

SUMMER LEARNING IN 2020

TALKING POINTS

Across the country, summer programs are adapting and innovating to ensure children and their families can access quality summer learning opportunities and critical supports and services.



**national summer
learning association**

COVID-19 AND SUMMER LEARNING KEY MESSAGES

KEY MESSAGE NO. 1

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC POSES AN UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGE TO SUMMER LEARNING:

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to worsen the already existing opportunity gap between children from rich and poor families. It has illuminated the nation's inequities in our school systems and communities like never before, shining a spotlight on the significant digital divide, food insecurities, childcare issues and learning losses millions of underserved students and their families face every summer.

- ✿ This COVID-19-related learning loss combined with the usual summer slide may have a ripple effect for years to come. NWEA predict significant learning loss from COVID school closures, especially in math. Their findings project that “students may return in fall 2020 with roughly 70% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year, less than 50% of the learning gains in math, and in some grades, nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions.”¹
- ✿ Summer is not cancelled this year, and summer learning programming will be more important than ever in 2020. Across the country, summer programs are adapting and innovating to ensure children and their families can access quality summer learning opportunities and critical supports and services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✿ Summer learning programs are exploring safe ways to reopen summer camps and community-based programs, developing virtual and at-home learning experiences that families can do together, and securing funding and policy support to expand summer meal programs in communities experiencing an increase in food insecurity due to job losses and school closures.
- ✿ With essential funding investments and policy support, there are opportunities to leverage the summer months now to help students safely re-acclimate to schools this fall and ensure summer and out-of-school time programs can continue to provide quality learning opportunities in the future. Parents, educators, summer learning advocates, business leaders and policymakers each play a critical role to save and expand summer learning opportunities in communities across the country this summer.

- ✿ To save summer for America's children and youth, policymakers must implement legislation that improves the accessibility and availability of summer programs, addresses the unmet demand that families have for quality summer experiences for their children and improves access to critical summer nutrition programs as food insecurity needs rise. Policymakers need to include summer learning providers, such as summer camps and community programs, in economy stimulus legislation and incentives. Also, policymakers can lead the way to shape policies at the federal, state and local levels that reducing barriers to equitable participation for children and families in summer learning, such as costs, accessibility, and special needs.

- ✿ While summer may look different, there is still a role for summer internships and youth employment in workforce development and summer safety plans this summer. Through the supportive policies and support of business leaders and community leaders, America's youth and young adults – especially from underserved communities – can learn, gain real world experience, contribute to their community and economy, and experience safer environments through their summer jobs, internships (paid or unpaid), and/or volunteering opportunities.



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SUMMER LEARNING KEY MESSAGES

KEY MESSAGE NO. 2

HIGH QUALITY SUMMER LEARNING MAKES A DIFFERENCE AND COMMUNITY LEADERS MUST BE HYPER-CREATIVE AND HYPER-COLLABORATIVE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR MOST VULNERABLE STUDENTS THIS SEASON:

- * Research shows that high-quality summer programs can make a difference in stemming learning loss and closing the country's educational and opportunity gaps. Elementary school students with high attendance in summer learning programs boost their math and reading skills.²
- * High quality summer programs improve math and reading skills, and also build critical social-emotional skills of students. These are skills that will help them not only in school but also in their careers and life.
- * Good summer programs also provide students with access to nutritious meals since many children go hungry during the summer. Research shows that only [1 in 7 youth](#)³ eligible for summer meal programs received them.

Informal and formal quality summer experiences can offer children and youth, of all backgrounds, the opportunity to explore their interests and learn in new and different ways that are limited in the school year.

