

Investments in Summer Learning Programs:

A Scan of Resources for Summer Programming in California, 2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Without ongoing opportunities to learn and practice essential skills, kids fall behind on measures of academic achievement over the summer months, a phenomenon known as “summer slide.” Most youth lose about two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months and low-income youth also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains. By the end of fifth grade, disadvantaged youth are nearly three grade equivalents behind their more affluent peers in reading. This disparity has grave consequences for disadvantaged young people, largely explaining differences in long-term academic success—and the setbacks for California’s youth in the summer are no different. Little is known, however, about the kinds of programs that are available to lower-income children during the summer months.



While the research on summer learning loss is clear and compelling, newer research brings attention to additional summer setbacks. On one end of the spectrum, kids experience unhealthy weight gain during the summer, contributing to the problem of childhood obesity. On the other end, when compared to the school year, many more kids are going without meals, as access to federally subsidized meals declines significantly during the summer months. While it’s normal for kids to gain weight in accordance with their age and development, children gain weight two or three times faster during

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summer vacation than during the school year. Summer gains are especially large for three subgroups already at greater risk for childhood obesity: Black children, Hispanic children, and children who are already overweight. Although a school's diet and exercise policies may not always be ideal, it seems that school environments contribute less to obesity than a child's nonschool environments.

The setbacks for California's youth in the summer are no different. In recognition of the importance of summer learning, the California state legislature authorized the Summer and Intersession Enrichment Task Force with the following objectives:

- To promote good health and to combat obesity by increasing education and awareness of the benefits of good nutrition and regular physical exercise and activity.
- To provide safe, supervised places for kids to be during the summer months.
- To provide enrichment activities and experiential learning that complement the school year curriculum, but offer other opportunities not found in school.
- To prevent summer learning loss among California's children.

Summer programs afford a critical opportunity to level the playing field. Little is known, however, about the kinds of programs that are available to lower-income children during the summer months. Given the growing recognition of the importance of summertime activities, the National Summer Learning Association is working with the Bay Area Partnership for Children and Youth to document the supply of and demand for publicly funded summer programs in California to inform the work of the legislative task force. ■



Research shows that regular attendance in high-quality summer learning programs has a significant positive effect on math and reading, grade promotion, high school graduation, and parent involvement.

PURPOSE AND METHODS

The National Summer Learning Association, with Cross & Joftus LLC, collected and analyzed data in five cities in California to provide critical information to state and local policymakers on public investments in summer programs. These data provide a snapshot in time of program offerings in the summer of 2008. The five cities included in the analysis are Sacramento, Oakland, Los Angeles, Watsonville, and Fresno. While all cities have a significant population of young people living in poverty, the cities differ in their geography, size, and summer services. Four key funding agencies were surveyed for each city: the largest public school district, the city parks and recreation department, the local summer jobs agency, and the state childcare agency. These agencies were chosen on the basis of several criteria, including their focus on children and youth and a track record of providing free or low-cost summer programs to youth in each city.



We collected data through phone and in-person interviews with agency administrators and providers in each city as well as at the state level. The goal of each interview was to capture city and agency-specific information on:

- The major funding streams used for summer and the agencies that manage those funds;
- The historical and local context of summer learning funding;
- Requirements of funding;
- The barriers to accessing particular resources; and
- Key statistics about numbers and characteristics of youth and families served. ■

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

When examining data collected from across the five target cities in the study, some common themes emerge with regard to the supply of and demand for publicly funded summer programs.

The supply of low-cost summer programs is extremely limited relative to the number of low-income children.

- While many children in California are benefitting from summer programs in the target cities, a huge gap still exists between the number of slots available for low-cost summer programs and the number of low-income school-age children.
- Roughly 75 percent of the school-age youth in each city are not accounted for in this study's attendance counts from large school districts, parks and recreation departments, and summer jobs programs. And many of those that are counted do not have programming for the whole summer.
- While this count is not fully inclusive of all summer opportunities in each city, it is likely that many low-income children are not participating in regular, organized activities during the summer.

