
Enhancing Summer Learning*

From a recent report from RAND: "Research has shown that student's skills and knowledge often deteriorate during the summer months, with low-income students facing the largest losses." (See: "Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning" – <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1120.html>)

Following-up on this concern, we sent a request to folks across the country for information about

- (1) programs currently in play, in addition to summer school, for countering summer set-backs (e.g., cross age peers, volunteers, business internships)
- (2) mechanisms that locales can use to organize social and human capital in addressing the concerns, such as collaboratives that help pull together community-school resources into a potent program (e.g., the resources of libraries, parks, schools, malls, community centers, youth groups, community-based and service organizations, businesses, etc.).

Specifically, we asked about:

- >any examples of what communities are doing to counter summer set-backs and other problems experienced by youngster over the summer
- >any ways communities and schools have come together to create an organized and cohesive initiative that is designed to attract and benefit youngsters who are of the greatest concern.

For communities and schools that have not done much, we also asked for thoughts about who (what organization/position) is in a position to stimulate interest in developing an organized and cohesive initiative.

This Information Resource presents a representative sample of what we learned from others and also some distinctive programs Center staff found on websites. Appended are excerpts from two major policy reports (one from the Harvard Family Research Project and one from the National Center on Time & Learning and the Education Commission of the States).

*Note: The center at UCLA is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1563
Phone: (310) 825-3634. Email: smhp@ucla.edu.

This resource was developing by the staff at the Center with the considerable involvement of UCLA students (special thanks to Jeanna Marie Ashman).

Shared Information

What Community Organizations Are Doing

(1) "Our family support services program provides a year long program life skills program for teens. During the school calendar we have group meetings and follow a curriculum that covers many topics including community resources. Teens also have a one to one advocate session once a week to practice those skills in their community. During the summer the one to one sessions continue. One of the goals is for the teens to explore resources in their communities, including free and low cost activities. This carries over to the families. Teens individual needs are supported, i.e., specific challenges they are having in school are worked on. Within this program and other FSS we work with clinicians, supported case managers, Intensive Case Managers and Waiver coordinators to link and refer to community offerings. To a large degree, what is afforded for summer programs, is largely dependent on individual community tax base. Our communities range from fairly rural to very rural, which also lends to differences in services/opportunities available.

There is one very rural community that seems to be the exception, not a wealthy district, but they consistently made available a wide range of programs open to all children. They team up a community resources, i.e., library, volunteers and paid staff to have full day summer programs at no cost to families that include learning opportunities, a low key type of summer school with the addition of recreational activities. The structure this provides is a tremendous benefits to the children and their families. Those at risk of regression have exposure to a degree of academic activities and recreational activities. Their isolation is greatly diminished from this experience. As well, those with social skills needs are in programs where they have opportunity to work on these skills in a relaxed, yet supported environment.

A number of our smaller towns are able to maintain half day recreational type programs. While not supporting the academic needs, the children are still exposed to valuable skill development. There has been an unfortunate trend, due to budgeting constraints for schools who did offer summer programs, whether they be ESY programs or more informal, speech improvement or reading/math skill 'camps', to cease offering these programs. In addition, to the already limited ESY programs it seems harder to 'prove' substantial regression for those in need."

(2) "I think this is one of those areas where "Let 1,000 flowers bloom" might be the underlying philosophy. If you have a sparkplug in your area, then you probably have some kind of program going. Some thoughts...Check out "Winston Area Community Partnership". This group formed in 1999 in rural Southern Oregon after back-to-back youth firearms tragedies. Like most places, individual citizens, businesses, and social agencies were doing a patchwork quilt of programs intended to support positive youth development. Those two deaths got people intentionally working on coordinating projects, identifying areas of need, planning new initiatives.

