



SMARTER SUMMERS
ANNUAL REPORT 2011



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WHAT IS SMARTER SUMMERS?



In June 2011, the Walmart Foundation launched a landmark Summer Giving Campaign, investing \$25 million in hundreds of nonprofit organizations that provide healthy meals, summer learning, and summer jobs. The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) received an \$11.5 million grant to provide high-quality summer learning programs for about 20,000 middle school students in 10 cities in a three-year project called Smarter Summers.



NSLA invited four providers with a set of key attributes to submit applications for funding to administer Smarter Summers:

- ▶ **SUMMER ADVANTAGE USA** in Chicago and Indianapolis
- ▶ **THINK TOGETHER** in Los Angeles County, San Diego, and Sacramento County, Calif.
- ▶ **HIGHER ACHIEVEMENT** in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore
- ▶ **BELL** (Building Educated Leaders for Life) in Detroit, Boston, New York, and Baltimore

Providers had in common:

- ▶ An existing plan for strategic middle grades growth (rising 5th through 9th grades) and school partnership in more than one of the selected cities
- ▶ A proven model of academic and social/emotional support
- ▶ Ability to scale beginning in summer 2011
- ▶ A minimum of 150 program hours (typically 6-hour days for 5 weeks)
- ▶ Free meals for program participants
- ▶ Opportunities for physical activity



“Under current conditions, the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school.”

(ACT, "The Forgotten Middle," 2008)



WHY IS SUMMER LEARNING IMPORTANT?

Most school-aged children see summer vacation as a break from learning and a chance to relax and play. Unfortunately, many students, especially those from low-income families and communities, often lack the opportunity to participate in meaningful summer activities. This disparity exacerbates an existing achievement gap with effects that persist long after summer is over.



Most youth lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. More importantly, however, low-income youth also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains. The effects of this summer learning loss on students have been tied to a widened achievement gap in ninth grade, placement in less rigorous high school

courses, higher high school dropout rates, and lower college attendance rates. A 2011 RAND report indicates that “...these learning losses [for low-income students] are cumulative, and students may never overcome them.”

Meaningful summer programming can not only help prevent these catastrophic effects on student achievement, but it can also have significant benefits for students in other areas. Students who regularly attended high-quality summer programs have been shown to demonstrate higher self-esteem and stronger leadership qualities, more successful transitions to the next grade, and better future employment outcomes.¹

The Middle Grades: A Critical Time for Summer Intervention

The transition to the middle grades, defined as grades 5 through 8, is as important to the outcomes of a student as the transition to high school. Students often begin showing “off-track indicators,” defined by Johns Hopkins University research scientist Robert Balfanz as poor attendance, disruptive or disengaged behaviors, and failing core classes, as early as sixth grade. From sixth grade data, “less than 1 of every 4 students with at least one off-track indicator graduated within one extra year of on-time graduation.” (Balfanz, 2009)



A recent Harvard University study found that “students moving from grade 5 into middle school show a ‘sharp drop’ in math and language arts achievement in the transition year that plagues them as far out as 10th grade, even risking thwarting their ability to graduate high school and go on to college. Students who make a school transition in 6th grade are absent more often than those who remain in one school through 8th grade, and they are more likely to drop out of school by 10th grade.”² (Education Week, 2011)

Summer learning loss in the elementary school years results in low-income students being up to 2.5 years behind their higher-income peers by the end of fifth grade. Without summer learning experiences, the achievement gap in literacy between the youth who eventually drop out of high school and those who enter a four-year college widens to almost seven years by ninth grade, creating an unswimmable gulf.

² Sparks, S. D. “Learning Declines Linked to Moving to Middle School,” *Education Week*, November 28, 2011.

NUTRITIONAL SETBACKS IN SUMMER AND THE ROLE OF SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

The summer break can have two seemingly opposite effects on nutrition for children, particularly those who are low-income. While some students lose access to meals that would normally be provided to them during the school day, others suffer from the lack of structure and physical activity from the school year and gain weight over the summer. High-quality summer learning programs, including the four selected for Smarter Summers, address these problems by providing free meals for participants along with regular physical activity.

