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SHAPING SUMMERTIME EXPERIENCES

Opportunities to Promote Healthy Development and Well-Being for Children and Youth

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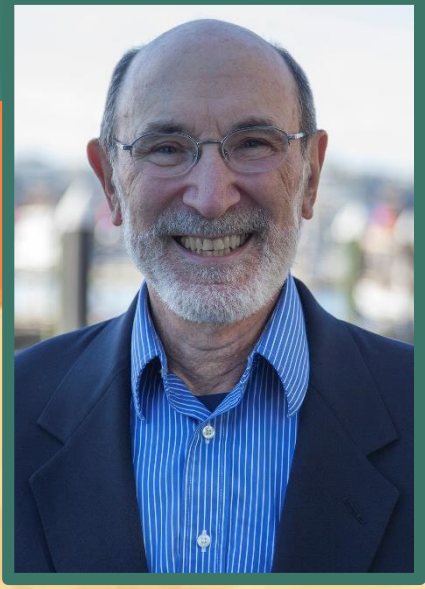

Statement of Task

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Examine summertime experiences affecting school-age children (rising K-12) across four areas of well-being:

1) **academic learning and opportunities for enrichment;**
2) **social and emotional development;**
3) **physical and mental health and health-promoting behaviors;**
4) **safety, risk-taking, and anti-and pro-social behavior.**

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Study Methodology

- in-person closed session meetings (n=5)
- public information-gathering session (n=1)
- extensive review of the literature
- memos received from knowledgeable stakeholder organizations (n=13)
- information obtained from federal, state, and municipal entities
- papers commissioned (n=5) on summertime and— international programs and policies; juvenile justice and child welfare; policing; geography and the built environment

Approach: Systems Perspective

Intersecting social contexts that pose barriers and present opportunities to the healthy academic and social and emotional development of many of our nation's neediest children.

Spring SUMMER Fall

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Report Contents

- Landscape of Summertime Experiences
- Effects of Summertime Experiences on Children's Development
- How Summer Programs Influence Outcomes
- Children's Circumstances

Audience:

- Federal, state, local, and organizational decision makers

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Summertime Risks and Opportunities

- Risks:
  - changes in food security, medical services, structured activities, direct supervision, risk behaviors, sedentary time, weight, and unintentional injuries, particularly for disadvantaged children/youth
- Opportunities:
  - to engage and leverage the strengths and resources of youth, families, communities, and other stakeholders to improve the education, health, safety, and well-being
  - However, opportunities are unequally distribute between subgroups creating disparities in outcomes.

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Overarching Report Findings

1. Basic developmental needs must be met as a critical precondition for summer programs and services.

2. Those in less advantageous circumstances are at risk for worse outcomes.

3. The assets and priorities of families and communities are key.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improving Availability, Access, and Equity

2. Improving Planning, Administration, and Coordination

3. Advancing Data Collection and Research

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Improving Availability, Access, and Equity

Example: Average cost of a summer program nationally $288/week. But family of four living at 100 percent of the poverty level has $25,100 income or $483/week.

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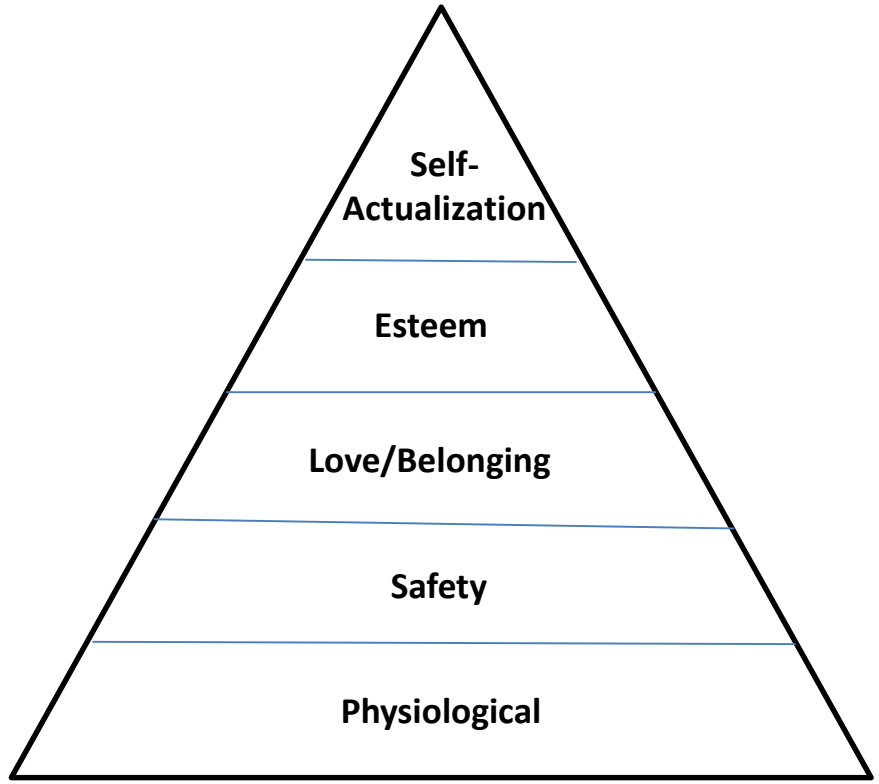
RECOMMENDATION:
Reduce Food Insecurity