FINDINGS BY PROVIDER AND PARTICIPANT ACROSS FIVE CITIES*

Program Sponsor	(1) REPORTED PROGRAM ENROLLMENT	(2) PROGRAM ENROLLMENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL DISTRICT ENROLLMENT	(3) PROGRAM ENROLLMENT AS A PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICT LOW-INCOME ENROLLMENT	(4) TOTAL REPORTED PUBLIC FUNDING	(5) AVERAGE PROGRAM LENGTH (TOTAL HOURS)	(6) REPORTED PUBLIC FUNDING PER PARTICIPANT	(7) REPORTED PUBLIC FUNDING PER PARTICIPANT PER HOUR
Public Schools	171,300	19%	28%	AM \$61,713,000 PM \$10,892,000	AM 94 PM 94	AM \$360 PM \$415	AM \$3.83 PM \$4.40
Summer Jobs Programs	4,415	0.5%	0.7%	\$8,388,000	240	\$1,900	\$7.92
Parks and Recreation	111,770	13%	18%	\$9,755,500	120	\$87	\$0.73
Childcare ¹	64,575			Not reported			

* Data includes the largest city school district (LAUSD, OUSD, SCUSD, PVUSD and FUSD), city parks and recreation department, largest summer jobs administrator and childcare voucher counts by county.

¹ Childcare data by county: Oakland (Alameda County), Sacramento (Sacramento County), Los Angeles (Los Angeles County), Watsonville (Santa Cruz County) and Fresno (Fresno County)

FUNDING FOR MAJOR PROVIDERS BY SOURCE

Provider	Local Funding	State Funding	Federal Funding
Schools	\$300,000	\$54,314,000	\$3,208,000
Parks and Recreation	\$9,589,000	\$140,000	\$0
Summer Jobs	\$6,975,000	\$200,000	\$180,000
Total	\$16,864,000	\$54,654,000	\$3,388,000

Coordination of summer programming across agencies presents a significant challenge, with local history, context, leadership, and available funds determining the extent of relationships among public providers of summer programs.

- Summer programs for low-income youth are run by multiple entities, including the schools, parks and recreation departments, summer jobs agencies, and a variety of small and large nonprofit providers. Yet there is not a group, organization, or agency that works specifically to coordinate summer programs across these various groups.
- Even within some of the larger agencies, such as the school districts or the parks and recreation departments, information on summer programs did not reside in a specific office, nor did any one person have a full understanding of the range of summer offerings. Information had to be gathered from multiple offices to gain a clear picture of public investments in summer programming.

The state of California is the primary funder for summer programs, but city funding is crucial for parks and recreation and summer jobs.

- Total reported state funding for summer: \$53,254,000; primary use is for school programs.
- \$16,864,000 in total reported city funding covers parks and recreation and summer jobs programs almost entirely.

Summer school is the biggest provider of programming, but funding cuts could be devastating.

- The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) went from serving almost 20 percent of school-age youth in Los Angeles in 2008 to serving none in 2009. The superintendent is quoted as saying that 250,000 youth missed out on summer programs because of budget cuts.

Options for older youth are less available and at capacity.

- Summer jobs programs are very popular, yet expensive to administer. Each city receives at least 10 times more applications than there are slots. All waiting lists are in the thousands.
- Summer school for older youth is just for remediation and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) prep. ■



FUNDING AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The current funding environment in California makes the task of addressing the gap in summer programs a daunting challenge. However, it is a critical task for the future of California's children. There are ideas and strategies that can and should be explored to increase the number of children involved in high-quality summer learning programs.

1. Improve data collection and encourage coordination of funding for summer

A recent report from the Education Commission of the States (<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/80/24/8024.pdf>) showed that many states, including California, are unable to determine how much state education funding is being used to support summer learning programs.

This is because states often include summer school as an allowable use of either formula or categorical programs—such as Supplemental Instruction funds in California—but do not require districts to report on the amount of funds that were actually used to support summer programs. As a result, California is unable to determine the impact of its investments in summer programs. Improved data collection could yield important information relevant to efforts to close the achievement gap, while contributing to effective state financial oversight. Fortunately, state policymakers have some options to increase support for summer learning:

- Require that districts and schools report on the amount of 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) supplemental grant, After School Education and Safety (ASES) supplemental grant, Supplemental Instruction, Title 1 (including ARRA), and other state formula and categorical funding that is used to support summer learning programs.

