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# IT'S TIME FOR SUMMER: AN ANALYSIS OF RECENT POLICY AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Ron Fairchild  
Jeff Smink  
Ashley B. Stewart  
*National Summer  
Learning Association*

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## **About the National Summer Learning Association**

Our mission is to connect and equip schools and community organizations to deliver quality summer learning programs to our nation's youth to help close the achievement gap. The Association serves as a network hub for thousands of summer learning program providers and stakeholders across the country, providing tools, resources, and expertise to improve program quality, generate support, and increase youth access and participation.

We are working to achieve the following results:

- Increase the number of providers offering high-quality summer learning programs to young people living in poverty;
- Increase the number of organizations and policymakers that identify summer learning as a public policy priority; and
- Increase funding for high-quality summer learning programs for young people who currently lack choices and opportunities.

For more information, please visit our website at [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org).

## Executive Summary

Summers in the United States represent freedom, discovery, and a time for vacations – both for adults and children. Summers are indeed opportunities for children and youth to hone skills learned the previous year, explore new hobbies, and prepare for the next school year. For children and youth from low-income families, however, summer marks a season of huge risks and developmental regression. These well-documented setbacks build, year after year, with the result that kids from low-income families increasingly and significantly underperform their more affluent peers. Summertime presents a clear case where the growth in the achievement gap is the direct result of a gap in resources, choices and opportunities. Lacking access to affordable, high-quality summer learning opportunities, many young people fall behind between school sessions, derailing not only their academic progress, but nutritional and development as well.

The National Summer Learning Association is the only national organization that focuses exclusively on learning during the summer months. We work to ensure that children and youth in high-poverty communities have access to quality summer learning opportunities that support their academic performance and healthy development through hands-on learning and other enrichment activities that look and feel different than the traditional school day. After more than a decade of engaging in rigorous research and evaluation, developing policy, collaborating with hundreds of program providers, delivering professional development to the field, and having coordinated with local, state and national authorities across the country, this paper reflects comprehensive and robust analysis of how to position summer learning in the center of education reform.

By structuring this paper around the federal, state and local policies and funding opportunities, we wish to equip policymakers and funders with strategic recommendations to maximize their investments and help to leverage existing policy and fiscal frameworks. We explore individual state and local approaches because we have found that most of the actual choices that directly affect summer programming are made at the state and local levels. The recommendations are designed to help key decision-makers navigate and influence policies and funding streams which are crucial to advancing the summer learning agenda.

**Federal.** Our review of federal education policy suggests that relatively small changes to foster innovation can produce meaningful results in terms of placing a higher priority around summer.

Generally major federal funding streams do not reflect an expansive view of when, where, and how young people learn beyond the traditional school day and year. Nor do they seek to address summer learning loss or gaps in critical resources during the summer months. However, many policymakers are growing increasingly aware of the critical role summer can play in widening or narrowing the achievement gap for millions of young people. We consider how federal funding streams—including Title I, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Supplemental Education Services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the Child Care and Development Fund, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant program—can be expanded and strengthened to deliver jobs, child care, and nutrition during the summer months.

Additionally, we explore the new funding opportunities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and other potential federal policies such as Summer Term Education Programs for Upward Performance (STEP UP) Act. All of these developments present the field of summer learning with a unique opportunity to fund innovative reforms in public education, including partnerships between districts and non-profit organizations. With strategic leadership and a broader vision for summer, these two recent developments have great potential to become significant reform priorities for the new Administration.

**State.** We know that most state funding designated for summer learning opportunities are either for remedial summer school, a combination of academic and enrichment programs or specialized enrichment programs for particular groups of students. This paper provides an analysis of strategic opportunities to expand and deepen summer learning efforts in Maryland, Wyoming, New York, New Mexico, and Illinois.

Each profile points to distinctive policies and funding streams that support summer learning efforts. What is consistent across the profiles is the dearth of data available to answer even the most basic questions about access, participation, and funding levels available to support summer learning programs. Even further, there is a need to build state capacity through an aligned administrative approach to better coordinate all expanded learning efforts. We also found that summer programs tend to be scattered across the agency- one department might administer a summer enrichment program, while separate departments focus on summer food programs and summer remedial programs. This lack

of alignment is problematic at state and local agencies, representing a major challenge to policymakers and researchers seeking to collect data and evaluate summer programming.

The National Summer Learning Association recommends that to overcome some of these challenges, state policymakers should encourage school districts and their community partner organizations to use funding sources like ARRA to develop a new vision for summer school that incorporates these seven principles:

- 1) Increase the duration and intensity of summer school to a 6-week, full-day model.
- 2) Expand participation to all students in school-wide Title I programs.
- 3) Blend academic learning and hands-on activities that foster critical 21st century skills.
- 4) Strengthen and expand partnerships with community organizations and public agencies.
- 5) Incorporate arts, music, sports, and free breakfast and lunch.
- 6) Provide innovative professional development for educators and staff.
- 7) Plan early to ensure proper infrastructure, data collection, and accountability.