I was a part of the "Build Our Kids" project (<http://www.buildourkids.org/index.cfm>). We got this off the ground right about the time the economy tanked, so our fundraising efforts came in way short of what we needed to implement the full project. However, businesses, schools, service groups & others pulled together to identify and provide support. Focus groups I conducted with middle school students identified areas such as "adults don't care about us", "adults don't spend time with us", "nobody helps us with our homework", "we don't feel connected to our schools", and "nothing to do between end of school and when our parents get off work" that formed the basis of many of the activities. I wrote the initial scripts for all of the videos on <http://www.buildourkids.org/index.cfm?nav=video> (except for "spark") and did several workshops for adults throughout the area.

Oregon has a system of county-based agencies called "Commission on Children & Families". As I understand the organization, the State felt that local people were likely to make better

decisions about what to do than legislators in the State Capitol. So funds flow from the State to 36 local, appointed Commissions that pretty much function as catalysts to bring together community partners.” See http://www.oregon.gov/OCCF/about_us.shtml

(3) "Our Summer Science Series fulfills a need for educational and enrichment programming for low-income Asian youth who struggle with language and academic achievement. It targets youth who have limited access to summer education and are less likely than their higher-income peers to do well in school and graduate from high school. The program hopes to reduce the summer gap by providing youth the opportunity to practice English and math embedded in science curriculum. This program provides a continuity of learning through a multidisciplinary science program combining enrichment, community exploration, leadership development, and academic supports to fourth, fifth, and sixth graders for four weeks. Morning workshops emphasize team work in designing projects, Field trip Fridays explore the city, and afternoon recreation includes sports, art, and cooking."

Distinctive School District Programs

(1) Positive Achievement for Learning Success (PALS) is funded by 21st Century Learning Centers Grant. The program supports after-school enrichment and summer enrichment for 1st through 8th graders in Sabine Parish. The program began in 2003. Since this time, the program has increased to 6 sites and various academic and recreational activities.

This summer we have components in gardening, Adventure Bases Counseling, Art, Fishing Tournament, Geocaching, Iron Man (running, canoeing, biking) music performance and Nature Explore classroom at the Hodges State Park and then each site has all kinds of activities going on when they are not at Hodges.

From a recent note sent to staff:

We touched the lives of over 1300 kids this year. I know that this program is extra work on administrators, community partners, lead teachers, teachers, student support staff and agency staff, however if you could have seen the 870 plus kids, parents and teachers interacting in such a positive way today at Hodges Gardens State Park I know that you would all agree that this work, time and money is well worth it.

We saw kids who at the first of the year were attacking teachers serving those same teachers dinner and entertaining them at family night activities. We saw school sites known for behavior problems show the upmost respect, care and concern for each other, their teachers and others in the community. We saw kids who didn't think that they had talents perform their hearts out for friends and family. We saw rival sites coming together to support each other in sporting events with friendly but fierce competition and cooperation. We saw some kids come out of their shells and a few that learned how to go back in when they needed to. We saw teachers going into unsafe neighborhoods to retrieve kids who needed to be in program. (I didn't send themJ)WE SAW MANY ENGAGED FAMILIES!

I must say that this has been the most successful year that I have experienced with PALS and it is all because of a committed professional team that cares about kids and families and a larger community that gets it. The PALS staff is the best! Principals, thank you for letting us use your schools and staff to do this work. Lead Teachers, please pass this email on to all of your staff. Administrators, DOE, OJJ, State Parks, Project Celebration, thank you for partnering with us to make all of this happen. Please send this email on to anyone in your shops that may want to hear about barriers being removed for students. If you want to see for yourself, you can go to www.sabine.k12.la.us/PALS

Some Distinctive Programs Center Staff Found on Websites

(1) *Children's Defense Fund Freedom School*

[Excerpt from director, Marian Wright Edelman's 7/8/11 newsletter]

"In many school districts across the country summer vacation is getting into full swing. But for a lucky group of nearly 10,000 children in 87 cities and 27 states around the country, it's not just summer, it's the Children's Defense Fund Freedom School.