Align key state funding sources for summer programs, such as those focused on libraries, recreation, and juvenile delinquency to create comprehensive, full-day summer programming for low-income students. At the local level, for example, Sacramento Parks and Recreation administers their own summer programs in schools and parks, plus the city summer jobs programs, providing a meaningful connection between three primary operators serving low-income youth in the city. If state agencies were able to collaborate in the same way, funding streams could be leveraged to create more comprehensive programming. In other words, programs would serve the same or more youth over a longer period of time and with more variation in activities and services.

Following is a brief overview of key ARRA funding streams that can be used to support school improvement through summer learning programs.

KEY ARRA FUNDING STREAMS			
Funding Stream	Amount	Summer angle	Timeline
Title I School Improvement Grants	\$3.55 billion to low-performing schools with 5% state set-aside	Summer learning programs as key component of school improvement plans	-Draft RFP in, August, 2009 -Final RFP in Fall, 2009
Title I, Part A	-\$10 billion (ARRA) -\$14 billion (Annual FY2009 appropriation) -\$24 billion total to districts with 5% state set-aside	Summer programs to accelerate learning for low-income students, with flexibility for academic enrichment and community partnerships	-50% ARRA awarded April, 2009 -Remaining 50% September 1st -FY2009 funds released in two rounds- July and October, 2009
Race to the Top	\$4.35 billion to Governors with 50% to districts	Summer learning programs as part of state and district strategy to turn around low-performing schools as outlined in RTT RFP	-Phase I apps due December, 2009 -Phase 1 awards, February, 2010 -Phase 2 apps due May, 2010 -Phase 2 awards September, 2010
Innovation Fund	\$650 million to districts and district/non-profit partnerships	Develop, implement, replicate, evaluate, and scale up successful summer programs	-Draft RFP in September, 2009 -Grants in early 2010

2. Encourage use of Title 1, including ARRA funds, for summer learning programs California receives almost \$1.5 billion per year in federal Title 1 funds, and through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), will receive additional Title 1 funds of about \$1.1 billion in 2009-10 and in 2010-11 to support innovative education reforms. Much of this funding can be used to support high-quality summer learning programs, providing an unprecedented window of opportunity for states to invest in reforms proven to help close the achievement gap and turn around low-performing schools. In California, we have anecdotal evidence that much of the additional Title 1 money released in 2009 was used to backfill cuts in the state’s education funding. This may not, however, be true for funding released in the 2010-11 school year. Communities should be encouraged to access some of this funding as well as the regular Title 1 allocation as part of the schools’ and districts’ efforts to boost student learning.



A substantial proportion of youth are taking care of themselves without adult supervision in the summer.

State and local policymakers can most effectively utilize Title 1 and ARRA funds for summer learning by considering the following policy options:

- 1) Encourage and/or require districts and schools receiving Title I School Improvement Grants to include summer learning programs as a component of their school improvement plans;
- 2) Encourage districts and schools to utilize Title I, Part A funds to support summer learning programs, including those that include academic enrichment and community partnerships;
- 3) Include summer learning programs as a component of state and district plans to turn around low-performing schools as part of California's Race to the Top application;
- 4) Districts and district/nonprofit partnerships with successful summer programs should apply for the Investing in Innovation fund and align their application with the state Race to the Top application.
- 5) Leverage existing state and local funding sources for summer programs, such as summer school, parks and recreation, libraries, and juvenile justice to create comprehensive and cost-effective summer programs;
- 6) Use a portion of the state set-aside for Title I (both Part A and SIG) to fund technical assistance and capacity-building efforts at the state and district levels; and
- 7) Use ARRA funds to invest in one-time costs that build sustainable infrastructure for summer programs such as professional development, data collection, materials, and policy development.

3. Reorganize federal afterschool funding As mentioned earlier in this document, California receives \$140 million in federal dollars for afterschool programs each year through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st CCLC). The state may spend this money on before school, afterschool, or summer/intersession services for students but, currently a vast majority of this funding is dedicated to school-year only programs. California could improve its 21st CCLC program in the following ways:

- Set aside a percentage of the funding for summer programs
- Encourage applicants to create year-round programs for students
- Reduce administrative hurdles for applicants
- Increase the daily per child rate so all providers can offer high quality after school and summer programs

A bill was introduced in the California Legislature in 2009 that addressed these issues (SB 798, DeSaulnier). This legislation should be closely examined and prioritized.

