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**National Summer Learning Association Joins the Obama Administration in
New Summer Opportunity Project**

*Initiative aims to expand access to summer learning, summer meals and jobs for
America's young people*

Baltimore, Md. – February 25, 2016 – The [National Summer Learning Association](http://www.summerlearning.org) (NSLA), the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities, applauds the White House today for its commitment to elevate the importance of keeping kids learning, healthy, fed and safe during the critical summer months.

This commitment will echo throughout our nation's communities tomorrow morning when the White House announces its Summer Opportunity Project – a multi-agency effort in partnership with NSLA and other national partners to provide the necessary support to communities across the country to create happy, healthy and productive summer opportunities for their youth. The initiative will be announced at a [Champions of Change – Summer Opportunity](#) event at which the White House will honor nine outstanding individuals from across the country for their efforts to transform summer from a time of high risk to a time of great reward for the country's most vulnerable children and youth.

“We commend the White House for its outstanding leadership on this issue and praise its efforts to join partners across the country in expanding access to high-quality learning opportunities, meals and jobs for young people during the critical summer months,” said Sarah Pitcock, NSLA CEO. “We are encouraged to see communities throughout the nation stepping up to ensure we meet the learning and development needs of all young people

each summer. But there's much work ahead. The summer months remain the most unequal and insecure times for far too many children and families.”

Every summer, low-income youth lose two to three months in reading achievement, while their higher-income peers make slight gains. And, most youth lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in math skills in the summer. Year after year, these losses accumulate. By fifth grade, the cumulative years of summer learning loss can leave low-income students almost three years behind their peers. In fact, more than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities.

According to Pitcock, “This inequity is plaguing our young people, working parents and our communities. The resources the Administration is committing to summer opportunities are a smart investment that will go a long way toward closing both the opportunity and achievement gaps.”

Pitcock opined that learning is like a faucet. “During the school year, the faucet is on and all children are afforded learning opportunities because of equal access to public education,” she said. “But during the summer, the faucet is turned off for low-income children. The result is a desert of learning loss and lost opportunity.”

To achieve the goals of the Summer Opportunity Project, NSLA will identify and disseminate what works in the summer space by creating a national best practices knowledge base and network that equips cities, towns and counties to provide summer learning, meal and job opportunities to all children and youth who qualify for free and reduced-price meals. NSLA will convene community stakeholders multiple times per year, provide professional development to summer providers, produce and curate valuable resources, generate public awareness through events like National Summer Learning Day on July 14, and advocate for supportive policies.

In conjunction with the Champions of Change Summer Opportunity Project, NSLA will release a new Summer Funding Resource Guide in collaboration with the White House and the U.S. Department of Education to help state and local leaders identify the most promising funding streams to expand summer supports for young people.

Additionally, NSLA is collaborating with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) and a number of municipal and nonprofit leaders to develop service and service-learning projects that will enable up to 20,000 youth to gain new skills and earn money for college. The Summer Opportunity AmeriCorps program is being launched through an up to \$15 million dollar commitment from the CNCS.

In addition to education, to ensure America's youth are safe, healthy and productive during the summer, NSLA, the White House and government agencies are working on summer programs to keep young people properly fed, help them develop the skills necessary to enter the workforce, and set them on a meaningful career path. Research shows that in addition to preventing summer learning loss, focusing on summer meals and jobs is critical to protecting and equipping children and families:

- Minority children gain weight up to twice as fast during the summer than during the school year. To help stabilize their diets during the summer, the United States Department of Agriculture's Summer Food Service Program subsidizes meals for

young people. In 2014, 3.2 million youth took advantage of this service on an average day.

- Summer jobs are critical for young people because they divert them from criminal involvement and reduce overall violence, yet nearly 46 percent of youth who applied for summer jobs were turned down, according to a recent study, and over the past 12 years there has been a 40 percent decline in summer job opportunities for our country's youth.

Under President Obama's leadership and the coordinated efforts of federal agencies, opportunities for more enriching summers have grown significantly. The President has committed nearly \$6 billion in new funding in the 2017 budget for work experience programs for young people, the Department of Labor's *Summer Jobs and Beyond* grant competition will award \$20 million to various communities that provide young people with job opportunities and the Department of Education's Summer Learning Portal provides communities with online resources and tools to help design and implement effective summer learning programs.

For more information, visit www.summerlearning.org.

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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