Proudly rooted in the Civil Rights Movement, the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, and the efforts of college students to make a difference, the *CDF Freedom Schools* program trains college-aged young people to provide quality summer and after-school enrichment through a model Integrated Reading Curriculum that supports children and families around five essential components: high quality academic enrichment; parent and family involvement; civic engagement and social action; intergenerational leadership development; and nutrition, health, and mental health supports. We partner with public schools, community organizations, faith congregations, colleges and universities, and juvenile justice facilities who sponsor and host their local Freedom School. About 90,000 children have had a *CDF Freedom Schools* experience since 1995 and 9,000 college teacher-mentors have been trained to serve them.

In the *CDF Freedom Schools* program children are engaged in activities that develop their minds and bodies and nurture their spirits. Children, parents, and staff are introduced to a superb collection of books that reflect their own images and are part of the integrated reading curriculum in which books, activities, field trips, and games all relate to and reinforce each other. The college servant leaders use this curriculum to teach the children conflict resolution and critical thinking skills, engage them in community service and social action projects, and inspire them not only to explore the problems facing their communities, but also to become active in working toward solutions. Children are encouraged to dream, set goals for themselves, and cultivate positive attitudes and high expectations. We are forging a new vision for what can be done with and for our children. We want every child to know they can and must make a difference.

Research has shown the *CDF Freedom Schools* program is making an impact. In June 2011, Harvard Family Research Project released a report called "Year-Round Learning: Linking School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning to Support Student Success." The *CDF Freedom Schools* program was one of 14 innovative national programs highlighted that have "demonstrated success in providing quality learning opportunities for youth." Late last year, a two-year study of children enrolled at *CDF Freedom Schools* sites in Charlotte, N.C. and Bennettsville, S.C. reported that 90 percent of the children tested did not suffer summer learning loss, and 65 percent improved or showed gains in independent reading by the end of the program. An earlier three-year study conducted for the Kauffman Foundation reported in 2008 that students enrolled in Kansas City's summer Freedom Schools program demonstrated significant improvement in reading.

In June, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and CDF hosted *A Strong Start: Positioning Young Black Boys For Educational Success*, a symposium that brought together leading educators, researchers, and policy experts to confront the crisis facing the 3.5 million Black boys from birth to age nine and to highlight programs that are making a difference in closing the achievement gap. One of the best practices shared during the symposium was the *CDF Freedom Schools* program. This summer, ETS is sponsoring a unique new Freedom School site in Newark, N.J. through a grant to Communities in Schools of New Jersey that is designed specifically for Black boys in grades three through eight.

We know the *CDF Freedom Schools* program is about to make an important difference this summer for these boys and the children at each of the other sites across the country. It's critical that many more children have the opportunity to experience the *CDF Freedom Schools* program in the future. We have a goal of at least doubling the program over the next five years, including opening more sites on Black college campuses to put college rather than prison into children's vision and in youth detention facilities to support re-entry and new

beginnings. We are encouraging more of our college servant leaders, especially Black and Latino males, to become teachers to fill as many of the expected one million teacher openings over the next four to six years as possible (only two percent of public school teachers are Black males). Bringing proven models like the *CDF Freedom Schools* program to scale is one solution to closing the achievement gap and finishing the unfinished business of the Civil Rights Movement for all children: a quality education for every child.”

(2) ***Summer Food and Fun*** [reported in the Tuscaloosa News 6/9/11]

“Summer Food and Fun is a project designed to work in conjunction with the food program to provide health and wellness education. The program is being hosted at the McDonal Hughes Community Center. The Summer Food and Fun project is sponsored by the Alabama Perinatal Association, a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to provide structured activities at no cost to at-risk young people during the summer. The program welcomes children from ages 3 to 18 for a free lunch during the summer. The children also can attend a two hour play session before each day’s lunch. Activities include arts and crafts, reading, health and nutrition education and career life skills. The public health department encourages adults to volunteer. If any of the participating children were affected by the April 27 tornado, they will receive counseling, if needed.”

