

To succeed in school and life, children and young adults need ongoing opportunities to learn and practice essential skills. This is especially true during the summer months. Many Americans have a wonderful image of summer as a carefree, happy time when “kids can be kids,” and take for granted the prospect of enriching experiences such as summer camps, time with family, and trips to museums, parks, and libraries. Unfortunately, some youth face anything but idyllic summer months. When the school doors close, many children struggle to access educational opportunities, as well as basic needs such as healthy meals and adequate adult supervision.

Did you know?

- All young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Research spanning 100 years shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer (White, 1906; Entwisle & Alexander, 1992; Cooper et al., 1996; Downey et al., 2004).
- Most students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains (Cooper et al., 1996).
- About two-thirds of the ninth-grade achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college (Alexander et al., 2007).
- Children lose more than academic knowledge over the summer. Most children—particularly children at high risk of obesity—gain weight more rapidly when they are out of school during summer break (von Hippel et al., 2007).
- Parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure that their children have productive things to do (Duffett et al., 2004).

SPOTLIGHT ON RESULTS

Project Morry is a tuition-free summer sleep-away camp and year-round program in White Plains, New York, that focuses on academic enrichment, recreation, and youth development for children from disadvantaged communities in New York City. Since its inception in 1996, all of the Project Morry graduates have completed high school, 80 percent enroll in institutions of higher education, and 100 percent of the students who enrolled in college have remained in college.



SuperKids Camp has served more than 10,000 Baltimore City children since 1997. In addition to sailing in Baltimore's Inner Harbor and visiting museums, elementary students in the six-week program hone their reading skills. Evaluations reveal that over 80 percent of participants maintain or improve their literacy skills.

Summerbridge Pittsburgh, a two-summer, tuition-free program, helps at-risk middle school students increase academic performance while building confidence and life skills. Since 1994, Summerbridge Pittsburgh has served more than 1,000 children and has a high success rate: More than 90 percent of its participants graduate from high school, and 80 percent have gone to college.



"It reignited my passion for learning"

While other kids in the neighborhood were hanging out all summer, Charity was learning Spanish, French, and Shakespeare at Summerbridge Pittsburgh. Her teachers prompted her for the first time to actually analyze subjects such as American history, not just recite facts. The summer experience gave the previously shy Charity the confidence to speak up in class—or raise her hand when she didn't understand something—and before long she was leading skits and classroom discussions. In short, she recalls, "It reignited my passion for learning."

And this story doesn't end there. Charity became an outgoing leader in high school and taught for two summers at a Summerbridge program. She has since graduated from Harvard University and attends Harvard Medical School.

Our Mission

The National Center for Summer Learning's mission is to create opportunities for high-quality summer learning for all young people. Based at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education, the Center is committed to expanding summer learning opportunities for disadvantaged children and youth as a strategy for closing the achievement gap and promoting healthy youth development.

The Center works to:

- Improve the quality and availability of summer programs by providing professional development and evaluation services to providers.

The Center trains over 2,000 summer program providers annually, reaching more than 2 million children each year.

- Build awareness and support for high-quality summer learning programs through outreach and communications.

Summer Learning Day and our annual national conference are just two of the events organized by the Center to bring together program providers, researchers, and policymakers from across the country.

- Generate increased public investment in summer programs for young people in high-poverty communities.

In 2007, the Center's efforts helped generate more than \$14 million in public investment spent directly on summer programs for youth.

Through its national network of providers and partners, the Center works to make summer learning a priority in communities across the country. Using research-based approaches and models of effective practice, the Center strives to ensure that all children have access to high-quality learning opportunities during the summer months.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Program providers should:

- Get the word out and use the research. When reaching out to funders, decision-makers, partners, and the media, share the research to demonstrate the need for and effectiveness of high-quality summer learning opportunities.
- Enlist support from community partners. Host meetings to discuss how you can work together to support young people in your community during the summer.

Policymakers and funders should:

- Prioritize summer as a key component of out-of-school time funding.
- Provide funding for organizations that operate and support high-quality summer programs.

Business leaders should:

- Invest in summer learning programs for children of employees, and those living in the communities they serve.
- Provide summer internships and support programs designed to equip young people with the skills they need to be competitive in the global economy.

Parents should:

- Demand more options for, and better access to, high-quality summer learning programs from local leaders.
- Support legislation and elected officials that make summer learning programs a priority.



NATIONAL CENTER for SUMMER LEARNING

JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

School of Education

Education Building, Suite 307
2800 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
phone: 410-516-6228 fax: 410-516-6222

www.summerlearning.org