- Reduce food insecurity for children and youth during the summer through existing mechanisms by increasing access to the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), reducing barriers to community eligibility for the SFSP, and expanding the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children Program.



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, 1943

RECOMMENDATION:
Promote Summer Employment

- Increase funding for structured summer employment programs in order to serve more adolescents

- Example:

  One Summer Chicago Plus- Chicago launched summer jobs program for youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Supported by city, county, and private companies.

Improving Planning, Administration, and Coordination

Many sectors are involved but making decisions around summer independently, with limited or no coordination

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RECOMMENDATION:
Expand Support for Intermediaries

- Augment funding, technology, and in-kind supports to intermediaries working in summertime space

- Examples:

  Afterschool Alliance

  Forum for Youth Investment

  National Afterschool Association

  National Summer Learning Association

What does the report say about the influence of summer programs?

- There is evidence of effectiveness for many different types of programs but the outcomes research base is not representative of all types of programming available, the full range of populations served, and agents offering services.

- Key themes emerged among fragmented evidence: intentional design, sustained attendance, sufficient duration

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FINDINGS: Summer Program Effectiveness

Safety, Risk-Taking, and Pro- and Anti-social Behaviors

- No rigorous outcome studies examined whether summer programs improve physical safety or supervision.
- There is moderate evidence indicating that summer programs designed to reduce risky behaviors such as alcohol use and unsafe sex are effective.
- There is strong evidence that youth employment programs for adolescents at risk of crime involvement can decrease violent-crime arrests.

Physical and Mental Health

- There is suggestive evidence that summer programs designed to promote weight loss can be effective in reducing weight, BMI, and promoting fitness.
- Programs providing targeted interventions to children and youth with mental health needs, such as depression or anxiety, can be effective in promoting mental health outcomes.

Social and Emotional Development

- There is moderate evidence that specialized programs designed to meet the specific needs of specific groups of children and youth can improve social and emotional skills and abilities.
- Suggestive evidence exists for the social and emotional benefits of medical camps and recreational camps.

Academic Learning and Enrichment

- Academic learning was the most frequently studied group of outcomes in the literature and the most frequently studied type of program.
- Academic learning programs have been tested in multiple contexts with large numbers of children and youth.
- We find evidence of effectiveness for many types of summer academic learning programs, including voluntary single and multi-subject programs (strong, moderate, and suggestive), mandatory programs (moderate), and at-home programs (strong and suggestive).

Advancing Data Collection and Research

- Data systems do not adequately capture seasonal differences in four outcome domains.
- Research on the impact of summer outside of the academic domain is scarce.

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RECOMMENDATION:
Build Summertime Evidence

- Establish and maintain databases that allow for disaggregation of data by month
- Extend academic-year data collection to include the summer months when appropriate to the subject of the data collection
- Share data across systems when possible.

- Example:

  Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Center program should update the 21 APR System to build on existing data and reporting on summer, including data on participants by type of program, geography, and demographics.

Research Needs

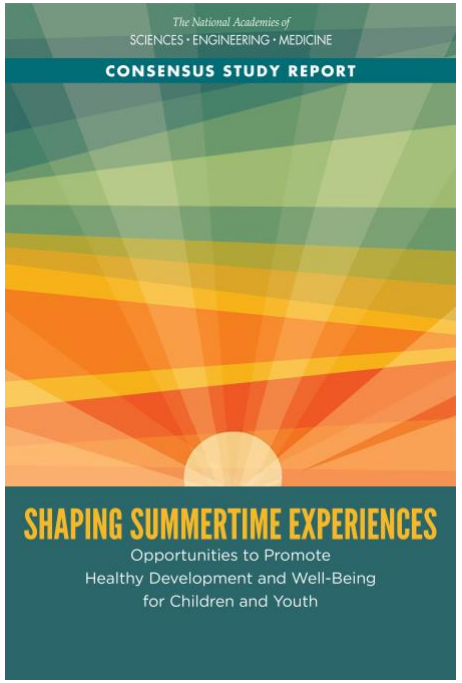
- Developmental trajectories
- Effectiveness of programs and practices
- Time use of children and youth
- Underserved populations
- Academic learning and enrichment
- Social and emotional development
- Physical and mental health
- Safety, risk-taking, and anti-/pro-social behaviors

- Example:

  Academic learning literature has focused primarily on the Black-White and low-high SES gaps.