Food Insecurity

The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) states that “only 1 in 7 of the low-income students who depended on the National School Lunch Program during the regular 2009-2010 school year had access to summer meals in 2010.” As the number of students served during the summer months decreases, the number of students demonstrating need is increasing. In 2010, “14 states served less than one-tenth of their low-income children through their Summer Nutrition Programs,” FRAC reported.

Three of the states served by the Smarter Summers local providers had a decrease in the number of students served in the summer between 2009 and 2010, despite an increase in the amount of student need. Every state showed an increase in the number of students receiving free or reduced lunches during the school year since the previous school year.³

Obesity

At the same time, research shows that children gain weight two to three times faster during the summer than during the school year. Researchers Paul von Hippel, Brian Powell, Doug Downey, and Nicholas Rowland wrote that while “schools provide a structured environment where children are constantly supervised, have limited opportunities to eat, and get physical exercise at least a few times a week,” summer often gives young people much more freedom.⁴ Children often have less physical activity in their schedules and consume less healthy food, leading to significant summer weight gain.



THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC BUDGET CUTS ON SUMMER LEARNING

According to the Afterschool Alliance's *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer*, 8 out of 10 parents support using public funds for summer youth programs.⁵ While 25 percent of school-aged children currently participate in summer programs, 56 percent of the non-participants would be likely to enroll, as reported by their parents. The survey results show that the interest in and demand for summer programs is high, but recent budgetary constraints across the nation are limiting the number of children who can be served.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided funds to school districts across the country as assistance during the economic recession. Many districts were forced to use these funds to supplant school-year funding streams that had already been limited or cut, but some districts chose to use them to redesign and expand summer learning programs. ARRA funds expired in 2011, leaving many districts to face the true depth of the budget crisis for the first time.

This "funding cliff" has and will continue to cause cuts in personnel, curricular materials, maintenance, extracurricular programming, and often, instructional time. Based on a national survey of school districts, more than one-third of respondents were considering eliminating summer school for the 2010-11 school year, a rate that has roughly doubled each year, from 8 percent in 2008-09 to 14 percent in 2009-10.⁶ Despite overwhelming demand for summer programming, the supply of programs being funded is increasingly lower.

California's budget crisis has been particularly dire, with emergency regulations passed to enable cash-strapped districts to cut the school year to just 168 days, down from 180. Not surprisingly, summer learning programs have taken a tremendous hit. San Diego Unified, Baldwin

Park Unified, Mountain View Unified and Elk Grove Unified school districts offered no other summer learning programs besides Smarter Summers. Similarly, Washington, D.C., and Indianapolis Public Schools faced near-elimination of their summer programs, but worked to make facilities available to community-based organizations to use for operation.



⁴ von Hippel, P. T., Powell, B., Downey, D.B., & Rowland, N. (2007). "The effect of school on overweight in childhood: Gains in children's body mass index during the school year and during summer vacation." *American Journal of Public Health*, 97(4), 796-802.

⁵ *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand*. Afterschool Alliance, 2010.

⁶ Emerson, N. M. *A Cliff Hanger: How America's Public Schools Continue to Feel the Impact of the Economic Downturn*. American Association of School Administrators, 2010.



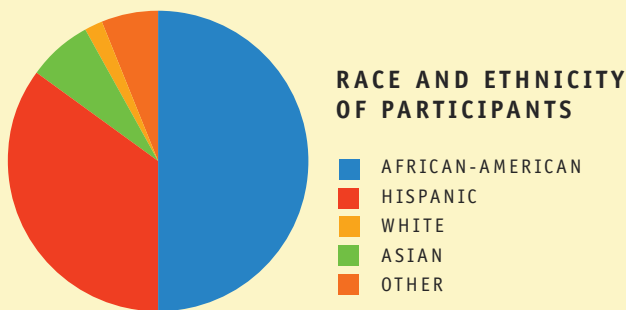
“ After several years of state and local budget cuts, thousands of school districts across the nation are gutting summer-school programs, cramming classes into four-day weeks or lopping days off the school year, even though virtually everyone involved in education agrees that American students need more instruction time. ”

(New York Times, July 5, 2011)

THE PROGRAMS: MODELS, STRATEGIES, AND OUTCOMES FOR CLOSING THE GAP

The four Smarter Summers programs share many research-based promising practices in reversing the middle school achievement dip, including strong attendance and behavior monitoring; hiring qualified staff; offering creative and engaging courses and activities; empowering students to demonstrate many types of skills and abilities while fostering the social needs of their age group; providing small group and individualized instruction and field trips; and facilitating exposure to college campuses, workplaces and professionals to set a culture of high expectations.