- * In the first-ever cross-sector study on summertime experiences, a committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine examined evidence on the outcomes of summertime experiences for children and youth in four areas of well-being: 1) academic learning, 2) social and emotional development, 3) physical and mental health, and 4) safety. The study found that "youth need a balance of structured and unstructured activities for optimal development." This finding highlights the critical role of out-of-school and summer programs since they provide an opportunity for both structured and unstructured play, in addition to a child's choice in activities, which may be especially important as the focus on structured academic learning in schools increases, even in the early grades, and as societal changes (e.g., increased parental employment, greater digital engagement, safety concerns) decrease opportunities for unstructured play.⁴

KEY MESSAGE NO. 3

ACHIEVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY GAPS START EARLY AND SUMMER OFFERS STUDENTS A CHANCE TO CATCH UP:

- * Achievement gaps start in the early childhood years and children from low-income families are already behind academically by the time they begin kindergarten.

The achievement gap between children from rich and poor families is almost 30 – 40 percent larger among children born in 2001, than those born 25 years earlier in the mid 70's.⁵

- * The largest-ever summer learning study⁶ conducted by the RAND Corporation found that it was clear that low-income students experienced more setbacks over the summer compared to their wealthier peers.
- * Another research brief⁷ found similar results: While all kids lose some math skills, poor children also lose reading and math skills, further compounding the academic achievement gap.
- * A [RAND Corporation report](#) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) offers conclusive evidence that summer is an opportunity to close achievement and opportunity gaps – to help kids catch up, keep up and grow in meaningful ways.⁸

WHAT CAN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES DO?

Parents:

- * Visit the [Summer Stride](#) resource from Learning Heroes and take the readiness check and help your child with math and reading at home this summer.
- * While community libraries and museums may be closed to in-person visits this summer due to the COVID-19 pandemic, explore their summer library programs or museum tours virtually with your children from the comfort of home. Visit the websites for your local library and museums across the country and the world to learn about these free virtual learning opportunities.
- * Participate in our [National Summer Learning Week](#) from July 6-11 by proclaiming Summer Learning Week in your community and sharing summer stories.

Educators:

- * Consider creative partnerships with libraries, OST, community-based organizations to keep learning fun and engaging (virtually or in small group, socially distanced programs). Offer families information on mapping tools so children can access free and nutritious meals all summer long.

Policymakers:

- * Vote to maintain the 21st Century Community Learning Center program that will help launch new summer programs and improve the quality of existing ones. Support Stimulus Relief Funding and provide funding flexibilities for summer and afterschool programs.



SUMMER LEARNING KEY MESSAGES

SUMMER LEARNING LOSS AND EQUITY

- ❖ Summer learning loss, also known as the summer slide, is a well-documented phenomenon that education researchers have been studying for over 100 years, as far back as 1906.⁹
 - Only about one-third of households participate in a summer learning opportunity.
 - Of those who pay for programs, the average cost is \$300 per week, putting these programs out of the reach of many families.¹⁰
- ❖ Also contributing to deepening opportunity gap is the difference in enrichment spending among wealthy and low-income – a difference that now stands at \$7500 a year.¹¹
- ❖ An Urban Institute report states that one in five children ages 6 to 12 are regularly left without adult supervision after school or during the summer, translating to **about 3.5 million unsupervised children**.¹²
- ❖ Studies show that 33% of families¹³ had at least one child who attended a summer program and 51% of families would like their children to participate.

A recent large-scale study sponsored by The Wallace Foundation and published by the RAND Corporation demonstrated that students with high attendance in free, five to six-week, voluntary summer learning programs experienced educationally meaningful benefits in math and reading.

- ❖ A survey of teachers by the National Summer Learning Association showed that 9 in 10 teachers spend at least three weeks re-teaching lessons at the start of the school year.



SUMMER AND NUTRITION LOSS

- ❖ According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), good summer programs provide students with access to nutritious meals since many children go hungry during the summer. Research shows that only 1 in 7 children who ate a free or reduced-priced school lunch during the 2017-2018 school year were reached by the Summer Nutrition Program.¹⁴



SUMMER LEARNING IS AN ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

- ❖ In America, with its 55 plus million public school students, we invest approximately \$10-12,000 per student during the school year, then walk away for two to three months during the summer.
- ❖ Targeted federal support goes a long way toward helping states and local communities leverage their existing resources to maintain support for the most vulnerable students during the summer months.

