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This issue of the State Education Standard was produced with support from The Wallace Foundation.
How many summer memories do we share? Maybe you were as lucky as I was.

- I walked to my hometown library at least once a week, and one year the sidewalks on the way there were covered with 13-year cicadas, which were hatching out just as school was over for the year. A science lesson by itself.

- My dad took me to see a famous art exhibit, Monet’s Years at Giverny, which opened in the summer of 1978 at the St. Louis Art Museum. It made an impression!

- A bat landed on my mom’s sweatshirt while we were hiking in the Rockies. The expression on both the bat’s and my mom’s faces are also still vivid imprints. It was my one chance to see a bat up close.

- My family visited Mexico. In particular, I remember walking the Great Ball Court at Chichen-Itza and learning about Mayan and Toltec cultures.

- While camping in Vermont, I found a rock to add to my collection with a cool spiral on one face. Later that summer, my dad and I polished it smooth on a machine in his lab so I could clearly see its features.

Although your summer memories are different from mine, I suspect that most of you had many rich experiences, both working and playing in the summers. I treasured the months of summer and never would have traded them for more classroom instruction. Even then, I was conscious that most of my classmates did not go to the library weekly, did not hike in the Rockies or camp in Vermont, did not go to the zoo or the art museum, did not visit a lab where scientists did their work, and never, ever dreamed of leaving the country for a vacation.

I was very lucky. Without being conscious of it, I was learning all year long. Because I enjoyed reading a lot, hiking in the mountains, visiting art museums, and going to concerts, my learning was simply embedded in play. Because I helped choose my own activities in the summer with the help of well-educated, engaged parents, I was in the driver seat of my learning. These summer activities stood in stark contrast to the rest of the year to my young mind—aptly called “schoolwork”—which somebody else put in front of me and which required sit-down, pencil-and-paper effort on my part.

But before I read the articles in this issue, I did not know just how lucky I was. If on average students lose a month of learning in summer, and some lose as much as two, over the course of a school career, the unluckiest have spent nearly a quarter of their time in school retreading old ground fall after fall. What would it be worth to those children—and to all of us—if they could get that time back to learn new things, and in new and engaging ways? What coalition of partners can we bring together to enrich the summers of every student? A committed effort now, in the dead of winter, can ensure that summer learning is rooted in planning and forethought and no longer about luck.
“No more homework, no more books.” I remember singing that song as I walked home on the last day of the school year. I knew my summer would be filled with family vacations, regular trips to the public library, and enriching experiences that would keep me occupied and learning until Labor Day. Even so, the truth was that I liked school, loved reading, and would have been happy if I could have stayed in the classroom all summer.

My elementary school years came well before we knew anything about “summer slide,” the loss of learning that affects primarily low-income children during the three long months of summer that they are not in school. And it was long before schools provided basic services like nutritious meals to a growing percentage of school-age children.

Today, we know that summer matters. That three-month break in learning hinders the success of our schools—and the health and well-being of our students. Today, when half the children in our nation live in poverty, the idealized summer vacation that I looked forward to is far from the norm. For too many children, summer means a loss of access to books, adult mentors, meals, and enrichment. And for many more, for whom school is still the safest place in their lives, an unstructured summer is not something to look forward to.

Fred Brown, a former elementary school teacher who is now deputy executive director of Learning Forward, describes what happened when those students return to the classroom in “All Children Deserve Uninterrupted Learning!” Hint: It is not pretty. Teachers spend the beginning of each new school year reteaching material from the year before. Then they rush to cover the material assigned for that year. And then summer happens again and the cycle repeats.

That’s why this issue of the Standard focuses on the critical importance of extending learning time throughout the summer months. In “Summer Matters: Advocating for Summer Learning That Can Weather Political Seasons,” Aaron McQuade notes, “Summer is...critical to each child’s development, both mind and body. Any meaningful attempts to get at America’s equity divide and the consequent gap in opportunities for kids must include summer education as a key part of the solution.”

State boards of education can play a key role in enabling summer learning for all students. Longtime Michigan state board member Kathleen Straus discusses the process her board went through to set standards for out-of-schooltime programs. Michigan has been a national leader in expanding the definition of “school day” and “school year.”

If you are concerned about funding (and who isn’t), Bob Seidel’s article, “Finding Funds to Move Summer Learning Forward,” outlines several funding streams that can help support this work. Rhode Island’s efforts to diversify support for this important public responsibility, outlined in Adam Greenman’s article, “Rhode Island’s Innovative Solutions to Summer Learning Loss,” may also give you some ideas of how your state can take action on this critical priority.

NASBE is grateful to The Wallace Foundation for their support of this work. Later this year, the Foundation will release the results of a comprehensive evaluation of what works in summer learning.

Schools and teachers work hard all year to ensure that every child gets a chance to achieve. Yet the evidence now shows us that if students do not have meaningful summer learning opportunities, they are likely to lose a significant amount of the content they have mastered. We hope this issue of the Standard will start a conversation in your state about how you can foster strong summer learning programs for all students.
As numerous studies from 1906 on have confirmed, children lose ground in learning if they lack opportunities for building skills over the summer. Nonetheless, summer learning loss comes up but rarely in the national discussion of education reform.

By the end of summer, students perform on average one month behind where they left off in the spring. Summer learning loss is most acute for low-income children and youth, who do not have access to the same formal and informal learning opportunities their higher income peers enjoy. While most students lose math skills without practice in the summer, low-income youth also lose about two months in reading achievement, while their higher income peers actually make slight gains.

These losses are cumulative and can lead to significant consequences later in life. Consider that by the end of third grade, four out of five low-income students fail to read proficiently, making them four times more likely to drop out of high school than children who do read proficiently by third grade. Other consequences of a summer without learning include placement in less rigorous high school courses, higher high school dropout rates, and lower college attendance.

There is a burden on teachers and budgets, too. Where students have experienced summer learning loss, teachers report using much of the first two months of the fall term to reteach the previous year’s material.
The traditional summer break presents real challenges to the success of public schools, as well as to the general well-being of young people. With half of the children in the United States living in poverty, the idealized vision of summer as a time to explore, rest, and have fun is far from the norm. Far too many young people lose access to meals, books, adult mentors, meaningful enrichment, and a sense of safety for three months of the year every year. For those three months, communities simply turn off the tap of resources to half of their children and families. No matter what schools do during the school year, no matter how long the school day or how great the after-school programs, if students do not have meaningful summer learning opportunities, they are likely to lose a significant amount of what they have learned. Yet the best available data suggest that only about one-third of low-income youth participate in an organized summer activity at all, let alone one designed to help them maintain and build critical skills.

In short, a large-scale summer break from learning is counterproductive in terms of both educational equity and excellence. But summer school conjures up few positive images. Often remedial in nature, traditional summer school is typically seen as punishment for poor performance and a less-than-ideal way to spend the summer. However, these images need not limit what schools and communities do now and in the future.

A NEW VISION FOR SUMMER SCHOOL

Summer learning can be accelerating, enriching, and engaging for both students and teachers. Recent studies point to the characteristics of high-quality summer learning programs that succeed in these aspects. A new vision for summer school is not a fantasy. Many summer learning programs, including those in more than 30 urban school districts, have embraced this vision.

Based on research and field evidence, the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) has developed nine principles of the New Vision for Summer School (NVSS) designed to provide comprehensive, engaging summer programming that transcends the remedial and punitive model of the past:

- **Increase the duration, intensity, and scope** of the traditional summer school model to a comprehensive, research-based, six-week, full-day model that makes summer an essential component of district school reform strategy.

- **Expand participation** from only those students struggling academically to all students in schoolwide Title I programs and consider expanded-year programs that include all students in participating schools.

- **Change the focus from narrow remediation and test preparation to a blended approach of academic learning in core subject areas and enrichment activities** that provide hands-on, engaging programming in order to foster critical skills such as collaboration, innovation, creativity, communication, and data analysis.

- **Strengthen and expand partnerships** with 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.

- **Improve student attendance and engagement** by providing healthy food, field trips, recreation, and comprehensive supports.

- **Provide innovative professional development** for educators and ensure summer programs offer teachers a chance to test new models of teaching and gain valuable leadership experience.

- **Include innovative approaches to learning for older students**, including proficiency-based learning, flexible credit recovery, internships, college visits, and other college- and career-readiness opportunities that provide targeted interventions and work force development skills that prepare students for future success.

- **Target key transition periods** such as kindergarten, middle school, and high school to ensure students are prepared for success in new environments.

- **Move summers from the periphery to the center of school reform strategies through sustainable and stable funding,**
long-term planning, robust assessment and evaluation, and improved infrastructure and data collection.

Since 2009, urban districts around the nation have invested over $200 million in summer learning programs that embrace these principles. And the 31 districts that are part of NSLA’s NVSS Network exchange ideas with peers across the nation, share best practices, and have access to the latest tools, resources, and policy developments in summer learning. These districts meet regularly to discuss development and implementation of evaluation and assessment, staffing, curriculum, technology, partnership building, and sustainability.

SUMMER LEARNING ON THE STATE POLICY AGENDA

Education leaders at the state level can play a key role in integrating summer learning into education policy. At the federal level, education reform (particularly Elementary and Secondary Education Act reauthorization), like much else, has stalled in Congress, and the gridlock is likely to continue. In addition, the general orientation of Congress to be less prescriptive toward states suggests that there are more opportunities for new summer learning policy at the state and local levels, even if ESEA reauthorization moves forward.