**Local.** Our extensive engagement at the community level suggests that local entities—including state legislatures, city councils, state and local education agencies, and other stakeholders—can hold significant leverage in (re)structuring the landscape for summer learning that drives innovation and comprehensive reform. Through five city-specific vignettes, we present promising local initiatives that address some of the cross-cutting challenges and opportunities in building a more coordinated, systemic approach to summer programming. We look closely at: feeding more young people during the summer in Washington, DC; adopting a comprehensive summer school model in Chicago, Illinois; building a system of summer supports in Indianapolis, Indiana; forging school district and community based organization partnerships in Springfield, Massachusetts; and enhanced collaboration between city agencies in Baltimore, Maryland.

This paper provides a rich context of policy and funding opportunities in summer. The compelling funding and policy approaches described herein share a common purpose—to create more systemic, comprehensive programming that meets the diverse needs of youth and families. Such funding streams and policies can improve academic achievement and provide a greater emphasis on enrichment programming for children that often mirror the types of experiences routinely available to

youth in higher income households. Finally, the analysis offers a set of recommendations for how policymakers and private philanthropic stakeholders can invest in summer at the national, state, and local levels.

The summer learning agenda, if it is to achieve success, will require resources and policies that more explicitly: 1) support the capacity of state and local agencies to provide oversight and leadership of these efforts, particularly as they begin to take root; 2) focus on intervening during the summer months to narrow the achievement gap; 3) align existing state funding streams to leverage current and future summer services; 4) advance local investments in new models of collaboration and coordination; and 5) support direct service programs, data collection, and systems-level infrastructure. By working together, we believe public and private entities can both serve more young people and serve them better. Millions of children and youth, families and communities, however, are still desperately underserved and it will take an effective and sustained effort to bring high-quality summer opportunities to every one of them.

## **Introduction**

During the summer months, young people living in poverty often don't have access to essential resources that support their academic performance and healthy development. As a result, they experience well-documented setbacks in academic skills which contribute to growth in the achievement gap (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007). Since 1906, there have been 39 empirical studies that have found incontrovertible evidence of a pattern of "summer learning loss," particularly for low-income youth (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). Research also shows that young children face nutritional setbacks which contribute significantly to the problem of childhood obesity (von Hippel, Powell, Downey, & Rowland, 2007). The literature is clear and compelling about the fact that summer is a season of huge risks and setbacks for low-income youth in the United States.

Recent empirical studies also show that quality summer learning programs can produce significant gains in academic achievement, particularly among low-income elementary school students (Borman & Dowling, 2006; Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006; Miller, 2003). Based on both experimental and quasi-experimental studies, there is a growing body of literature that describes the impact and characteristics of quality summer interventions. Funders and policymakers are increasingly aware of the potential for both losses and gains during the summer months. While there is tremendous interest in exploring innovation during the summer months, policymakers readily acknowledge the limitations of current summer-related investments and policy infrastructure.

The purpose of this paper is to both describe and analyze current local, state, and federal policies and funding sources used to support low-income young people during the summer months in major U.S. cities. Our analysis highlights several urgent needs confronting the field. First, there needs to be much stronger alignment and coordination between funding sources in order to maximize existing resources. This is particularly important given current fiscal realities confronting public agencies and providers across the country. Second, there should be a much stronger emphasis and/or requirement to utilize summer programs within existing funding streams, policy frameworks, and data collection systems. Finally, there should be new, dedicated funding streams at the federal, state, and local level that explicitly advance a much more comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable vision for summer-related funding than what currently exists.

### *Traditional Summer School*



School districts – which typically administer the largest share of public funding for summer programs – still invest woefully insufficient amounts despite the general increase in the prevalence of summer school in recent years (Borman, 2001). Although the precise amount of funding and structure of the summer programs varies from one year and school district to the next, it is common for major urban school districts to use Title I and a mix of other state and local funding for this purpose. Summer school in most large cities generally is designed solely for the purpose of remediation, viewed as the exclusive purview of districts, limited in duration and intensity, and offered only to a subset of kids who qualify based on poor academic performance during the school year. There is a significant opportunity to support the efforts of superintendents, principals, and teachers who are interested in strengthening the quality and comprehensiveness of current investments in summer school.