While sharing many core practices, each Smarter Summers provider tailors its approach to meet specific needs of the school districts it serves. A provider's model is likely to vary from city to city in order to address varying district priorities, such as literacy, math, behavior or test-taking skills. As such, measures of program success and outcomes vary among Smarter Summers programs and summer learning programs more broadly. While the majority of providers use summer pre- and post-tests to show changes in reading and math skills and math vocabulary, Higher Achievement focuses on an annual cycle of evaluation that tracks changes in school-year indicators, such as attendance, behavior, grades and standardized test scores. Across evaluation strategies, Smarter Summers providers are showing that their programs are making a positive difference in the lives of middle school students across the country. Here's more about what they do, how they do it, and how they know they were successful.



PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

TOTAL PROGRAM HOURS

150-240

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE RATE

81.5% TO 99.6%

STAFF TO YOUTH RATIO

1:10 TO 1:15

TOTAL NUMBER OF YOUTH SERVED

IN 2011 7,805

PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH QUALIFYING FOR FREE OR REDUCED PRICE MEALS

85%

BELL

BELL works directly with school and district leadership to identify the scholars that are in greatest need of additional academic and social support. These may be students at risk of being retained in grade, who need personalized instruction, or are in need of a safe and supportive environment during the summer. BELL hires a Parent Ambassador at each host school to help BELL connect with the families identified by the school. Parents fill out a thorough enrollment application for their scholar, including a personal commitment to support their scholar's success in BELL by ensuring high attendance and regular parental participation. As scholars enroll, BELL inputs all data on each student into an online database that puts critical information at the fingertips of program and organizational leadership.

BELL uses in-depth reading and writing activities around novels from its multicultural library, requires independent reading and math exercises, and has created pacing charts to modify exercises to a scholar's academic level.

BELL also provides engaging learning experiences that are often not found during the school year, including experiential learning through enrichment classes, guest speakers, community service, and field trips.

Higher Achievement Program

Higher Achievement is a rigorous, year round, multi-year academic enrichment program targeting middle school children in grades 5-8. Higher Achievement helps underserved youth transition successfully through middle school and places them in high school programs that get them on track to college. Higher Achievement is an open enrollment program, and grades are not reviewed prior to enrollment. As a result, entering scholars typically form a natural bell curve. However, the organization's experience in sites with the highest concentration of poverty has shown that even those scholars with A and B grades are far below where they should be, and therefore are at risk.

Higher Achievement's curriculum is centered on the themes of freedom, justice, solidarity, and voice. This early and consistent focus on social justice themes fosters in the scholars a sense of respect for other people's diverse backgrounds and beliefs, and an appreciation for different experiences and points of view. Scholars develop their social justice knowledge in community meetings, social justice interviews, a service learning project, and personal reflections. Every Friday of Summer Academy, Higher Achievement scholars participate in a field trip that reinforces the week's social justice theme, utilizing the region as their campus. Summer Academy concludes with a 3-day college trip during which scholars are introduced, many for the first time, to the possibility and expectation of higher education.

Summer Advantage USA

Summer Advantage selects educators who have a track record of improving student achievement and deep commitment to helping every child succeed. Educators understand that they are held accountable to scholar outcomes from day one. Certified teachers and college students are selected through a rigorous screening process and provided with intensive training through an innovative combination of classroom and online instruction.

Regular parent/teacher meetings, parent workshops, daily reading logs and volunteer opportunities for field trips and guest speaker events deeply engage parents in their child's learning. Using a data system that all staff can access, teachers and program managers collaborate to make informed decisions on improving scholar performance. Every week, staff work together to discuss best practices, plan lessons, and engage parents in scholar learning.

Certified teachers use research-based and culturally sensitive curricula to deliver approximately 8 hours of literacy instruction and 4 hours of math instruction each week. The remaining 20 hours each week are spent in enrichment activities, field trips, guest speakers, and community time.