State budgets are generally tight, of course, but state policies, politics, and fiscal situations vary. There is, therefore, the potential for opportunities to move summer learning to the fore in state policy in various ways (with or without short-term appropriations), thereby increasing the prospects for local summer learning initiatives to obtain resources.

Recent state policy initiatives on summer learning have taken several forms, sometimes reflecting the challenge of tight budgets. For example:

- In 2014, New Mexico appropriated $1.1 million for a new afterschool and summer grant program, and Massachusetts increased funding for its out-of-school time quality grant program by 15 percent.
- Rhode Island appropriated summer-targeted funds in both 2012 and 2013.
- Kentucky passed unfunded summer learning legislation in 2012 and Texas passed legislation in 2013 creating a summer program with a focus on teacher induction, but failed to appropriate funds for it.
- The Massachusetts, Texas, and Washington legislatures have established commissions to make policy recommendations on expanded learning opportunities, including summer.
- Task forces in California and Rhode Island in recent years offer models of action steps that have had positive policy outcomes.

State policy agendas will be unique in each state, taking into account political climate, existing or pending legislation, current regulations, and local district policies that impact summer learning. States are likely to address some issues administratively, primarily through the state education agencies (SEAs). Other issues will likely require new legislation, while still others may fall into either or both of these categories. However, certain priority opportunities are likely to provide a platform for summer learning in multiple states.

Fiscal stress at every level of government makes new appropriations for summer learning a challenge. Much of what we propose here does not require additional funding, relying instead on using existing funds to support summer learning as a tool (among others) to address existing objectives.

Based on recent conversations with staff of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and others, NSLA believes the following issue areas deserve priority consideration for advancing summer learning policy at the state level. Two of these—use of Title I funds and use of 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds—likely require primarily administrative action.

TITLE I

Title I of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (currently known as No Child Left Behind) provides funds to school districts to support improving the academic achievement of the disadvantaged. Summer learning is often an allowable use in various sections of Title I, even if it is not explicitly recognized in the federal statute. State education agencies have considerable influence on use of these funds by districts within their states. SEAs could clarify the allowability and even explicitly autho-
The Boston Summer Learning Project, which serves more than 1,700 low-income youth, has been helping students avoid summer learning loss since 2010. An evaluation from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time in 2011 found students’ English language arts (ELA) skills improved by 12 percent while their math skills improved by 17 percent. In 2012, English language learners demonstrated particularly impactful academic gains—32 percent in ELA and 33 percent in math.

In Grand Rapids, a 2011 evaluation of the Summer Learning Academy (SLA) found that participants experienced significantly better math outcomes over the summer when compared with peers from similar demographics who did not participate in the program, with average gains equivalent to 6.7 weeks of school-year instruction in math. Middle school SLA participants benefited the most, with average gains equivalent to 14.1 weeks of school-year instruction in math. SLA is a partnership of the school district with foundations and community partners.

Pretest and posttest data from Duval County (Florida) summer programs show strong positive results in K-2 reading, K-5 reading and math, and other categories. For example, the K-5 Superintendent’s Academy math test scores showed 70 percent of kindergarteners scoring at grade level at the end of the summer, compared with 29 percent at the start of summer (see figure 1).
addressing the proportion of 21st CCLC funds that ought to support high-quality summer programs and in determining key characteristics for those programs. This requires no additional funding.

Two other priority issues—grade-level reading and teacher induction—may benefit from some combination of legislative and administrative action on summer learning.

**GRADE-LEVEL READING**

Early learning has become an education policy priority at the federal and state levels. Most states already have legislation in this arena, without necessarily identifying summer learning as a strategy. The national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading recognizes summer learning as a core strategy to help young people read at grade-level by the end of third grade. State legislation could authorize and fund summer literacy programs for young students. State-funded pilot programs with strong program evaluation components could move the field forward significantly. Where states already have legislation addressing grade-level reading, state boards of education and SEAs may have leeway to use summer learning as a core strategy.

**TEACHER INDUCTION**

The quality of teaching has also been a major policy issue at the federal and state levels. Summer learning programs offer tremendous opportunities for teachers in training or in their first years of practice to learn by doing in conditions generally less pressured than during the school year.
because of better teacher-student ratios and other factors. Summer programs can incorporate intensive mentoring by experienced teachers as well as regular—even daily—debriefing and reflection activities. School districts should take advantage of summer not only to combat summer learning loss, but simultaneously provide professional development. States could support such efforts by targeting some existing or new teaching quality funds to summer programming.

In addition to these four priorities, other important areas for state policy development may include:

- **Summer as an opportunity for experienced teachers to develop innovative approaches to addressing the Common Core State Standards;**

- **Supporting effective student data sharing among schools and out-of-school time programs;**

- **Collection of data on investment in and outcomes of summer learning—both traditional remedial programs and innovative programs reflecting New Vision for Summer School principles—to ensure that investment follows high-quality programs;**

- **Developing or strengthening incentives for school-community partnerships that can facilitate summer learning;**

- **Using summer learning to develop and pilot digital learning methods and digital student portfolio strategies, e.g., badging;**

- **Enhancing professional development for—and innovation by—teachers, principals, and other education professionals;**

- **Supporting STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) initiatives, especially the role that summer programs can play in providing time and space to have scientists, engineers, accountants, and others work with youth in classrooms and laboratories, as well as through internships and summer job opportunities for older youth;**

- **Using summer to facilitate smooth student transitions into kindergarten, middle school, high school, and postsecondary education;**

- **Creating commissions to make recommendations for state policy on summer learning (or expanded learning opportunities more generally); and**

- **Integration of summer learning into policies aimed at improving on-time high school graduation rates and postsecondary student success.**

Summer learning loss presents a significant challenge to educators’ and policymakers’ efforts to ensure equity and excellence in public education. There are, however, numerous opportunities for constructive policymaking to make summer an asset rather than a liability, even within the context of an education board’s strategic plan and current state and local initiatives.

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3 Alexander et al., “Lasting Consequences” and Cooper et al., “The Effects of Summer Vacation.”


6 Thirty-one NVSS districts collectively serve more than 2 million students: Atlanta (GA), Austin (TX), Baltimore (MD), Birmingham (AL), Boston (MA), Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC), Chicago (IL), Cincinnati (OH), Council Bluffs (IA), Dallas (TX), Duval County (FL), Fairfax County (VA), Fresno (CA), Grand Rapids (MI), Houston (TX), Milwaukee (WI), Minneapolis (MN), Newark (NJ), New York City (NY), Oakland (CA), Philadelphia (PA), Pittsburgh (PA), Providence (RI), Racine (WI), Rochester (NY), Sacramento (CA), Seattle (WA), Springfield (MA), St. Paul (MN), Washington (DC), and Wausau (WI).
Summer learning programs have emerged as a promising way to address the achievement gap between children of the poorest families and those of the most affluent. Research shows that during summer, low-income students suffer disproportionate learning loss, particularly in reading, contributing to the achievement gap between low- and higher-income children. The research also shows that high-quality summer programs can benefit struggling students of all class backgrounds by providing additional time to learn material they did not master during the school year. While many school districts offer mandatory summer programs to students who are at risk of repeating a grade, fewer districts offer summer learning programs to a broader population of students to stem summer learning loss and boost the academic performance of participating children.
The Wallace Foundation is funding a multyear demonstration project to determine whether voluntary, district summer learning programs can stem summer learning loss for low-income students. Six districts—Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Duval County (Florida), Pittsburgh, and Rochester, New York—were selected for the demonstration project and committed themselves to offering such programs to large numbers of at-risk elementary students. These programs are all voluntary; offer reading, mathematics, and enrichment activities such as arts, sports, and science exploration; operate for a full day; provide transportation to students; are free of charge; and share a goal of maintaining or improving student achievement. They served students rising from third into fourth grade, and most served other grade levels as well.

To gather information for evaluations of the six districts for the years 2011, 2012, and 2013, we interviewed district leaders and summer site leaders and teachers; surveyed teachers, parents, and students; observed program training, instruction, and logistics; engaged professors of elementary education reading and mathematics to review the curricula; gathered program cost data; and analyzed district data on attendance.

Although the demonstration project is not complete, key lessons can be drawn in six broad areas:
- planning
- curriculum
- teacher selection and training
- enrichment activities
- academic time on task
- program cost and funding

## PLANNING

Launching a summer program is akin to launching a new, albeit more limited, school year, only with less time for planning and execution. A management structure has to be established, including district program responsibilities and oversight and site-level leadership and staffing; hiring and training summer teachers and administrators; developing or choosing a summer curriculum; selecting enrichment activities suitable for the program; recruiting summer students and creating ways to promote consistent attendance; and managing many other details, such as transportation, meals, and supplies. These tasks require months of planning, all while the school year is in full swing. However, districts that managed the planning process well had fewer logistical problems and more instructional time for students.

Program leaders who decided on a summer program by December and began planning in January ran a smoother program with less disruption to academic instruction during the summer. When site leaders were hired in late winter, they were able to participate in district-level planning and to conduct their own site-level planning. Planning both at the district and the summer site level resulted in a smoother start-up to the program and fewer logistical challenges. When teachers were selected in the early spring, they were in place to participate in all trainings leading up to the summer programs. When curriculum selection and pacing guide development began in the winter, teachers had these materials with them during training on the summer curriculum. When enrichment providers were identified in early spring, district boards could approve their contracts with sufficient time to pay them for advanced planning, staff hiring, and material purchases.

