



National Summer Learning COALITION

What: The National Summer Learning Coalition

The member organizations of the National Summer Learning Coalition represent a wide range of education, youth development, health, recreation, and other agendas. But we all know that summer learning loss and other risks that young people face during the summer compromise the nation's ability to close the achievement gap and support healthy development for all students. *The Coalition urges federal policymakers to take the lead in ensuring that every child in the United States is safe, healthy, and engaged in learning during the summer.*

Summer learning must become an essential component of education reform and youth development, not an afterthought that is vulnerable during difficult economic times. At this time in particular, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides a unique opportunity for the United States Congress and the Administration to lead in this direction, while leaving ultimate decision-making about program design to local communities.

Why?

For young people who lack access to high-quality summer learning experiences, extensive research confirms that during the summer these students typically lose up to three months of what they learned in math during the school year, and low-income youth, who more frequently lack such access, also chronically fall behind their peers in reading. This presents a major challenge, not only to students and their families, but to the nation as well. Research from Johns Hopkins University attributes two-thirds of the 9th grade achievement gap in reading to unequal summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years. Students who fall far behind are at great risk for dropping out of school. The national dropout rate of about 30 percent has huge implications for workforce development, economic growth, and international competitiveness. All of our efforts and investments to improve the quality of teaching, curricula, school management, and other aspects of public education are seriously compromised by summer learning loss. *The Coalition believes that providing high-quality summer learning opportunities to significantly more students, in conjunction with other education reform measures, will have a major impact on student success.*

In addition, summer presents risks to the health and safety of young people, including special challenges to most families. The majority of students who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year do not receive them during the summer and are at increased risk of hunger for those months. Without opportunities for proper nutrition and exercise, the obesity epidemic among young people escalates during the summer. Families who need after-school programs during the school year also need full-day programs during the summer.

How?

Summer learning programs must be an essential component of any comprehensive strategy to improve student success rates and promote healthy development. Evaluations have shown that high-quality programs can reverse the pattern of summer learning loss. But simply asking schools to do more of the same over the summer months is unlikely to improve student engagement or achievement and could further reinforce the punitive stigma associated with many current remedial summer school programs. Students need access to a variety of accelerated learning opportunities over the summer that increase skills and motivation to learn. Teachers have a special role to play in addressing these needs. The flexibility inherent in the summer months presents an opportunity to implement innovative learning strategies that look and feel different than the traditional school

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day and year. Successful summer learning programs use a variety of approaches, including school-based and community-based strategies, often implemented by partnerships between schools and community-based organizations, camps, and faith-based organizations, as well as extension of the school year, but only if the additional time is focused on innovative teaching and learning that engages students and teachers.

While we support a variety of approaches to summer learning, the Coalition believes that high-quality summer programs entail:

- **Adequate duration and scope.** To be successful, summer learning programs should address the comprehensive needs of students, including academics, enrichment, and other programming for healthy development. This often includes addressing students' nutrition and exercise needs. Successful programs typically provide students with a minimum of 150 hours of full-time programming per summer over more than one summer for sustained, multi-year academic benefits.
- **Strong partnerships.** Successful summer learning programs typically include robust partnerships among schools, community organizations, and other public agencies in order to align and leverage resources, improve program quality, and develop shared outcomes for success.
- **Innovative programming that engages both students and teachers.** Quality summer learning programs provide a blended approach of academic learning and enrichment activities that include transition programs (e.g., for rising kindergarteners and ninth graders), proficiency-based learning opportunities, college and career awareness, experiential learning (e.g., workplace internships or service-learning), STEM education, arts, physical education, and innovative professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators.

The Coalition believes that local communities should have the flexibility to use federal funds in a variety of ways to address local conditions, while being accountable for providing high-quality programming in a cost-effective manner with measurable outcomes. Local decision-making should engage students, their families, teachers, administrators, and other community stakeholders. But we also believe the federal government should play a leading role by encouraging states and local communities to make summer learning an integral component of education reform, particularly through the Elementary and Secondary Act reauthorization.

What now?

We believe that, to meet the needs of all students and to make the United States a global education leader again, our public education system requires new investments. We also recognize that economic and fiscal pressures may make it difficult for the federal government to allocate new resources to public education, including summer learning. At this time, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides a special opportunity for Congress and the Administration to encourage local communities to use a variety of new means to allocate existing resources to summer learning. The Coalition looks forward to working with Congress, the Administration, and all summer learning stakeholders to ensure a diverse array of high-quality summer learning opportunities are accessible to students throughout the nation.

For more information, please contact Bob Seidel, Policy Director at the National Summer Learning Association, at bseidel@summerlearning.org.

Signed,

National Summer Learning Association
Summer Learning Advocates
Afterschool Alliance
After-School All-Stars

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Aim High (California)
American Association of School Administrators
American Camp Association
American Youth Policy Forum
America's Promise Alliance
August Scholars/The Learning Project (Massachusetts)
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life)
Camp Fire USA
Campaign for Grade-Level Reading
Citizen Schools
Coalition for Community Schools
Collaborative for Building After School Systems
Education Coalition of Monroe County (Florida)
First Focus
Food Research and Action Center
Forum for Youth Investment
Harlem RBI
Higher Achievement
Horizons National
In Reach, Inc. (Maryland)
Innovations in Civic Participation
Iowa Afterschool Alliance
Jubilee Housing (Washington, DC)
Maryland Out of School Time Network
Middle Grades Partnership (Baltimore)
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Collaboration for Youth
National Dropout Prevention Center
National Partnership for Educational Access
National Service-Learning Partnership
New Day for Learning
North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs
Partnership for Children and Youth (California)
Project Morry
Public Education Network
Ready by 21 Policy Coalition
Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance
Rural School and Community Trust
Safe And Sound Campaign (Baltimore)
School's Out Washington
Summer Advantage USA
The After-School Corporation (TASC)

The Educational Coalition for Monroe County (Florida)
The Steppingstone Foundation
The Swope Corridor Renaissance/Upper Room, Inc.
(Kansas City)
United Way Worldwide
University of St. Thomas Center on Academics and Sports
Vacamas Programs for Youth (New Jersey)
Wyoming Afterschool Alliance
YMCA of the USA

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