In addition to enrichment offerings, Summer Advantage makes college readiness a required component of the program. On Fridays, scholars visit local colleges, such as Butler, Ball State, Purdue and Indiana University. The learning experience is rounded out by community service projects.

THINK Together

THINK Together partners with school districts and aligns its programs with the school year through a focus on hands-on, project-based instruction. THINK's model includes a 3-hour morning session staffed by one credentialed teacher and a team of paraprofessional staff at each site. The teacher delivers standards-based curriculum in math or English Language Arts for one hour and staff members deliver a project-based enrichment component and a Healthy Living component for one hour each. THINK's focus on Algebra I preparation stems from low levels of readiness among middle school students and is designed to provide math language building blocks that will lead to improved grades and test scores. THINK's project-based enrichment focuses on hands-on, experiential opportunities in STEM fields including robotics, biology, and engineering. In the afternoon, participants rotate through four hour-long enrichment modules including art, reading, and outdoor education. THINK Together also includes an array of individual and team leadership activities designed to foster a sense of belonging—a key marker in the path to healthy youth development.

Summer 2011: Outcomes for Youth

Across the ten cities, programs recorded significant gains in important academic and non-academic skills:

Provider	2011 Academic Outcomes	2011 Non-Academic Outcomes
Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)	Scholars gained an average of 7.5 months of grade-level equivalency in literacy skills and 7.2 months of math skills. ⁷	BELL asked scholars to record how they view themselves in domains of academic ability, confidence, leadership, self-efficacy, relationships and resiliency at the beginning and end of the program. Scholars showed significant growth in their responses to the prompts “I do well in school” and “I try hard in school” across all BELL Smarter Summers cities.
Higher Achievement Program	The following outcomes were observed from the 2010-2011 school year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% of scholars increased their math grades or maintained an A or B average. • 59% increased their reading grades or maintained an A or B average.⁸ 	69% of scholars reduced their school absences or maintained perfect attendance. 74% reduced school tardiness or maintained zero tardies.
Summer Advantage USA	Scholars gained an average of 2.1 months of grade-level equivalency in literacy and math skills. ⁹	91% of parents had at least one contact with a teacher to discuss their child's performance. 61% of parents participated in two or more program events.
THINK Together	87.5% of sites demonstrated student growth from pre-test to post-test in math vocabulary. In Los Angeles, all sites demonstrated significant growth. Across all sites, 7th grade participants saw an average 25 percentage point increase in math vocabulary. ¹⁰	91% of parents reported that their children liked going to the program. 93% of parents said the program met their children's needs.

⁷ This data comes from the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test IV and Math Test IV, nationally-normed tests that were administered during the program on a pre- and post-program basis. ⁸ Higher Achievement focuses on an annual cycle of evaluation that tracks changes in school-year indicators, such as attendance, behavior, grades and standardized test scores. ⁹ This data comes from the Iowa Basic Skills Test in reading and math administered during the program on a pre- and post-program basis. ¹⁰ Data from an internally developed assessment based on high frequency standards-specific vocabulary for middle school math.

Outcomes for Families

The programs also provided positive benefits for families. At the conclusion of Summer 2011, a survey was given to program families, and over 2,000 responses were received. **Two-thirds of parents stated that Smarter Summers was the only affordable summer learning option for their children.** Parents expressed overwhelmingly positive feedback about their children's Smarter Summers experience.

- 93 percent of parents would recommend the program their child attended to another parent.
- 76 percent of parents feel more involved in their child's education as a result of the summer program.
- 82 percent of parents agreed or strongly agreed that the summer program enabled them to be more focused on their job, job search, and/or school work.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

In each of the ten cities served in 2011, Smarter Summers programs were required to work with local school districts, and also partnered with organizations and institutions in the community. These collaborations are critical strategies for expanding capacity for staffing and programming as well as developing community buy-in and support for the future. They also serve to employ a number of teachers from each district during the summer months.

Districts

School districts are an integral partner of Smarter Summers. Providers were required to partner with a district to provide the program, and all Smarter Summers programs took place on public school campuses. Providers were also required to provide 25% of the required match (\$250 per youth) in public in-kind or cash support. Through in-kind donation of facilities, transportation, custodial and food services, district partners enabled providers to qualify for the grant and maximize their budgets to serve the most youth possible.