## CURRICULUM

In any education setting, teachers’ instruction of the curriculum has the greatest influence on student learning. In the context of summer learning programs, the quality of the curriculum and its instruction are critical to achieving improved student performance. There are several reasons why selecting a curriculum for the summer is challenging, including the limited number of summer-specific commercial curricula currently available. Involving district curriculum experts is critical to ensuring alignment to school-year curriculum and goals.

In most of the districts studied, there was one centrally purchased or developed curriculum that all teachers across the district followed in the summer. Teachers found lesson plans clear and easy to follow, and all students throughout the program were exposed to the same amount of instruction, targeted toward the same knowledge and skill development.

The districts with the strongest curricula selected commercial programs. In most of these districts, staff augmented the purchased curriculum with district-developed lessons and activities. In one of these districts, for example, students worked on a district-developed mathematics “problem of the week” that called on
students to use the skills they had been taught that week.

Although it is not necessarily the case that commercially available curricula are preferable to programs developed by a district, curriculum development is time-intensive and best done by curricular experts. In our observations, curriculum planning added another layer of responsibility that was difficult for program staff to manage. In some districts with homegrown curricula, we observed classes in which a majority of the class time was devoted to activities that bore little relevance to the subject of the class. For example, students in a writing block were expected to create greeting cards, decorate an author’s chair, brainstorm interview questions (that were to be written down by the teacher), and create posters. In many of these activities, students were expected to write almost nothing. In one district using its own curriculum, lesson plans were photocopied for teachers to use just minutes before the class was to begin. In another district, one teacher ended up “working nights and weekends” to finish the curriculum and did so only after the scheduled teacher training on the curriculum. Given these constraints, it is not surprising that the commercial curricula were judged to be of higher quality.

Some program leaders resisted the idea of purchasing curriculum because they believed summer programs should be “different” and “more fun.” However, we did not find that student satisfaction varied by district program, despite differences in the approach to curriculum. For example, in a program with a commercial curriculum that described itself as very “school like,” 84 percent of students surveyed thought the summer program was fun. In a different program with a homegrown curriculum and a “camp-like” atmosphere, 86 percent of the surveyed students reported that the program was fun—a nearly identical response. Both programs had similar attendance rates.

TEACHER SELECTION AND TRAINING

Research confirms that teacher quality has the largest school-based impact on student outcomes. To maximize district investments in the summer, districts need to hire their best and most highly motivated teachers. Research on teacher content knowledge suggests that effective teachers have a deep understanding of their material—and they know how to teach it. Summer teachers who have recently taught in either the sending or the receiving grade level are more likely to have deep content and content-specific pedagogical knowledge for the grade of students they are teaching. Some districts did indeed assign teachers to grade levels and subjects that matched the teachers’ recent experience, avoiding, for instance, assigning a middle school physical education teacher to teach third grade reading. By matching teachers’ summer experience to their school-year experience, districts also aimed to maximize teacher knowledge of grade-level standards and children’s developmental stages.

Some districts adopted rigorous selection processes for hiring teachers who not only had experience with the relevant grades but were motivated to teach in the
summer. These processes included requiring teachers to write an essay explaining why they wanted to work in the program, conducting interviews, soliciting recommendations from principals, and observing teachers in the classroom. In one district, summer program leaders considered school-year teaching effectiveness measures. However, union regulations often bind many districts to hire by seniority. In fact, the district that adopted the more selective policies had to negotiate with its local teachers union in order to change the hiring policy for summer. We recommend that districts seek similar exemptions.

Some districts tried to maximize the number of teachers who had previously taught the students or knew them from their school. Prior research from a mandatory summer program in Chicago showed that students taught by their school-year teacher during the summer posted larger gains during the summer than other students. The researchers theorized that having knowledge of students’ strengths and weaknesses enabled teachers to more effectively target instruction.

After teachers are hired, they need training in teaching the summer curriculum. In the district with the highest proportion of teachers reporting that they felt well prepared, training consisted of three hours on the English and language arts and three hours on mathematics.

Unfortunately, in this district and others, discussions of logistics often crowded out training on the curriculum—particularly when offered right before the start of the summer program. Teachers came to the training wanting to know how many students they would have, what grade they would teach, and the room to which they were assigned. To ensure that sufficient time is spent on the curriculum, districts should address logistical questions separately. Teachers could be told that they will have all logistical information in hand on a certain date, or the information could be provided to teachers before the curriculum training.

Finally, giving teachers scheduled, paid time to set up their classrooms paid off in better use of instructional time in the first few days of summer. Having time to review materials, learn about the room setup (including access to technology), test passwords needed for computers and smart boards, and prepare classroom materials reportedly helped ensure that teachers were able to start instructing students on day one. Not surprisingly, teachers indicated they wanted curricular materials provided early.

**ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES**

All districts in the study offered enrichment activities such as the arts, sports, and science exploration to differentiate their summer programs from traditional “summer school,” which many students and parents perceive as punitive rather than as valuable and fun. District leaders hoped that advertising these activities would attract more students, and they hoped students would want to attend regularly once engaged.

In addition, district leaders expected to narrow the “opportunity gap” by providing low-income students some of the cultural opportunities typically available to more affluent students during the summer. Research confirms that lower income children are less likely to engage in art or music lessons, vacations, or visits to museums, zoos, and libraries than are their higher income peers.

While the districts studied proceeded quite differently, all the approaches could be effective if well implemented. In two districts with summer programs that felt the most like “school” and where district leaders espoused firm academic goals above any others, programs hired certified teachers to provide enrichment activities. Enrichment activities in these two districts were similar to what schools might offer during the school year—visual art, music, dance, drama, and physical education. One district leader expressed the hope that arts instruction, which had been dropped from the district’s schools during the normal school year, would help narrow the opportunity gap for students in the summer.

One district issued a request for proposals in August, and initial proposals from community-based organizations (CBOs) were submitted in November. Responding CBOs were required to develop an enrichment curriculum that reinforced academic skills, a schedule, learning goals, projections of the number of students they could serve, and a budget. In its attempt to narrow the opportunity gap, this district offered a variety of programming across multiple grades, which included fencing, swimming, studio art, biking, science, and drama.

Not all enrichment activities need to be—or perhaps should be—linked to academic content. But if districts are pursuing this goal, they are more likely to succeed if they plan well,
School districts should take advantage of summer not only to combat summer learning loss, but simultaneously provide professional development.

offer specific curricular guidance and additional training, and promote greater coordination of academic and enrichment staff. The best examples of the integration of academic content and enrichment observed were those in which academic content was naturally embedded in the enrichment activity, such as drama (where students were reading and writing), music (where students used fractions to measure rhythms), and nature explorations (where students applied science concepts).

The district in which most enrichment teachers had no difficulties with managing classrooms (as confirmed in observations) hired teachers with experience managing classrooms of elementary students. This district also kept class sizes the same size as the academic classes. Smaller class size is considered a best practice in summer learning programs, and the literature reinforces this district's experience that smaller class sizes can support more effective behavior management by increasing student engagement and decreasing disruptive student behavior. As a result, only about one-quarter of enrichment teachers reported that class size prevented them from individualizing instruction and that student misbehavior resulted in wasted instructional time, compared with half to three-quarters of enrichment teachers in other districts.

In other districts, classes were combined during enrichment periods, resulting in larger class sizes. But enrichment teachers and their assistants did not always have experience instructing large groups. The enrichment teaching force in districts that partnered with CBOs ranged from experienced professionals (e.g., studio artists) to college and high school students. In addition, many enrichment instructors did not receive behavior management training. In these districts, difficulties with disruptive students were observed, and the teachers reported that disruptions wasted instructional time. One enrichment teacher said, “Too many kids whose behavior was off were pulling the energy from the majority who were here to learn.”

ACADEMIC TIME ON TASK

Offering a program does not guarantee results. Productive academic learning time is more predictive of student achievement than student time in the classroom. In other words, how programs use time is critical. Summer programs that last the same number of days can provide very different levels of average time on task depending on average daily attendance, the number of minutes assigned to academics each day, and how instructional time within academic blocks is used—in other words, how much is dedicated to instruction.

There was a great range in the academic time on task provided to an average student in these programs—from an estimated 37 hours to 121 hours. Table 1 shows how factors within the district’s control influence this variable, which is provided in the last row of the table. The three district examples are organized from highest time on task to lowest, with example 1 the most academically intense in terms of the number of days of programming and the amount of minutes per day dedicated to academic instruction. In addition, that district posted strong average daily attendance rates and was observed to use instructional time well—only 9 percent was spent on noninstructional activities. Example 2 has more minutes of daily academic instruction than other districts and very high attendance rates, but it was
the shortest program studied—only 16 days—which lowered the average academic time on task. Example 3 has the lowest time on task, low average daily attendance rates, and higher rates of noninstruction during the academic blocks. Three to four hours of academic instruction per day is typically recommended as a minimum.

Not surprisingly, teachers in programs with greater time for academic instruction were more likely to agree that the program could significantly improve students’ academic achievement. There was a great range across districts. In the district with the fewest hours scheduled for academic instruction, only 42 percent of teachers reported that the program could make a significant difference in student achievement, compared with 92 percent of teachers in the program with the greatest number of hours scheduled for academic instruction.