(3) ***Reading Programs at Shopping Malls***

- Announcement from the Gene Leahy Mall, Omaha, NE – “Kick off the Summer Reading Program and celebrate Antarctic culture as we continue our One Work, Many Stories journey. Learn about penguins and snow by watching a movie in a dome, then visit the craft bazar, sample an ethnic treat. Fund more Omaha Public Library events.”
- Announcement – “Queens Center employees provide reading program – The mall and the local school collaborate on a read aloud program. All grades of students participant. Employees who work in either the management of the mall or the security for the mall visit the school to read for grade K-2, but the children in grades 3 to 5 take a trip to the mall to hear the mall employees read in the common area.”

(4) ***School District Programs***

- Berkeley County School District, SC – “The district offers free summer immersion camps in the areas of science, technology, engineering, math, academics and fine arts. The district’s special Talented Enrichment Program serves artistically gifted and talented fourth through eighth graders. Students select courses in choral and instrumental music, dance, drama, and visual arts. New this year, a “Young Writers Institute.” The district’s Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Camp will introduce third through fifth graders to these career fields in a fun filled way by exploring the Wonders of the Lowcountry. Campers will take related field trips to local places of interest. New this year is a partnership with Google and the Governor’s School for Science and Mathematics.”
- Central Valley After school, Clovis, CA – “The Central Enrichment Summer Adventures Programs is designed to create a new vision for summer learning. It includes technology, wilderness survival class, rockets, music video, stop-motion animation films, literacy campfire, civic and cultural connections day (an eight station tour of downtown Fresno), Millerton Lake and Recreational Center, Adventure Race at Woodward Park. A partnership among the County Office of Education, Packard Foundation, Children’s Partnership, After school, City of Fresno, CA state parks, Center for Multicultural Cooperation.”
- Boone Schools, OH – “Summer bridge program to help fight summer learning loss. For students entering first through sixth grades, the district has summer bridge books

available. They offer 15-20 minutes of refresher information that students and parents can do together that will keep last year's learning from disappearing. The books cost \$10 through a partnership between the district and Carson-Dellosa Publishing."

- Los Angeles, CA – "At Camp Akela kindergartners read about rainbow fish, others study volcanoes, create travel journals, dance, and play in a portable pool. The students are also learning literacy, math facts and science and are honing writing skills. Melding education with typical summer fun, the program is part of a statewide campaign of Partnership for Children and Youth. The Packard Foundation launched an eight year summer learning initiative aimed at reaching 100,00 children in ten regions throughout CA."
- Six urban districts study effectiveness of summer programs – "The Wallace Foundation has a three year project to determine long term effects of summer learning programs. Grants to Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Rochester, Pittsburgh, and Duval County will collect longitudinal data that will allow researchers to track cumulative academic progress, summer learning loss, behavior and transitions into middle school. Programs will include intensive reading, math, science and enrichment. Some programs will have sessions on hiking, biking, kayaking, and theater."

(5) *Baltimore City's Program*

"Baltimore kicks off 'grand Prix' summer school. Students will be building soapbox cars with a focus on math and science. The program will serve 15,000 elementary, middle, and high school students. About 1,000 elementary students will also participate in a reading program funded by the Abell Foundation. Middle School will continue to team with the Michael Phelps Swim School. Advanced middle school students will be offered a chance to study Chinese or Arabic."

For resources related to summer learning, see
National Summer Learning Association – <http://www.summerlearning.org>

Finally, the following comments are representative of concerns shared by many who responded:

"We believe the summer programs absolutely important and positive and some situations essential. Everyone, communities as a whole and schools are facing budget cuts that impact programs available. ... Opportunities for summer programs is such a benefit in closing the academic gaps and helping to keep at bay psychosocial problems that occur with lack of engagement with positive peers and activities. Agree with the report from Rand, that low-income students face the largest losses. One example is the loss of funding for Headstart programs. Without the summer supports, these children lose opportunities that help them close the gaps and start kindergarten with deficits that make it hard for them to be successful.