The four local providers worked directly with the school districts and principals in the ten cities whose students they served. Providers collaborated with districts to plan the programs in a variety of ways:

BELL: BELL has worked closely with Baltimore City schools in the past, with a significant summer learning partnership in 2007 that served 2,000 scholars from the lowest-performing schools in Baltimore. As district priorities shifted to focus more heavily on middle school, the Smarter Summers initiative once again allowed BELL to meet a strategic need of the Baltimore City school system. Together, BELL and BCPSS identified and enrolled scholars, recruited and hired teachers, and formed a program model that focused heavily on the needs of BCPSS students.

The Smarter Summers grant enabled BELL to strengthen its partnership with Boston Public Schools. Traditionally, BELL had delivered its summer learning model in a limited number of sites, paid for by philanthropy. With Smarter



Summers, BELL was able to work more strategically with BPS to target high-need schools and unlock some public funding to cover part of the program cost. BELL delivered its summer learning model in place of traditional summer school at those sites—a first for BELL—and worked closely with the principals and teachers at host sites to plan and execute the program model.

Higher Achievement: A signed MOU with each district and Host School outlines the partnership, including: classroom and school facilities, scholar transportation, custodial and security personnel, curriculum alignment, data sharing, and family engagement. In Baltimore, that MOU also includes a commitment of \$55,000 in direct financial support for Higher Achievement's current year of operations. In Washington, D.C., the Executive Director serves on the DCPS Out-of-School Time Steering Committee.

Summer Advantage: Summer Advantage works with district leaders or school administrators to assess their interest and needs. They exchange information about student academic needs such as grades and state test scores. At the beginning of the program, school year teachers and counselors describe scholars' academic needs at the time of referral through an internally-developed evaluation form, and counselors/administrators provide school report cards and/or assessment results.

As part of its agreement, each school district agrees to provide facilities, food and transportation for the program. Summer Advantage hires and trains the educators and provides the curriculum, multicultural leveled libraries, guest speakers, community experiences, and more. Summer Advantage then works with school partners to identify the scholars in the target demographic (based on funding and partner needs). Scholars are invited to apply through targeted correspondence to those families. The final step in the process is an orientation event that parents attend prior to the acceptance of their scholar in the program.

Summer Advantage shares assessment data with the school district. All assessment data are collected by its seasonal team of teachers and program managers. A detailed evaluation report is ready for dissemination by September 30, and it is shared with school principals, teachers and appropriate district and after-school liaison staff.

THINK Together: In each region, THINK Together recruited district staff to support the summer program, including school administration, teachers, custodial staff, nurses, cafeteria staff, and office staff. Their goal in hiring and working with district staff was to develop a program that was cohesive with the culture of each school and provide a successful program on campuses, especially those at which THINK did not have an established program. Through pre-program “discovery meetings” with district personnel administrators, THINK was able to outline necessary procedures for hiring school staff which expedited the clearances and all the pre-requisites required of the district employees. Because the planning and implementation of program was done as a team with administrators, office staff and teachers working alongside THINK staff, they were able to create a truly collaborative program that strengthened the relationship between THINK and each district.

City	Number of Teachers Employed
Baltimore	21
Boston	30
Chicago	48
Detroit	72
Indianapolis	130
Los Angeles	17
New York	40
Sacramento	32
San Diego	29
Washington, D.C.	4
Total	423

The table above shows the number of credentialed teachers hired from each Smarter Summers city or county for the providers’ programs.

Community Partners

Some partnerships were ongoing throughout the program for curriculum or personnel, and others were resources for field trips and one-time events for the students. Below is a list of community partners that collaborated with the local providers:

Universities: College readiness is a major component of Smarter Summers programs, and college visits are integral to both Higher Achievement and Summer Advantage. On Fridays, Summer Advantage scholars visit local colleges, such as Butler, Ball State, Purdue, and Indiana University. Summer Advantage staff reported that youth were motivated by meeting college students who shared their life stories.

Higher Achievement scholars visit university campuses for overnight stays in the summer. This summer, they visited Penn State, Virginia Tech, Lafayette College, University of Maryland College Park, Old Dominion University, and Salisbury State University. Scholars visit classrooms, sleep in dorms, swim in the campus pool, and dine in the dining halls during their three-day experiences.