Scheduling time for academic instruction does not guarantee that the time will be used that way. Districts varied by 10 percentage points (from 81 to 91 percent) in the average amount of time spent on academic instruction during the academic segments of the program. A few practices appear to be related to effective use of classroom time: adopting a clear, effective curriculum with an expectation that teachers follow it; scheduling time for students to move from one class to another; hiring strong teachers; and clearly articulating that academic achievement is an important goal.

### Table 1. Academic Time on Task for Three Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Influencing Academic Time on Task</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled days</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes of daily scheduled academic instruction*</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average daily attendance rate</td>
<td>82% (or 25 days)</td>
<td>93% (or 15 days)</td>
<td>66% (or 15 days)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of scheduled instructional time actually spent on academics</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average hours of academic instructional time per student per summer*</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>37*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Because minutes of academic instruction varied by site in many districts, we present the average minutes of daily academic instruction in the three districts. We included ELA, mathematics, and science in estimates of daily academic instruction.
Learning Center (21CCLC) funds, School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds, or general purpose funds.

Funding varied by program component. To pay for academic teachers, districts drew on Title I, general funds, or IDEA-B (for special education). To pay for enrichment, districts tended to rely on 21CCLC funds, city funds, or federal stimulus funds. Bus transportation was often paid for by Title I dollars. The cost of federally subsidized meals was passed through the districts since districts were reimbursed at cost through the USDA.

Among private funding sources, the Wallace Foundation was the largest, providing an average of 17 percent of summer school revenues. Other private funds, such as support from local foundations, amounted to only 2 percent of total revenues.

Figure 2 shows the average proportion of total costs by category. As anticipated, summer programs spent the greatest share of their funds on academic teachers (45 percent of total expenditures on average), followed by other school-based staff paid for by the summer budget, which included site managers, paraprofessionals, secretarial staff, and nonprofit employees who taught arts, sports, or other enrichment (23 percent on average). District-level costs paid for by the summer budget averaged 10 percent of expenditures. (Although districts often contributed staff “in kind” to help carry out summer programs, only those staff directly paid from the summer program budget were included here since districts were not able to systematically account for their in-kind staff contributions.) Busing, materials, and food constituted roughly equal shares of the balance of the summer school budget.

Because school districts typically must follow teacher pay scales for summer school programs, teacher wages are often a predetermined component of the overall budget. However, districts can exercise influence over a number of other features of summer programming that have large cost implications. We identified six of these in the district data:

- **Attendance rate.** Attendance had a profound impact on costs, inflating program costs by as much as 60 percent more per hour per child in districts with low attendance rates of 63–68 percent. Because districts designed their summer programs to serve a set number of intended enrollees and hired staff accordingly, the costs of the program...
per slot (i.e., per student served on a typical day) were much higher when attendance was low. Some of the voluntary summer programs struggled to maintain strong attendance.

- **Size of program.** Generally speaking, the larger programs had lower costs. Based on direct observations of these districts’ summer programs, we hypothesize efficiencies derived from spreading the fixed costs of running a summer program—such as curriculum development, planning, professional development, and the formation of partnerships with CBOs—over a greater number of students.

- **Number of students per summer site within a district.** Over and above the size of the summer program itself, clustering more students per site (i.e., at a school where the program is operated) reduced the cost per slot relative to spreading students over more sites. In other words, some of the fixed costs in summer programming accrue at the building level. In larger sites, some fixed costs, such as the cost of a school building principal, are spread over a greater number of students.

- **Duration.** Among the four- to six-week summer programs across the districts, we observed lower costs per hour for longer programs, suggesting there are declining marginal costs from adding hours to the summer program. As is the case for several of these cost-related factors, these savings could derive from the division of fixed costs associated with the summer program over a greater number of hours.

- **Ratios of children to adults.** Although there were no data on the number of adults per enrollee in all of the grades across the six districts, direct observations of sampled rising fourth grade classes yielded average ratios of children to adults ranging from 6.5 to 11.6. Assuming these ratios hold for all grades within a district’s summer program, costs per hour (as expected) are higher for programs with fewer students per adult.

- **Start-up costs.** New summer programs often require the acquisition of new materials and the development of policies and procedures than older programs do not.

Understanding these factors can help districts design programs to minimize costs while providing the greatest benefits to students. But it is important to recognize that cost efficiencies can threaten quality. For example, devoting fewer hours to academic instruction can lower

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**Figure 2. Average Expenditures by Category, Summer 2011**

![Pie chart showing average expenditures by category for summer 2011.](chart)
costs, but it may also reduce the potential for academic benefits. Larger class sizes (after factoring in attendance) can also reduce costs, but larger classes inhibit individualized instruction.

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR STATE POLICYMAKERS**

Although most of the guidance here is directed toward school district administrators, there are lessons here for state policymakers as well:

**Vet curricula for summer use.** Many states vet curricula for use during the school year (or even create homegrown curricula for their districts). Districts often struggle to select appropriate curricula for summer programs. If states reviewed or developed and then suggested a summer curriculum, districts may be more likely to select high-quality curricula.

**Ensure that districts are aware of any state money available for summer programming in the fall.** Summer programs run more smoothly when planning begins in the preceding fall. Many districts delay planning due to funding uncertainties. If state money is available for summer programs, announcing this in the late summer or early fall will promote higher quality summer programs.

**Incentivize cost saving.** If state funding is available, incentivize cost-saving measures by providing more funding to districts offering programs that are at least five weeks long, have 10 to 15 students per teacher, serve large proportions of eligible students, but also exhibit plans that maximize economies of scale while maintaining quality.
Summer learning loss creates a permanent drag on the US education system. In a 2012 survey of 500 teachers, 66 percent said it typically takes them at least three to four weeks to reteach the previous year’s skills at the beginning of a new school year. Twenty-four percent said reteaching takes them five weeks or more. But without adequate resources, programs cannot provide access for all the students who need meaningful learning opportunities over the long vacation from school. While summer learning is an emerging strategy for accelerating student success, uncertainty over how to pay for it, especially in an environment of tough budget choices, poses a barrier for school districts and community partners alike. But for those who know where to look and how to devise creative strategies to combine funding streams, substantial opportunity exists.

No single funding stream is risk-free, and few are likely to provide sustained adequate funding. The challenge is to pull together multiple streams from federal, state, and local public funds, foundation grants, and cash and in-kind support from businesses. With the generous support of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) developed *Moving Summer*
Learning Forward: A Strategic Roadmap for Funding in Tough Times to provide out-of-school time programs, school districts, and other stakeholders strategies for obtaining and sustaining funding for summer programs. The roadmap highlights opportunities at the federal, state, and local level.

**FEDERAL RESOURCES**

Federal policy is becoming increasingly flexible on how school districts, their partners, and other program providers achieve federal objectives, even as it rewards programs with well-documented positive outcomes. While many federal funding streams do not specifically refer to summer, the focus on results and increased flexibility offers opportunities for providers of high-quality summer learning programs.

Program providers should analyze the multiple ways summer learning could address the broad goals outlined in federal grants. If a grant program does not specifically prohibit funding for summer learning, but summer learning fits the broader eligibility requirements and goals, then a summer program should be eligible. For example, if a competitively awarded federal grant is to be used to address areas that states or districts have prioritized in order to increase student achievement, a summer learning program addressing those priorities would be a match. Advocates can say with evidence-based confidence that providing additional time for student learning during summer will help improve student achievement.

This goal-based approach to seeking funding implies that, when visiting www.grants.gov or otherwise searching out federal funding, searches should be extended beyond the keyword “summer.” And even if an organization deems it is not eligible for a particular funding stream, a partner might be eligible and could collaborate to seek funds.
NSLA's funding road map details federal funding that can support summer learning programs from a variety of agencies:

- **US Department of Education**
  - Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA, also known as No Child Left Behind)—Title I, Part A—Education for the Disadvantaged
  - ESEA—School Improvement Grants (SIGs)
  - ESEA—Title II, Part A—Improving Teacher Quality
  - ESEA—21st Century Community Learning Centers
  - ESEA—Title I, Part C—Education of Migratory Children
  - ESEA Waiver flexibility
  - Promise Neighborhoods
- **US Department of Health and Human Services**—Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- **US Department of Housing and Urban Development**—Community Development Block Grant Program
- **Corporation for National and Community Service**—AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps*VISTA programs
- **US Department of Labor**—Workforce Investment Act
- **US Department of Agriculture**—Summer Food Service Program
- **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**—Summer of Innovation Initiative and others

**STATE RESOURCES**

Summer learning funding varies from state to state. Funds for summer programs may be available in a state’s primary education funding formula or in a special category. As with the federal government, it is always important to look at opportunities across agencies, including health, juvenile justice, workforce development, libraries, and others.

The one federal program that explicitly funds after-school and summer learning is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program. The US Department of Education provides funds to states on a formula basis, and the states in turn conduct competitive grant processes for school districts and community-based organizations. A growing number of states require that grant proposals include summer components.

State policy to support summer learning can take different forms. Below are four examples.

**State Policy Supporting Summer Learning**

**CALIFORNIA**

In California, Senate Bill 798, signed into law in 2010, says that in fiscal years when the state’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers appropriation exceeds the 2008–09 level, the state must allocate 15 percent of the additional funding to summer learning programs for elementary and middle school students. Other “supplemental” funds can be used for programming on any non-school day, including summer. In addition to SB798, a small portion of California’s state funding for after-school programs (known as the After School Education and Safety, or ASES, Program) and part of existing 21st CCLC funding can be used for summer programming. These funds, known as “supplemental” grants, can be used for programming on any non-school day.