Many summer programs raise two private dollars for every public dollar invested. Key investments such as literacy for younger students and employment for older youth pay back dividends in long term academic and economic success.

SUMMER LEARNING MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- ❖ 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 the RAND Corporation shows that individualized academic instruction, parental involvement, and smaller class sizes are a few components of high-quality programs that are making a difference.¹⁵ Quality programs also often provide access to opportunities that support health and nutrition.

ADVOCACY AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

- ❖ Federal funding is critical for summer programs. These dollars serve to launch new programs and allow existing programs to serve more students and improve quality. Nationally, 88 percent of teachers say summer learning programs are important to students’ success and 85 percent of families support public investment in summer programs.¹⁶
- ❖ The House and Senate continue to show strong support for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Title IV Part A, and other key funding that supports summer programs in budget allocations. The Trump Administration proposal once again eliminates many education funding programs¹⁷, so it is important for Congress to continue to hear from advocates on why these programs matter. Visit www.summerlearning.org/contact-congress.org to take action.



SUMMER LEARNING KEY MESSAGES



ADVOCACY AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

While summer learning programs need more federal funding, it is crucial for policymakers at the state level to allocate federal funding received to invest in more quality summer and afterschool opportunities as well as increase regular state education funding to include financial support for summer and afterschool programs.

- ✿ State policymakers could support summer learning and close the opportunity gap for children in their state by adding or refining language about summer learning and afterschool learning in their state school finance formulas and in statutes, describe key components of successful opportunities as principles for which the funding should be spent.
- ✿ For this summer, the coming school year, and following summer, state policymakers should allocate a portion of the CARES K-12 federal education funding for summer and afterschool opportunities for struggling students and/or for high need schools.
- ✿ In the past, depending on the costs in various states and schools, each typical summer or afterschool program could cost per school or school-community site about \$100,000 to \$200,000 to operate a program to include the key components.¹⁸ Due to challenges posed to summer and afterschool programs by the COVID-19 pandemic, additional allotments will be needed to add health and safety provisions to prevent the virus spread in programs.
- ✿ To allow for social distancing and keep costs affordable, state legislators should stipulate for allocations to be made from the CARES higher education funding to support work-study and/or summer internship programs for college students and/or support work study programs for recent unemployed graduates to work as teaching assistants at a reduced salary in exchange for college, work and/or service credit.



**NATIONAL
SUMMER
LEARNING WEEK**
JULY 6-11, 2020

ABOUT NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING WEEK 2020

Hundreds of communities across the country will join together for National Summer Learning Week from July 6-11 — a national week of awareness and celebration led by the National Summer Learning Association, to elevate the importance of keeping kids learning, safe and healthy so they start the school year strong and thrive all year long.

Each day of National Summer Learning Week will focus on a learning area critical to healthy child development and learning, especially during the summer months: Literacy, STEM, Arts, College & Career Readiness, and Nutrition and Wellness.

Pending COVID 19 restrictions, libraries, children's museums, non-profits, municipalities, school districts, parks and recreation centers as well as Mayors of cities and towns across America will host science, math, reading, sports, and arts-related virtual experiences or at home learning activities reaching thousands of youth who will celebrate National Summer Learning Week and a season of learning.

NSLA encourages children and families everywhere to join in National Summer Learning Week by engaging in learning and fun (virtually or in their community).

National Summer Learning Week also provides opportunities for parents, caregivers and community members to take action to protect funding for summer and afterschool learning programs and community members can contact their federal, state and local representatives to communicate their support.

NSLA recognizes programs across the nation that successfully harness the power of summer to create brighter futures for children and will announce the 2020 Summer Learning Award finalists this summer season. These are national exemplars of what works in summer learning and we look forward to shining a light on how these programs make a difference in the lives of the children they touch.



FOOTNOTES AND RESOURCES

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**national summer
learning association**

summerlearning.org

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING ASSOCIATION

The National Summer Learning Association 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, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and advocates for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. NSLA's work is driven by the belief that all children and youth deserve high-quality summer learning experiences that will help them succeed in college, career, and life.