San Diego State University gave THINK Together access to the entire campus for its culminating event, “Campus Crash.” They also provided a football field to gather about 600 students for the main event.

Enrichment Providers: Smarter Summers providers partnered with community-based organizations in all 10 cities to provide expert instruction and authentic experiences in enrichment activities ranging from art and music to STEM and sports. Offerings provided by local partners included Afro-Cuban hand drumming, broadcasting, violin, yoga, comic book design, capoeira, and basketball.

Staffing: BELL and Higher Achievement partnered with the Urban Teacher Center in Baltimore to access additional instructors in the classroom while providing high-quality teaching experience for educators in training. UTC provided teaching interns to both programs at no cost, allowing BELL to have three instructors in a BELL classroom of 20 scholars and Higher Achievement to have two instructors in classes ranging from 10-15 in size. The individualized support enabled by this staffing model resulted in reduced behavior problems and some of the highest academic gains across BELL's four Smarter Summers cities.

THINK Together partnered with Kelly Services in San Diego to support the programs' staffing needs. Higher Achievement also formally partners with universities to recruit volunteers, including American University, George

Washington University, Howard University, and Catholic University.

Cultural Institutions: THINK Together's STEM focus enabled programs to take advantage of a multitude of local science institutions. The Getty Museum provided buses and free parking for all Los Angeles summer participants. The Griffith Observatory reserved the entire observatory for summer participants. The Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens allowed Los Angeles students to participate in a unique scavenger hunt. The Fleet Science Center provided a field trip opportunity that included an IMAX experience as well as exploration of the Science Center. In addition, tickets to the center were donated for THINK to use in a raffle at its culminating event. Mad Science and the Birch Aquarium provided a series of mobile science labs to San Diego sites that allowed students to dissect sea creatures and work on chemistry projects.

Similarly, Higher Achievement took advantage of the rich cultural institutions near our nation's capital to enrich the program, including the Smithsonian Institutions, the Corcoran Gallery, the Kennedy Center, and the National Aquarium.

NEXT STEPS: LEARNING LESSONS, SPREADING BEST PRACTICES, ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

The Smarter Summers project is designed with the goal of creating sustainable summer learning solutions at scale in communities, armed with information, lessons learned, and best practices gathered from the work of each summer.

2011 Challenges and Lessons Learned

District Funding: District funding is often directly tied to the performance of its students. In some districts served by the local providers, summer programming had the positive effect of increasing the performance of middle grades students during the school year, which has potentially negative implications for future funding of schools. Strong

partnerships with the districts will be required to circumvent these funding pitfalls and to continue to provide high-quality summer programming for all students who need and want to participate.

Staff Recruitment: Some providers found that recruitment of teachers was difficult — not because of staff turnover, but because the network from which to hire staff certified to teach middle grades was small. This challenge is expected to ease in future summers because this summer created a larger network of middle grades teachers willing to participate.

District Vendor Agreements and Funding Timelines:

District funding timelines can hamper the ability of programs to leverage outside funding. Providers expressed an interest in starting the negotiation and recruitment processes earlier in the calendar year for the next summer program. This will allow for the program model and schedule to be put in place earlier, to allow for an easier recruitment season and more opportunities to build supplemental support.

Student Population: One provider found challenges for enrollment, behavior management, and retention in serving children who were required by their school districts to attend the program, rather than voluntarily choosing to attend. Earlier coordination with the districts and developmental curricula to ease frustration in the classroom should minimize these problems.

Student Recruitment and Retention: Student retention was higher in programs with strong enrichment; this will be a focus for recruitment and retention in the future.

Smarter Summers Community Representatives

In addition to providing local providers with the means for expanding their programs and services, NSLA is also equipping local intermediary organizations to build public support and capacity for high-quality summer learning programs. These intermediaries, known as Smarter Summers Community Representatives, will receive technical assistance, training, support, and funding to implement city-specific summer learning projects. A Peer Learning Network will foster cooperation and networking to assist providers and intermediaries in achieving their proposed goals.