**FLORIDA**

The Supplemental Academic Instruction fund was created in 1999 as part of the A+ Education Plan in Florida. Since 2000, it has been funded through the Florida Education Finance Program. The funding helps districts provide supplemental instruction to K-12 students. The instruction can be provided during school hours or beyond the traditional school day, week, or year. The funds must be used to help students gain at least a year of knowledge for each year in school and to keep students from falling behind. Supplemental instructional strategies may include, but are not limited to, after-school instruction, extended school year, and intensive skills development in summer school.
LOCAL RESOURCES

Great diversity of potential resources exists at the local level. For a community-based program, partnership with the local school district can prove tremendously important, not only for aligning summer offerings with the school-year curriculum and for data sharing, but also potentially for shared support of teaching staff and in-kind provision of space, transportation, and other resources. Partnerships with other public agencies, including the mayor’s office, parks and recreation department, libraries, and health agencies may provide a wide variety of assets.

For school districts, partnerships with other public agencies as well as community-based organizations serving children and youth, such as Boys and Girls Clubs and the Y, can yield great benefits.

There may also be strong local education collaborative initiatives, such as the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, that are already bringing together numerous public and private partners.

Finally, local private support from either foundations or businesses can help not only provide direct funding for activities but can also serve as a “match” (cash or in-kind) to leverage public investment. Private funds—particularly business donations—may underwrite program features not allowable using public funds. They may also support planning and resource development and bridge time gaps between public funding cycles. Businesses are often eager to provide in-kind support—from food for events to accounting services.

Faced with a challenging fiscal environment, state leaders committed to using summer learning to improve student outcomes and reduce achievement gaps need to be aware of all available resources so communities can maximize their impact and work to ensure that every child has a memorable, enriching summer.

For more ideas on resources and strategies, including case studies of blended funding, download *Moving Summer Learning Forward: A Strategic Roadmap for Funding in Tough Times* from www.summerlearning.org/funding, or contact Bob Seidel at bseidel@summerlearning.org.

Bob Seidel is senior director, strategic initiatives and policy, at the National Summer Learning Association. The original version of this article was published in *AfterSchool Today* magazine—The Official Publication of the National After-School Association (naaweb.org), Spring 2014.

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**MINNESOTA**

Minnesota has funded education programs to support at-risk students under the Graduation Incentives Law (GIL) since the 1960s. Included in this measure is funding for local school districts to offer 20 percent extra instructional time to eligible students. Minneapolis Public Schools administrators recognized that the GIL could support summer learning and won the support of local political leaders. The district used these funds to expand summer learning for GIL-eligible students in 2009. By 2011 the Minneapolis summer program had a budget of approximately $6 million to support about 9,000 preK-12 students (about 35 percent of those eligible). Ninety percent of the funding came from the GIL.

**RHODE ISLAND**

In 2012 and 2013, the Rhode Island General Assembly approved $250,000 in new funding for innovative summer learning partnerships as part of the Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative. This funding was a direct result of the work of Rhode Island’s Joint Legislative Taskforce on Summer Learning and Leadership of the Rhode Island After-school Plus Alliance (RIASPA). RIASPA’s ability to come to the table with matching funding from the United Way of Rhode Island and Hasbro Inc. was critical (See “Rhode Island’s Innovative Solutions to Summer Learning Loss, page 24.”)
Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Chafee visited one of the state’s summer learning programs in the summer of 2013. Fifth graders were observing animals and other sea life found in local rivers and in Narragansett Bay, and they were busily documenting their experiences. A certified teacher and a community educator from Save the Bay, a local nonprofit, were leading the lesson. The governor asked one of the students what she was working on. The student, mollusk in hand, replied, “Excuse me, sir, I can’t talk to you right now because I need to figure out what this is.”

High-quality summer learning fosters this deep engagement and is key for closing opportunity gaps and improving educational outcomes. Increasingly, research is demonstrating the importance of using this strategy—one that expands learning into the summer months by creating an extended school year that looks and feels very different from the rest of the year.1

Deep engagement during summer programs existed in Rhode Island before 2008, but over the last six years, the state developed systems to make programs like this one in Woonsocket more readily available to children throughout the state. It required a strong programming model, financial backing, supportive policies from state and local authorities, and a great deal of collaboration and coordination.

Summer learning loss has been documented in the United States since early in the 20th century.2 These early studies measured differences in test scores at the beginning of the summer and at the end, and discovered that students did not retain information during the summer. Studies conducted throughout the 20th century confirmed this.3 Later studies also discovered evidence of summer learning loss in reading ability and reading comprehension.4 A meta-analysis of summer learning studies found that, on average, students lose up to two months of grade-level equivalency in math during the summer when not engaged in learning. For low-income students, that two-month loss also occurs in reading.5 A longitudinal study of a Baltimore, Maryland, summer program found that up to two-thirds of the achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers could be attributed to unequal access to quality summer programming.6 More recently, efforts have been made across the country to address this gap in learning during the summer months, especially for low-income children. The National Summer Learning Association has led efforts to boost the quality of summer programs and to encourage programs to meet the social, emotional, academic, and health needs of children. All of these areas were considered as Rhode Island sought to build a statewide system for summer learning.

In 2008, Rhode Island formed a statewide work group that brought together policymakers, school superintendents, program providers such as the Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs, foundation partners, and representatives from state agencies, including the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). This group conducted a national scan of best practices in out-of-school time programming. Additionally, they brainstormed the types of policy changes that could support the growth and development of summer learning in Rhode Island.

These efforts led the Nellie Mae Education Foundation to provide an initial investment supporting five demonstration programs that met specific requirements based on the research conducted by the statewide work group. These included hands-on, experiential programming with academics embedded into the activities, strong student engagement efforts, and a curriculum that was fun and looked different from the traditional school year. Most important was a requirement that classes be co-created and co-delivered by a certified teacher and a community educator, bringing the best instruc-

By Adam Greenman
tions. That legislation was enacted in late 2009. The Joint Legislative Taskforce on Summer Learning was formed in January 2010, co-chaired by a member of each chamber of the Rhode Island General Assembly. Members of the task force included representatives from the teachers unions, superintendents association, principals association, state agencies (including RIDE), the governor’s office, program providers, and others. Throughout the winter and spring of 2010, the task force heard testimony from national education experts, practitioners of summer programs, and other education stakeholders. The report, including nine recommendations for best practice programming and ways to fund programming with public dollars, was released on June 21, 2010, the first day of summer. The report became a key driver for policy decisions in the coming years.

Private Investment

As the summer of 2011 came to a close, work group members sought to further develop their model of summer learning, which had served close to 1,200 students over four years. The group wanted to provide more children the same opportunity. But expansion would require additional investment in both programming and systems to support the development of high-quality programming such as technical assistance and evaluation. United Way of Rhode Island, one of the members of the work group, brought a potential partnership to the table. Working with Hasbro Inc. and a private family foundation, United Way announced the creation of the Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative, which included an investment of $400,000 in summer learning programming and infrastructure for the summer of 2012. This new funding partnership also introduced several more best practices, including a standardized program length of six weeks, full-day programming, and the introduction of service learning as an additional curriculum component. Through this investment, the number of programs and collaborations between schools and community partners grew from the original 5 to 11, which served more than 1,000 children during the summer of 2012 alone. Evaluations of the program were also promising, demonstrating average pre-test to post-test student gains of close to 30 percent. This success, and the investment from major partners, began to draw additional attention from the public sector.

Public-Private Partnership

From the beginning, the summer learning work group concluded that they needed to educate state legislators and other policymakers about the importance of summer learning and ways these leaders could address summer learning loss. Several legislative staff members on the work group suggested legislation to develop a legislative task force on summer learning, which would provide a report and detailed recommendations. That legislation was enacted in late 2009. The Joint Legislative Taskforce on Summer Learning was formed in January 2010, co-chaired by a member of each chamber of the Rhode Island General Assembly. Members of the task force included representatives from the teachers unions, superintendents association, principals association, state agencies (including RIDE), the governor’s office, program providers, and others. Throughout the winter and spring of 2010, the task force heard testimony from national education experts, practitioners of summer programs, and other education stakeholders. The report, including nine recommendations for best practice programming and ways to fund programming with public dollars, was released on June 21, 2010, the first day of summer. The report became a key driver for policy decisions in the coming years. The report detailed how districts could use existing federal funding to support summer learning, including Title I and 21st Century Community Learning Center funding. As the Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative grew, school districts supplemented private funding with
this public funding to increase the number of participants. The success of the initiative, coupled with the report from the legislative task force, led the legislature to develop a state grant specifically for summer learning. This grant increased the number of programs from 11 to 17 by the summer of 2014, and the number of students increased by nearly 50 percent from 2012 to 2014. It also shifted the initiative from one that was primarily funded through private dollars to one that is truly a public-private partnership.

While there are now many examples of high-quality summer programming throughout Rhode Island, two programs exemplify the type of summer learning that has become routine across the state: the BLAST Program in Deering Middle School, in West Warwick, Rhode Island, and the Providence After School Alliance Summer Scholars Program.