4. Document effective fee structures to expand availability of free or low-cost parks and recreation programs

There is great variability among the cities in this study with regard to use of public and private funds for summer parks and recreation programming. Based on this preliminary analysis, it seems as though Los Angeles and Fresno may be stretching their public dollars farther than other jurisdictions. It would be helpful to document more than clearly how parent fees, public support and private or in-kind support are used in concert to reach capacity while still serving a high proportion of low-income youth.

5. Explore possible restructuring of ASES funding priorities We estimate that roughly 100,000 youth in California are currently served in the summer through the existing ASES supplemental grants, which represents a large drop-off from the number of youth served by afterschool programs and by summer schools. The current ASES funding priorities as defined by legislation require that all elementary and middle schools regardless of income level receive after school grants before supplemental grants—for summer and intersession programming—could be allocated. There may be an opportunity to reassign these priorities so that schools serving low-income families could access supplemental funds before schools with upper income populations are eligible for afterschool grants. This strategy would better align the number of afterschool and summer slots in communities where public support is needed for children to be able to receive services. It would also provide an opportunity for children in remedial summer school in lower-income communities to have full-day, comprehensive programming and/or summer programming over a longer period of time.

6. Increase public and private investment in summer jobs One of the greatest unmet needs in summer programming is for summer jobs programs. Less than one percent of school age youth in each city in this study were served by summer jobs programs. There is a great opportunity to prioritize summer jobs programs in the state, access untapped federal funding, and engage the business community in a more meaningful way. Cities like Los Angeles and Baltimore are providing thousands of paid jobs to youth each summer through commitments from the private sector. Moreover, city agencies and school districts are partnering with workforce programs to provide paid summer employment in city facilities, parks, and offices. Cities and states should consider finding ways to provide incentives for business participation in summer youth employment programs.

7. Consider developing additional state funding streams for summer learning programs As the economy improves, we recommend identifying a funding stream for summer learning programs at the state level. This effort could start with a pilot program to evaluate the impact of increased participation in high-quality summer programming on youth academic, health, and social outcomes, or on school improvement at select sites. Regular attendance in high quality summer learning programs has been shown through research to have a significant positive impact on areas such as math and reading, grade promotion, high school graduation, and parent involvement. A competitive grant process to design and implement a research-based summer learning program would provide an incentive for LEAs and community partners to think strategically about focusing their resources on summer programming and improved outcomes for youth. A research-based summer learning program design would encourage schools and community partners to:

- **Increase the duration and intensity** of programs to a comprehensive, 6-8 week, full-day model.
- **Expand participation** to all youth who are either struggling academically, or who qualify for free and reduced price meals.
- Ensure programs employ a **blended approach of both academic learning in core subject areas AND hands-on activities** that foster critical 21st century competitiveness skills like collaboration, innovation, creativity, communication, and data analysis.
- **Focus on health and fitness** to prevent summer weight gain. Programs could connect to a variety of existing resources, including state and local health agencies and state universities for outreach and extension services.
- **Strengthen and expand partnerships** between schools, community-based organizations, and public agencies that provide summer activities to align and leverage existing resources, identify and meet gaps in service, improve program quality, and develop shared outcomes for summer success.

- **Provide incentives to youth that improve attendance and engagement by making enrichment activities** such as arts, music, sports, and free breakfast and lunch through the federal Summer Food program an essential component of summer programs.
- **Provide innovative professional development** for educators and youth development professionals, and ensure summer programs offer teachers a chance to test new models of teaching and gain valuable leadership experience. ■

For more details on the research methods and findings and further discussion of the lessons learned and their implications, see *Funding Summer Learning Programs: A Scan of Public Investments in Maryland*. The full report is available from the National Summer Learning Association by visiting www.summerlearning.org.

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The National Summer Learning Association's mission is to connect and equip schools and community organizations to deliver quality summer learning programs to our nation's youth to help close the achievement gap and support healthy development.

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