Some children only receive 'counseling' during their school programs and the lack of continuity definitely has a negative impact. Budget concerns have also meant a loss of summer job training programs. As far as who is in a position to stimulate initiatives, I think school board members need to educate themselves in regards to what the cost is of not having these services. Short term budget cuts in these areas, often end up costing communities more in the long run. A collaboration of town supervisors with school administration to work on needs assessment and greater communication with politicians to highlight needs/concerns would help all understand the importance of summer programs. State representatives need to hear the voice of county Youth Commissions and Youth Bureaus. Historically, in our communities, these organizations have made sure our youth with MH needs and those at risk have been included in their programs, helping develop skills and confidence that carryover to school and community settings. However, with budget cuts these opportunities are no longer available."

Appendix

Excerpts from Two Major Policy Reports

Excerpts from: *Year-Round Learning: Linking School, Afterschool, and Summer Learning to Support Student Success* (2011) by Sarah Deschenes & Helen Janc Malone, Harvard Family Research Project.

<http://www.hfrp.org/var/hfrp/storage/fckeditor/File/YRL-ExecSummary-062311-FINAL-1.pdf>

“.... Broadening our ideas about where, when, and how learning happens helps communities to create richer learning pathways that have the potential to

- Include more youth development opportunities to help young people gain the skills necessary for lifelong learning and a healthy adulthood.
- Offer a seamless learning environment that can help promote school success and stem summer learning loss.
- Efficiently use resources outside of schools to help close the achievement gap.

... Because examples of various ways to achieve a policy goal are often useful in the early stages of discussion, this brief describes one possible approach—year-round learning—and highlights promising initiatives underway.

Year-round learning consists of intentional, community-based efforts to connect school, afterschool, and summer learning. Institutions involved in these efforts are committed to working together to support positive youth outcomes, develop continuous learning pathways, and provide equitable opportunities for both students and families. This approach provides youth—often in distressed areas—with access to quality learning environments across settings, as well as across the year. We offer examples of year-round learning efforts from 14 initiatives across the K–12 system, with many focusing on middle school and high school and some continuing into college. ...

Principles of Year-round Learning

Four key principles emerge for supporting children and youth through year-round learning:

1. Removing barriers to learning and increasing access to learning supports and enrichment opportunities
2. Being student-centered and family-centered
3. Building on organizational commitment, capacity, and flexibility
4. Engaging and being active in the local community

Removing barriers to learning and increasing access to learning supports and enrichment opportunities

- *Acknowledging and working with the effects of disadvantage.* The 14 initiatives in this study are trying to remedy some of the disparities affecting their participants through providing experiences and opportunities on par with what is offered in more privileged areas.
- *Increasing access to services.* In order to alleviate disadvantages to improve student learning, initiatives provide access to a variety of health and social services for both students and families and help families navigate the college testing and application landscape.
- *Exposing youth to new learning environments.* These initiatives provide youth with learning opportunities that they do not access during the regular school day, such as field trips, college visits, or activities like music or photography.

- *Aligning work with school and district standards and curriculum.* While several community-based programs actively work with schools to align curricula, in many cases the alignment happens through teachers and staff who either act as liaisons between schools and programs or are on staff as teachers, mentors, or coaches after school.

Being student-centered and family-centered

- *Providing key supports to help students get and stay on a pathway to high school, college, and beyond.* Programs that are implementing year-round learning can create pathways that lead to acceptance into competitive high schools and colleges, and the attainment of successful careers. This strategy includes building close relationships with school- or community-based role models, and providing internship opportunities and projects that build the critical thinking, life, and career skills needed to succeed.
- *Encouraging and tracking participation across the year and over time to ensure youth stay involved and engaged.* Being student-centered means paying attention to when and how youth participate; initiatives cannot support students if they are not attending programs.
- *Involving families in learning in order to keep youth engaged and help reinforce academic and developmental messages at home.* Initiatives are working to understand how to involve the participants' families in learning to create consistency between various learning environments and help families become successful learning partners.

Building on organizational commitment and capacity

- *Planning and implementing for year-round learning.* Initiatives that offer year-round programming have arrived at this approach over time. Some initiatives have grown out of a long conversation with the community about its needs and wishes while others expand from success of more limited programs.
- *Having a champion.* These initiatives often have a champion—someone who is leading the charge for reshaping a community's understanding of what the education system can be.
- *Establishing common goals and outcomes, often using shared data.* Conversations between afterschool and summer providers and school teachers about their respective goals can help all parties to see that they exist to support students and can help each other by working together. Using data to identify student needs and progress is one way to support these shared goals.