**BLAST Program**

The BLAST program at Deering Middle School in West Warwick, serving middle school students in the city for six weeks during the summer, is a partnership between the West Warwick School Department and the Kent County YMCA. Part of the Hasbro Summer Learning Initiative, the program’s curriculum is developed collaboratively by certified teachers and community educators. However, much of the curriculum is a skeleton, as student choice plays a major role in the programming. Instruction is based on hands-on and experiential activities, and all the programming links to the core theme of service learning. Additionally, students have opportunities for recreation in the afternoon.

In the summer of 2012, the curriculum focused on improving the town of West Warwick. Students selected a problem in their community they wanted to solve, and the curriculum was designed to help them get to a solution by the end of the summer program. Students observed that the playgrounds in the wealthier areas of town were better kept than the playground in the lower income area. Students researched playground safety and found a checklist from the National Playground Association. They used the safety checklist to determine areas that needed improvement, researched the cost of improving the playground, developed budgets to demonstrate the costs, and wrote letters and developed presentations to make their case. Students presented their findings to the town council in September and received $5,000 for the improvements. In this hands-on and experiential program, students led. Also, math was embedded in it, through the development of budgets, measurement of playground equipment, and other calculations. It included reading and literacy, as students researched, wrote persuasive letters, developed presentations, and presented them in a public forum. The program was engaging and relevant to the students, and it taught important academic skills, civic engagement, and other key skills such as collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

**Providence After School Alliance Summer Scholars Program**

The Providence After School Alliance (PASA) Summer Scholars Program is a collaboration between PASA, the Providence School Department, and various youth-serving community organizations in Providence. The program was one of the original demonstration programs funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and has since developed into the main option for Providence middle school students. The school department has allocated significant resources to the summer program and is the primary funder of this work. The program focuses on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math and provides students with several curricular options. Like the BLAST program, PASA’s programming is created

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Initial private investment was critical, as was an interest from the public sector in summer learning and its effect on education more broadly.
and delivered through a partnership between a community educator and a certified Providence school teacher. It is hands-on and experiential, and academics are embedded in those activities.

One example of Summer Scholars programming is the partnership with the Community Boating Center. Students learn to sail, and within that instruction they are also taught critical math and science skills. They use geometry to calculate their routes, and they learn meteorology and its impact on sailing. Rhode Island is nicknamed the Ocean State, yet many participants in the program have never experienced the state’s vast waterways.

Both BLAST and Summer Scholars demonstrate the keys to summer learning success: hands-on, experiential programming, youth voice and choice, embedded academics, and partnership between schools and community educators. Each program has a diverse funding plan of public and private sources, and each puts students at the center of learning.

**Scaling Up: Recommendations for Policymakers**

The tremendous growth in summer programming in Rhode Island over the last six years is a result of several factors, including a convergence of interests at the right time. Initial private investment was critical, as was an interest from the public sector in summer learning and its effect on education more broadly. As Rhode Island looks to scale this work and expand it to thousands more, it is clear that additional resources will be necessary. Are summer funding resources used for remedial programs that have little demonstrated effect on student performance? Is other funding available for initiatives taking place during the school year that have not been effective? School districts are usually resistant to taking risks with public tax dollars. However, as Rhode Island has seen, the risk is not that great, and the returns are quite promising.

State policymakers, including state boards of education, can take several steps to promote summer learning. First, state boards can set policies and regulations mandating specific elements in summer programming. They can also offer guidance on effective collaborations and guidance on state and federal funding that can be used to better address summer learning. Finally, policymakers can alter funding formulas to specifically allocate resources so all students have access to quality summer programming.

**Conclusion**

The summer months are an ideal time to engage students in deep learning while also letting them have fun. The research on summer learning loss makes clear that too often schools and communities miss this opportunity—and the consequences are great not only for individual students, but also for communities and the future work force. Since 2008, Rhode Island has worked to take advantage of the opportunity that summer provides to educate children, to keep them sharp academically, and to provide them with engaging new experiences. While there is still more work to do locally to reach scale, Rhode Island has positioned itself for growth through strong public-private partnerships and through strong collaborations between schools and community educators.

Adam Greenman is executive vice president for community investment, United Way of Rhode Island.

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6 Alexander et al., “Schools, Achievement, and Inequality.”

7 Rhode Island General Assembly, Findings of the joint-legislative taskforce on summer learning programs (2010).
Communities Can Work Together to Strengthen Summer Learning for Youth

By Katie Willse

To make the most of limited resources and reach the greatest numbers of youth, communities must coordinate across sectors, track and share data, and strengthen partnerships.

One difficulty urban communities encounter as they seek to improve summer learning programs is a lack of basic data identifying where existing programs are and what age groups they support, as well as more complex measures of quality. For example, a recent survey identified 229 summer learning programs in Baltimore City, but distinguishing them from summer meal programs, mapping their locations, and identifying the age groups each serves required a concerted effort.

High-quality summer learning programs in a given city are often only able to address a fraction of the need. Lack of access to program data and absence of stakeholder coordination compounds the problem. Working together to systematically increase program quality and provide more high-quality summer learning opportunities where families need them can lead to improved outcomes for youth.

More cities are beginning to coordinate strategies and resources to expand and improve services for young people who need them most. Ranging from collective impact initiatives that build a pipeline of services to support a young person cradle to career, to system-building efforts in the extended learning field, stakeholders are joining forces to address education issues at scale.

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) aids communities that want to build summer learning systems to serve families and youth and has provided extensive support to cities such as Baltimore, Birmingham, Newark, and New York City. NSLA’s Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems, developed in collaboration with community leaders, serve as a road map to building high-quality summer learning systems. Based on systems research, best practices in afterschool and summer system building, and a survey of community intermediaries and program providers, these indicators measure progress in achieving system-building milestones in six key areas including development of a shared vision, engaged leaders, data management, continuous improvement, sustainable resources, and effective communications.

Newark, New Jersey

These indicators have helped many communities better understand their summer learning needs and strengthen their offerings. With NSLA’s support, for example, Newark, New Jersey, leaders convened more than 100 stakeholders, assessed the city’s summer learning landscape, identified gaps, and built a common vision for coordinating, expanding, and strengthening high-quality summer learning opportunities for more youth.

Many of Newark’s children and youth are at risk of summer learning loss. In 2012, a report by Advocates for Children of New Jersey found that about 43 percent of Newark’s children lived in poverty. More than 80 percent of Newark’s children qualified for free or reduced-price lunch
during the school year. Despite this need, leaders could identify only about 14,000 slots in summer programs available to youth in 2010 and 2011, which would serve just 30 percent of a school-age population of approximately 46,000 youth.

Newark community leaders used NSLA’s community indicators to develop a summer learning action plan, which was presented at a forum and is included in the report, Investments and Opportunities in Summer Learning: A Community Assessment of Newark, New Jersey.3

Shared Vision and Citywide Coordination
- set short-term and long-term summer learning priorities for improving youth outcomes
- connect the Summer Learning Work Group’s vision to other related initiatives in Newark

Engaged Leadership
- develop plans to ensure summer learning work continues through significant community changes
- engage community leaders as summer champions
- develop a system of mutual accountability for summer learning work

Data Management System
- determine a process for effective data sharing across the summer system
- align data collection processes for participation, enrollment, and demographic information across summer learning opportunities
- compare outcomes related to summer learning loss to understand the effectiveness of a variety of summer learning opportunities
- develop and implement an evaluation plan for summer learning opportunities that includes both academic and social-emotional learning outcomes

Continuous Quality Improvement
- establish quality standards for summer learning opportunities
- educate key stakeholders on quality standards

Sustainable Resources
- develop a clear sense of the scale of the summer learning system in Newark
- identify an intermediary or lead organization to manage resources, reporting requirements, and compliance for system-building work
- identify resources to support program grants, program capacity building, system coordination, and the activities of the summer learning plan
- support the expansion of the Summer Food Service Program in Newark

Marketing and Communications
- articulate a shared vision for summer learning in Newark
- leverage marketing partnerships to support full enrollment at all key providers
- articulate a call to action targeted to key stakeholders on what they can do to support summer

Newark’s leaders have embraced the call to action and the strategies included in their summer learning action plan. In the summer of 2014, Newark Public Schools launched a revamped summer program called Summer Plus that connected academic instruction by district teachers with enrichment and academic activities by community-based partners in a single program model for 4,000 youth.

In addition, leaders, including the Victoria Foundation and the United Way of Essex and West-Hudson, are spearheading efforts to build an out-of-schooltime network that would coordinate funding and technical assistance to programs during the summer and the school year. With the collaboration of diverse community partners and a shared passion to offer a bright future for all youth, Newark has taken critical first steps to provide quality summer learning opportunities to all students who need them—and it can serve as a model for other communities that want to enhance summer educational programs.

Katie Willse is chief program officer at the National Summer Learning Association.


Research has shown that an idle summer isn’t just boring; it can cost a student as much as two to three months of educational progress.¹ Yet children with access to camps, leagues, lessons, cultural events, and vacations not only don’t lose ground, they jump ahead by a month or more.² By the late 1990s, researchers had begun releasing startling longitudinal evidence showing that the summer opportunity gap during the elementary school years can account for as much as two-thirds of the gap in educational success between low-income children and their better-resourced peers.³ No matter how diligently educators seek to reform school and after school, it is clear they could never bridge this gap without a change in what happens during the summer.

by Aaron McQuade
At the same time, student success is not just about academics. Children and youth, especially those in low-income communities, face nutritional challenges during the summer as well. Experts cite long summers spent in front of the television while snacking on junk food as one of the leading causes of childhood obesity. Conversely, many other low-income children find themselves missing meals entirely when they are away from school.