- Boston Afterschool and Beyond
- Family League of Baltimore City
- The Youth Connection (Detroit)
- DC Alliance for Youth Advocates
- The Children's Initiative (San Diego)
- UC Davis Center for School and Community Partnerships (Sacramento)
- The After-School Corporation (New York City)

- The Marion County Commission on Youth-MCCOY (Indianapolis)
- Chicago Allies for Youth Success

NSLA will also launch the Community Indicators Project, which seeks to harness the knowledge and expertise of all 10 Smarter Summers communities to develop the first-ever set of indicators of a high-quality summer learning system. Guided by NSLA but driven by input from Community Representatives, this project will engage participants in debate and discussion over the size, scope, and defining features of a high-quality summer learning system at the community level.

The Potential in Districts: Building More Opportunities For Summer Learning

Despite the dire fiscal times, many Smarter Summers districts have recognized the importance of summer learning and are blending public and private funds, and maximizing partnerships, to offer additional ramped-up, revitalized new programs and pilot programs during the summer.

Chicago: The UpGrade program served 75,000 Chicago Public School students in 2011, 8,500 of them in middle school. CPS offerings include the Freshman Connection program, which gave rising ninth graders access to high school mentors, academic prep, and social-emotional skill-building from counselors.

Detroit: Detroit Public Schools' Summer School Academy served about 12,000 middle school students in summer 2011. The program was designed to provide an extra boost of academic enrichment for students scoring not proficient or partially proficient on standardized tests. The 7th-8th grade program included project-based learning with a focus on Pre-Algebra concepts. The Summer School Academy included a required teacher professional development component and special training for new teachers.

New York City: The New York City Department of Education is gearing up for a series of summer learning pilot programs in summer 2012. Two middle school program models will offer additional support in math and literacy, STEM-based

enrichment, and physical activity to a range of students, including those most in need of support and those who are meeting or exceeding grade level standards. Programs will be offered for five weeks, 7 hours per day.

Boston: In addition to BELL's Smarter Summers-funded programs in eight Boston public schools, the broader Boston Opportunity Agenda funded summer learning programs run by community-based organizations in 22 additional schools in 2011. Each program employs a different mix of time, location, enrichment, and staffing based on the specific needs and interests of its children. All are focused on the common goals of academic progress in math and language arts and improvement in specific nonacademic skills (engagement, initiative, communication, and relationships with adults).

Baltimore: Baltimore Public Schools is a finalist for a \$3 million Investing in Innovation (i3) grant from the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate and refine its

middle school STEM summer learning program, which was offered in seven schools in summer 2011. The primary goal of the program is to provide additional out of school time focused on mathematics instruction and VEX Robotics so that enrolled students can increase their mathematics grade-level aptitude by the end of the program, develop interest in technology and STEM, and encounter a college-going culture. In addition, the program provides 75 hours of professional development to participating teachers.

Baltimore Public Schools, Boston Public Schools, Chicago Public Schools, Washington, D.C. Public Schools and the New York City Department of Education are all members of NSLA's New Vision for Summer School Network, a national network of reform-minded district leaders committed to reimagining and expanding summer learning programs to provide comprehensive academic support and enrichment to a broad base of students as well as innovative professional development to teachers.

CONCLUSION

The Walmart Foundation's investment in four high-quality summer learning programs is having a ripple effect across 10 cities. First and foremost, thousands of middle school students with few or no other affordable summer learning options are attending high-quality programs. Instead of falling off track during the critical transitions to middle school and high school, these young people are gaining academic ground and invaluable exposure to colleges, careers, and a network of supportive adults. Importantly, they are also being provided with nutritious meals and opportunities for active play, sports, and teambuilding. With school district and city budgets strapped, Smarter Summers is providing an essential lifeline in many communities, resulting in outcomes NSLA expects to pay dividends for years to come.

How can you get involved?



Smarter Summers is a partnership designed to build public support for high-quality summer learning programs as a central strategy in closing the achievement gap and supporting healthy development. The Smarter Summers program requires increasing levels of matching funds in Years Two and Three in order to sustain and grow service levels. Support a Smarter Summers program in your community, or help NSLA build awareness of the power of summer learning programs by talking to your local leaders about summer learning opportunities for youth, and by hosting a Summer Learning Day event in your community.

Learn more at smartersummers.org.





All photos courtesy of BELL, Higher Achievement, Summer Advantage, and THINK Together.



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