Engaging and being active in the local community

- *Being participant-driven.* Many initiatives rely on local decision-makers, such as schools and parents and students, to determine the scope of their programming, thus ensuring that they are providing services that youth and the community need and want.
- *Understanding and being involved in the local community.* To truly relate to the local context, people involved with the initiatives need to be part of the community fabric. For example, program staff can make intentional efforts to understand youth's interests and realities outside of the school and program hours. Initiatives can also make sure that multi-site programs are flexible enough to tailor their work to local environments.
- *Leveraging existing local resources to offer comprehensive services and learning opportunities.* Effective year-round learning requires many stakeholders to share responsibility for learning outcomes. This entails creating partnerships among youth organizations, school districts, parent groups, and public youth-serving agencies.

Full report online at www.hfrp.org/Year-Round-Learning

Except from: *Time in America: Trends to Reform the American School Calendar – A Snapshot of Federal, State, and Local Action* (2011) by the National Center on Time & Learning and the Education Commission of the States.
<http://www.timeandlearning.org/learningtimeinamerica/learningtimeinamerica.html>

With respect to this report, Jennifer Davis, president & CEO of the National Center on Time & Learning states: “Today’s standard school calendar of 180 six-hour days simply isn’t enough to give children – particularly disadvantaged children – the education they need for success in the 21st century. That’s why it’s so important that schools across the country, with crucial support from pioneering district and state leaders as well as the federal government, are expanding school time and improving educational outcomes for students. These schools are models for any state or district that is considering reducing learning time to find short-term budget savings.”

The report recommends that policymakers align resources with the diverse needs of students -- at the federal level, “strengthening the School Improvement Grant program to build more planning time and require a minimum increase of 300 hours for all students in participating schools; and expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC) program to support both voluntary afterschool and summer programs (as it does now) as well as models that redesign schools to expand time (by at least 300 hours) for all students. States should grant greater flexibility to districts to innovate with expanded-time models that are both educationally valuable and cost-effective. And districts can take advantage of already proven cost-effective models of building more time into schools, exploring ways to combine federal, state, and philanthropic funds to support sustainable models of expanded-time schools.”

With specific respect to summer, here’s a brief excerpt from page 26

Rethinking Vacation Time

Not only is the school calendar of 180 days fairly standard across the country, so, too, is the fact that these 180 days typically fall between the months of September and June (or August through May in some states). The long summer vacation has been a staple of the school calendar for at least a century. Yet, research shows that over the course of the summer, students from all socioeconomic groups lose ability in mathematics, and children from lower - income strata lose ability in reading, as well. 66 Other research suggests that the learning loss experienced over the summer, in fact, contributes to the achievement gap between high - poverty students and their more affluent peers.

To counter the ill effects of summer vacation on academic learning, many urban districts have made a concerted effort to provide learning opportunities to their students, especially struggling students, for at least some weeks during the summer months. Unlike past school district programs that often focused strictly on remediation, a number of recent efforts - like ones in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Dallas , as well as the 84 districts that participate in a program called Freedom Schools - are designed to provide students a more well - rounded experience. The National Summer Learning Association maintains that these types of programs hold promise because

*Summer presents an untapped opportunity-a time of year when youth and families seek programs that look and feel different from the traditional school year; teachers have the flexibility to be innovative and creative in their teaching and assessment; and community partners with specialized expertise in arts, recreation, sports, and youth development abound.**

In addition, some districts (and individual schools) have found that using school breaks in the middle of academic years offers a viable opportunity to enroll struggling students in intensive support classes.

*This quote is from Brenda McLaughlin and Jeffrey Smink (2010), “Why Summer Learning Deserves a Front-Row Seat in the Education Reform Arena,” *New Horizons for Learning Journal* 8, 45.