Summer is thus critical to each child’s development, both mind and body. Any meaningful attempts to get at America’s equity divide and the consequent gap in opportunities for kids must include summer education as a key part of the solution.

For more than 10 years, the Partnership for Children and Youth (PCY) has been working to raise awareness about the value of afterschool and summer programs, known collectively as “expanded learning time” (ELT). Children spend much more time out of school than in it. PCY is committed to ensuring that children—particularly those from under-resourced communities—have the support and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. PCY, along with key partners, created the Summer Matters campaign: a collaborative statewide effort in California to raise awareness about this challenge and to build capacity across the state to address it. This work is being accomplished with training, coaching, and facilitation to build the capacity of schools and their community partners and through communications and advocacy to partners in education, policy, philanthropy, and direct service.

The Summer Matters campaign was designed around two core strategies. First, PCY wanted to pilot high-quality summer learning programs in diverse communities across California. The goal was to create tools, processes, and infrastructure to improve quality in existing programs and build quality into new ones. Pilot communities have been paired with local technical assistance providers who have tools and strategies for assessing and supporting quality improvement. PCY sought to build model summer programs as transferable examples for the rest of the field. Over the past five years, 12 pilot communities have dramatically improved the quality and quantity of their programming, becoming examples for others.

By intentionally building a continuous quality improvement process into the model, these programs—and the new ones they inspire—are stronger and more sustainable than they would be otherwise.

On a parallel track, a communications and advocacy campaign was launched across the state with multiple partners, including K-12 and afterschool advocacy organizations, school districts and county offices of education, the California Department of Education (CDE), policymakers, large-scale youth-serving organizations, philanthropy, and the media.

The campaign’s goal has always been to take the stories and data from the field and bring them to a much wider audience. Decision makers need to know what high-quality, engaging summer learning looks like, as well as why it is critical.

Initial communications efforts cast a wide net, aimed at generating awareness among stakeholders (including parents) that experts were rethinking the role of summer in a child’s development. PCY wanted the audience

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Teachets and staff gain almost as much from summer learning as students.
to look at summer as an opportunity rather than as rest.

PCY collaborated on large events in the state capital and other major cities, bringing thousands of kids out to participate in fun activities to which they might otherwise not have access. PCY placed dozens of stories and op-eds in influential media, both local and statewide, highlighting the work of the pilot communities. PCY staff spoke at state and national conferences about its work and cultivated champions to carry the message through their networks.

Data collected through the pilot communities portion of the Summer Matters campaign led to the development of six elements of a quality summer program, a guide outlining what each summer program should look like.

As conditions have changed, so too has the campaign’s communications focus. California’s new Local Control Funding Formula law, enacted in 2013, puts more decision-making power in the hands of district leaders. Consequently, recent communications efforts are targeted more at the local level and focus on communicating specific success stories so local leaders can learn from their neighbors and peers.

This approach requires a strong, responsive group of partners and collaborators. The Summer Matters campaign has reached key education leaders across the state through a coalition that includes the California School Boards Association, the California PTA, the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association and its Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee, and the Association of California School Administrators. More than 50 superintendents across the state have signed on to support summer learning, and a PCY roundtable with more than 80 key stakeholders is convened several times a year.

For the past several years, the California Department of Education (CDE) has been a summer learning champion. State Superintendent Tom Torlakson co-chairs the Summer Matters campaign and speaks frequently about the essential role of summer learning with local education leaders across the state. The CDE’s After School Division has been thinking strategically about how to strengthen its support for summer learning through afterschool funding and related statewide technical assistance. Other statewide partners include the California Library Association and the state’s Parks and Recreation department.

Awareness is only part of the equation. California’s current per-student spending is lower than all but two states’ spending. However, the state also spends more on ELT programs than all other states combined.

California began funding afterschool initiatives in 1999 with the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program (ASLSNPP). The effectiveness of ASLSNPP paved the way for Prop 49, the After School Education and Safety grant program (ASES), which was passed in November 2002 and more than tripled the state allocation for afterschool programs. (The actual funding allocation was tied to a minimum state expenditure level, which wasn’t reached until the 2006–2007 fiscal year.)

In 2006 Partnership for Children and Youth sponsored Senate Bill 638, which substantially improved access to the implementation of Proposition 49 funds but did not address the
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fact that Prop 49 grant money was not designated for summer.

In 2008, when the Summer Matters campaign began, school funding had just been decimated by the recession and California’s resulting budget crisis. In response, state leaders gave districts greater control over how funding was used by eliminating “categorical” funding. This essentially meant districts could spend what little they had left however they wanted. Almost every district in the state chose to eliminate their existing summer programs.

This turn of events can be seen as a blessing in disguise, as many summer programs in place before the funding crisis were based on the traditional model. Such programs, which focused on remediation, felt more like punishment to the students who needed the most help. Now that many districts are bringing summer programs back, California schools are more interested in developing fun, experiential, and relevant summer learning programming that mixes academics and enrichment.

In 2010, two years into the Summer Matters campaign, the legislature passed Senate Bill 798, which revised the amount of funds directed toward after-school and summer learning programs by setting aside 15 percent of future revenue increases for funding summer programs. In 2011 PCY co-sponsored Senate Bill 429, giving leaders even greater flexibility in the use of funds, an important step in helping struggling summer educators continue to provide quality services to the largest possible number of students.

PCY’s latest effort is Senate Bill 1221, which gives funding priority to programs that offer year-round programming, including summer, in their applications for federal 21st Century Community

California’s Partnership for Children and Youth

Founded in 1997, the Partnership for Children and Youth’s mission is to promote systems of continuous learning, foster collaboration, and build leadership among school districts, government agencies, and community-based organizations serving low-income children and youth. PCY has accomplished the following:

raised over $90 million in public and private dollars for youth programs in California’s lowest-income communities;

facilitated dozens of new partnerships between schools, local governments, and community agencies;

trained thousands of afterschool and summer program staff in program and youth development; and

spearheaded three successful California legislative measures in support of summer learning.
Learning Center grants. It also seeks to update accountability and quality improvement requirements to leverage recent research and developments in the ELT field.

Though PCY’s advocacy and legislative efforts are making some progress in the flexibility of existing funding, the challenge remains of identifying funding to meet the large-scale need. Today, California funds about 4,500 afterschool programs, serving some 450,000 children. Including federal funding, investment in California’s ELT comes to around $700 million annually.7 But there is still serious ground to cover. More than one-third of California’s 6,800 designated low-income schools have no expanded learning programs, and the demand for afterschool funding exceeds the supply by almost $200 million, leaving more than 100,000 students without access to ELT programs.8

Now that school district funding is slowly beginning to flow again and state lawmakers have decided to keep control over how to use that funding at the local level, districts have a renewed opportunity to invest in year-round learning experiences. More school officials are coming around to the idea that quality summer learning can significantly boost academic achievement and social-emotional learning for the state’s disadvantaged youth.

Teachers and staff gain almost as much from summer learning as students. In many ways, summer creates a learning environment that is risk-free. Neither students nor teachers are burdened by the stress of grades or tests. This allows everyone to try, without the fear of failure.

At many summer sites, especially those that emphasize a STEM curriculum, students are even encouraged to make mistakes as part of the scientific process. When they make mistakes, they learn why things went wrong and work to make necessary improvements. Teachers are free to experiment as well. They do not have to answer to exams or pacing guides, which restrict when and how lessons can be taught. Program facilitators are free to focus on the experiences of the children while experimenting with new lesson plans and teaching styles that deviate from traditional methods. This flexibility can vastly improve student-teacher relationships. In many cases, these summer practices are now making their way into the school year and actually changing the way educators think about teaching.

Educators are seeing firsthand what happens when a child is exposed to new adventures, skills, and ideas through a mix of activities including reading, writing, math, science, and the arts in ways that are fun and engaging. Magic happens when students are given opportunities to move, play, and discover. Many programs absorb children in kinetic learning, where education can mean more than memorization.

Five years in, PCY’s Summer Matters campaign is bringing enriching summer opportunities to more than 12,000 students in 110 communities across California.

Navigating California’s unique infrastructure presented PCY with significant challenges. The campaign has had to be flexible in order to coordinate both state and local education and policy structures. Policymakers and the public are gradually waking to the realization that summer can mean the difference between a student getting ahead or falling behind. Summer learning programs should all be extraordinary, but PCY’s hope is that someday soon their presence becomes ordinary.

Aaron McQuade is senior communications associate at Partnership for Children and Youth.


4National Summer Learning Association, “Summertime and Weight Gain.”


6Summer Matters campaign Steering Committee members include ASAPconnect, Children Now, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Fowler-Hoffman, the National Summer Learning Association, and the Partnership for Children and Youth.


When I was growing up, I couldn’t wait for summer vacation! My family seemed to always have the perfect road trip planned, and often the destinations were many states away from my native Ohio. Before I entered middle school, I had visited over 25 states, walked the perimeter of the Grand Canyon, marveled at the splendor of Niagara Falls, and crossed the borders into both Canada and Mexico. The destinations were only part of the fun. There were also the games we played along the way: 20 Questions, I Spy, a modified version of Wheel of Fortune that my dad made, and more. There were tons of books and travel documents for me to read since I was often asked to help the family make choices about stops along the way.
Even though I usually mourned the end of summer, I was often excited for that first day of school. I couldn’t wait to share with my classmates during the annual “what did you do this past summer?” discussion. Not only would I have great stories to tell, there would always be some cool artifact to share. My learning truly didn’t stop simply because the school year ended.