DISCUSSION:
An Updated View of Summertime

Summer provides a unique window of opportunity during the year to engage families and leverage the strengths and resources of families, communities, and other stakeholders to improve the education, health, safety, and well-being of children and youth.



Download report: **www.nas.edu/SummerOpportunities**

For more information about the study or dissemination activities, please contact: Rebekah Hutton, Study Director, rhutton@nas.edu

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APPENDIX

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FINDINGS: Impact of Summer on Four Domains

- **Safety, Risk-taking, and Anti-and Pro-social Behavior**
- **Physical and Mental Health**
- **Social and Emotional Development**
- **Academic Learning and Enrichment**

Research on the impact of summer outside of the academic domain is scarce.

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Research Needs (1of4)

TABLE 6-1 Research Needs to Inform Evidence-Based Summertime Programs and Practices	
General Category	**Specific Research Needs**
Developmental trajectories	• Conduct longitudinal studies that examine the effect of different types of summertime experiences over the course of childhood/adolescence and the effect on long-term developmental outcomes for children and youth. • Conduct research on resilience and asset-based approaches to improving developmental outcomes with special attention to underserved populations
Effectiveness of programs and practices	• Examine how participation in summer programs over multiple years affects outcomes for children and youth. • Conduct replication studies to understand how different contexts may change outcomes. • Review existing public/private employer summertime programs for effectiveness and define elements that could be replicated by employers in underserved communities. • Move beyond pre/post program studies to prospective controlled studies, ideally with randomization. • Develop a standardized set of effectiveness metrics for summertime program evaluations. • Understand how supports for parents and caregivers can shape family-based and informal experiences into opportunities for growth across the four areas of well-being. • Conduct studies on how to implement, disseminate, and scale effective programs and practices.

Research Needs (2of4)

General Category	Specific Research Needs
Time use of children and youth	• Conduct longitudinal studies of unstructured and structured summertime experiences. • Expand time use surveys to differentiate between summertime and other times of the year; to include children living within foster care and juvenile justice settings; to include time use by children and youth under 15 years old; to differentiate opportunities by agents; and to consider changes in children's technology use and access.
Underserved populations	• Understand how community, neighborhood, and family contexts affect outcomes for children and youth during the summer. • Conduct research on the characteristics of programs that have been shown to be effective for children and youth from underserved populations. • Understand the needs of system-involved children and youth and policies/practices that can be implemented to meet their developmental needs.

Research Needs (3of4)

General Category	Specific Research Needs
Academic learning and enrichment	• Conduct research to establish optimal best practices (e.g. dosage, staffing, curriculum, mix of academic and enrichment content) separately and in combination to advance the academic development of children from different backgrounds, at different developmental stages, and in different family and community contexts in targeted academic outcomes. • Conduct research to better understand the summer-related academic learning outcomes and enrichment opportunities for subpopulations of children and youth who are currently underrepresented in the literature, which has focused primarily on the Black-White and low-high SES gaps. These populations include but are not limited to children and youth who are American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, immigrant, migrant and refugee, homeless, system-involved, LGBTQ+, and those with special health care or developmental needs.
Social and emotional development	• Examine seasonal patterns related to the developmental trajectories of social and emotional skills for children and youth. • Identify seasonal trajectories of social and emotional learning for children and youth across grades. • Conduct research to understand the effects of different types of summer experiences on social and emotional skills.

Research Needs (4of4)

General Category	Specific Research Needs
Physical and mental health	• Examine best practices for reducing food insecurity for children and youth during the summer. • Conduct research to understand whether there are changes in rates of injury (e.g., motor vehicle injuries, recreational injuries, firearm injuries, self-inflicted injuries) during the summer. • Conduct research on rates and causes of violence (e.g. domestic violence, child/youth homicide and victimization, exposure to neighborhood violence) during the summer. • Examine best practices and supports needed to promote the mental and behavioral health of children and youth during the summer.
Safety, risk-taking, and anti-/pro-social behaviors	• Conduct research to understand whether participation in risky behaviors (e.g., smoking and e-cigarette use, underage alcohol consumption, teen pregnancy) changes during the summer. • Conduct research to learn more about effective practices for promoting pro-social behaviors during the summer. • Conduct research to learn more about rates of and circumstances surrounding police contact with youth during the summer.