)

### Scholastic

[Scholastic Learn at Home: Free Resources for School Closures](#)

## Enrichment Resources

### Association of Children's Museums

[Children's Museums at Home](#)

### National Basketball Association: NBA Together

[Expand Your Community](#)





**national summer  
learning association**

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