Only later did it dawn on me that not everyone continued to experience learning during the summers. As an elementary teacher in Elyria, Ohio, a small urban district about 30 miles west of Cleveland, I looked forward to asking my students the question all my teachers had asked me that first day of school: “What did you do this summer?” However, I quickly realized that many of the students in my school didn’t have families who could provide road trips, summer camps, or other types of learning experiences. Their stories were mainly about roaming the neighborhood, hanging out at the mall, and watching television. It didn’t take me long to recognize these were often the same students who had the greatest challenges remembering what they had learned the previous school year. As a result, we spent most of the first few months of school “reviewing” the previous year’s material. I was experiencing summer learning loss firsthand; I just didn’t know what it was.

Like many other teachers, I was caught up in a pattern that is playing out in many schools and districts:

1 Teachers work very hard all year to make sure their students know the content.

2 Summer happens.

3 Teachers start a new school year working extremely hard to reteach last year’s content, particularly for their lower income students (sometimes blaming the teacher in the previous grade for not doing a good enough job).

4 Teachers feel pressured because of all the new content they are required to help students learn and get frustrated that some of their children are so far behind.

5 Despite this, teachers continue to do their best to make sure students learn the new content.

6 Summer happens, the achievement gap widens.

7 Repeat.

When it comes to summer learning loss, the phrase “If I knew then what I know now” rings especially true for me. If I had known that many youth lose two months in math skills over the summer but that low-income youth also lose more than two months in reading achievement. If I had known the effects of the “summer slide” are cumulative and significantly contribute to the achievement gap between lower and higher income children. If I had known that summer learning loss accounts for about two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap in reading! If I had known that four out of five of low-income students were falling being in reading by the end of third grade, and that they were four times more likely to drop out of high school than their peers who were reading proficiently.

The reality is that teachers, schools, and districts know these things and have the opportunity to respond. According to Making Summer Count, a report commissioned by The Wallace Foundation and written by researchers at Rand, rigorous studies of voluntary summer programs, mandatory summer programs, and programs that encourage students to read at home in the summer have all found positive effects on student achievement. The combined evidence from these studies suggests that all these types of summer learning programs can mitigate learning losses and even lead to achievement gains. The follow-up report from Rand, Getting to Work on Summer Learning, offers some specific guidance to school district leaders interested in launching or improving summer learning programs:

- commit to having a summer program by January;
- include both district and site-level staff in planning;
- deliver planning templates to site leaders;
- anchor the program in a commercially available and evidence-based curriculum;
- standardize the curriculum across district sites;
- include strategies for differentiation in curriculum materials to accommodate at least two ability levels;
Many municipalities have recognized the benefits of effective summer learning programs and followed many of these recommendations. One of the cities prioritizing summer learning is Dallas, Texas, Learning Forward’s hometown. Dallas is also home to Big Thought, an organization working with Dallas public schools and committed to mitigating the effects of summer learning loss. Big Thought’s approach is to combine innovative learning experiences with community resources to help develop the capacities of the city’s youth.

As Learning Forward’s deputy executive director, I visited several Big Thought locations last summer. First, let me describe what I didn’t see. I didn’t see classrooms full of students who were in danger of being retained if they didn’t pass their summer school courses. I also didn’t see teachers reteaching from the same textbooks students had used during the previous school year. What I did see, however, were highly motivated children engaged in inquiry-based learning activities that challenged their thinking and held their interest. I saw lessons that combined mathematics and literacy skills, encouraged collaboration, and pushed teachers to create learning environments that pushed their thinking just as much as they pushed their students’.

Programs like Big Thought are in cities all over the country. As seen in many of the other articles in this journal, the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is one of the organizations working to help increase the number of providers offering high-quality summer learning programs to youth in high-needs districts. The NSLA website offers guidance and examples of programs that are in place all across the country. For school and district leaders looking to follow the advice in the Rand report, there’s absolutely no need to reinvent the wheel.

For those who know Learning Forward, you may be asking why we would be interested in summer learning. Learning Forward, after all, is an organization that is focused solely on professional learning for educators as a vehicle for increasing educator effectiveness and student learning. The reality is that many of the innovative teaching strategies used by teachers during the summer are excellent models for the regular academic year. Summer provides teachers an opportunity to test and refine those techniques that pique children’s interest and motivate them to learn.

Often, professional learning to prepare for summer learning is focused on program components and schedules. As districts help prepare teachers for their summer learning experience, it is essential that their professional learning goes well beyond mere logistics. Rand’s *Getting to Work on Summer Learning* emphasized that teachers need opportunities to deeply engage with the summer curriculum. Those districts experiencing the most success, according to the report’s authors, begin giving teachers opportunities to practice the summer curriculum in the spring and also provide coaching support.

Principals and other building leaders who are inspired by the effective teaching they observe during the summer can strengthen their schools’ professional learning systems by ensuring those techniques become the norm during the school year. Additionally, schools can create seamless links between the traditional academic year and the summer learning experience. The goal should be that students enjoy a connected learning experience that spans the entire year!

In a few months, thousands of children will be sitting in SUVs or airplanes in great anticipation of their upcoming summer vacations. Others will be deeply engaged in summer learning experiences sponsored by their school districts and local organizations. Wherever they are, I hope their learning is continuing—our collective success depends on it!

Fred Brown is deputy executive director at Learning Forward.
Standards are a powerful tool that state boards of education can wield to support and improve education systems. Boards set them to establish a vision for what effective practice should look like, as well as to provide indicators for measuring quality. Such standards typically cover classroom activity during the school year. The Michigan State Board of Education, however, has developed standards for out-of-schooltime learning, including afterschool or summer programs. It is one of the only boards in the country to do so.

Michigan convened a task force in 2001 to begin developing the standards. The task force, comprising staff from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and school district representatives, came up with findings and recommendations that became the initial draft of the standards. The Michigan Out-of-Schooltime Standards of Quality were adopted in 2003, revised in 2008 while Straus was president of the board, and revised again in 2013. They provide guidance in health and safety, human relationships, program staffing, indoor and outdoor environment, program activities, and administration.

What was the original motivation to develop and adopt the Michigan Out-of-Schooltime Standards of Quality in 2003?

The standards were the result of a recommendation from our Integrating Schools and Communities task force. The task force found that many students did not have safe places to be after school and during the summer and recommended development of model standards to help create quality out-of-schooltime programs in the state. Over the years, the board has been very supportive of such programs, and the development of the standards was a natural progression of this support. We wanted to make sure the programs had guidance on quality.

It is vitally important to support students, particularly at-risk students, outside the classroom to improve their chances of success. A key philosophy of the standards is to emphasize both academic and social development, to help programs develop students’ skills in both areas. Out-of-schooltime programs are a great opportunity to do that. They can develop their leadership skills through arts projects or hands-on activities, for example. While the standards don’t address the content that needs to be taught to develop these skills, it is important that these social skills elements are included in activities and implemented at a high level.

In the 2013 version of the standards, the board included some new elements, such as mention of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and alignment with early childhood standards. What process did the board go through as it revised the standards this time?
The state convened an ad hoc committee of MDE staff and stakeholders to align the out-of-schooltime standards with the early childhood standards already adopted by the board. The committee recommended to the board that the standards be inclusive of all age levels, as well as students with special needs. New standards had recently been adopted nationally regarding healthy eating and physical activity in out-of-schooltime programs, and we incorporated some of this guidance. We had had many discussions about the importance of STEM for students, so we added that to the standards to ensure out-of-schooltime programs emphasized these areas as well. In addition, the governor has been very supportive of out-of-schooltime programs, and this helped move the process forward.

What do you think the next policy steps might be as the Michigan board looks to support out-of-schooltime programs in the state?

I think the board will continue its interest in this issue. The next step for us will be to try to find out more about what has been going on in local communities and programs regarding implementation of the standards. It is definitely hard to hear from all the programs using the standards in the state. We have less information about programs that do not receive federal funding for out-of-schooltime programs because there are so many of them. It is going to take a while to get input from these programs, but we will continue to hear from MDE about implementation and hope to have some recommendations once staff get all the feedback. A possible next step will be the inclusion of the Michigan Out-of-Schooltime Standards in a tiered quality rating system for school-age care and education programs. Some work is already being done with stakeholders to explore the possibilities for this form of implementation.

What insight do you have for members of other boards across the country as they look to support out-of-schooltime through policy?

Above all else, be very inclusive of the stakeholders you engage as you develop policy around out-of-schooltime, especially parents and teachers. Other stakeholders you could get feedback from include students, members of the business community, labor unions, school administrators, and agencies such as social services, health, law enforcement, and justice. All these entities were represented in the initial task force, and we continue to get feedback from them as we refine the standards. Initially, they weren’t used to talking to each other about this topic. However, quality out-of-schooltime programs require coordination and support from all these entities and organizations to be effective.

Support for this issue has grown over the last 10 years. While the board has been supportive for almost 15 years, there was some initial resistance from stakeholders when the standards were first developed, particularly around funding. However, we’ve brought a number of those stakeholders into the conversation over the years, and have found a lot of common ground.

Chris Sun is an associate research analyst in education at CNA, a nonprofit research organization assisting NASBE with the development of this issue of the Standard.

Resources