### *Other Summer Investments*

Beyond annual budget allocations for summer school, public funding dedicated specifically for summer programming is scarce and generally uncoordinated in most cities. In addition to schools, a range of entities including child care bureaus, parks and recreation departments, and workforce development agencies are typically involved in administering summer programs that use public funding. As a result, programs are often developed narrowly around a specific funding source and set of objectives, resulting in a lack of collaboration with other public and private programs. Thus, current policies and funding streams that support summer opportunities are either overly narrow and disconnected from each other, or overly broad making summer merely an allowable, but non-required use of funds. Both scenarios point to the need for more robust, comprehensive policy frameworks at the local and state level in support of expanding summer learning opportunities. This also speaks to the complexity of the task of determining the total amount of funding used to support summer programming in a community, given the ways in which summer policies are currently conceived. For example, we do not know how much Title I funding is currently allocated for summer programming because it is an “allowable” use and there are no summer reporting requirements.

This paper illuminates several compelling public policy and funding models that suggest a much stronger vision for summer. In addition, the paper provides a set of recommendations for how private philanthropic investments in summer at the national, state, and local levels can have a broader impact on issues related to funding, public policy, and program quality. All of these new funding and policy approaches described in this paper share a common aim - to create more systemic, comprehensive

programming that meets the diverse needs of youth and families. Such funding streams and policies can improve academic achievement AND provide a greater emphasis on enrichment programming for disadvantaged children that often mirror the types of experiences routinely available to youth in higher income households.

### *Framing the Issue and Overcoming Barriers*

There are deeply rooted cultural and economic reasons for the lack of adequate supports and opportunities available to young people in the United States during the summer months. First, summers are associated with freedom, discovery, and a time for vacations – both for adults and children. Efforts to change the standard, 180-day calendar typically engender significant opposition from families who view summers as “their time.” In addition, powerful business interests such as amusement parks, private camps, and beach resorts all resist changes to school calendars. In response to pressure from these groups, many states have passed legislation restricting when the school year may begin and end each year. Such legislation seriously hampers the ability of local school boards to pursue calendar change initiatives.

One strategy policymakers can use to overcome this type of reflexive opposition is to frame the issue of summer learning in terms of expanding choices and opportunities to children and families who need them the most. Rather than explicitly attempting to change the calendar, district policymakers should offer full-day, comprehensive summer learning programs in all Title I schools and provide strong incentives for participation. Focus group research conducted in 2007 by Lake Research Partners and The Tarrance Group suggests that many individuals have a strong negative perception of “summer school,” and few parents would be proud of the fact that their child had to participate in a program called that name. For many people, more school during the summer is viewed as a punishment and a restriction of freedom. Thus, policymakers should avoid framing the issue as simply “calendar change” or calling programs “summer school.” By embracing the language of expanding choices and opportunities, advocates for summer learning have a better chance of building broader, large-scale support for their agenda.

We remain far from realizing the vision of every child having access to a summer filled with opportunities rather than risks. While recognizing that reality, we also believe there are concrete actions that policymakers and funders can take to move us farther in that direction. Notwithstanding the current economic crisis, the time for action is now. By showcasing emerging policies and offering

specific strategies to foster innovation, we hope to accelerate the gathering momentum to deliver more sustainable and scalable solutions to this problem. Our analysis of the current funding and policy landscape suggests that communities can continue to capitalize on existing infrastructure and support for *afterschool* programs and expand such support to include the critical *summer* months – when investments in youth often diminish.

## **The Federal Landscape**

Summer is on the radar of federal policymakers and national out-of-school time organizations. For the past three years, we have witnessed a steady and growing interest on the part of public officials and national advocates in what happens to low-income youth during the summer months. Since 2006 there have been several important policy developments in the form of new legislation and changes to existing programs that represent major strategic opportunities for funders and policymakers.

The issue of expanding choices and opportunities for young people and their families during the summer months has broad, bi-partisan appeal. “Expanding summer learning opportunities for low-income youth” has become a stated policy priority for a variety of national organizations and associations. Importantly, there are also a growing number of public officials who support the issue including President Obama, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and several members of Congress. There is a growing sense that the issue is moving from the margins to the mainstream of national policy conversations about how to expand time for the learning and development of children and youth.

Recent policy developments suggest that summer learning has the potential to become a significant reform priority for the new administration. Summers could play a major role as education policymakers seek to use the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)* and the eventual reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)* as tools to close the achievement gap and improve educational opportunities for young people. In addition to focusing on education policy, our analysis also suggests that there are opportunities to strengthen support for summer within other federal policy domains. What follows are brief descriptions of key recent developments and policy opportunities in four primary categories:

- Education
- Childcare and child development

- Health and nutrition
- Employment development and service learning

While there are other sources of federal funding beyond these domains, we chose these categories because they represent the primary sources of federal funding available for programs over the summer in most major cities based on our experience working with more than 5,000 providers across the country. The policies typically fit very easily into one category without crossing purposes with another. Although many summer program providers strive to address several or all of the four categories, our review reveals a general lack of coordination and comprehensiveness in the design and implementation of policies supporting summer programs.

Also, despite all of the recent progress on the issue, we found few examples of public policies at the federal level that explicitly supported summer programs, and fewer yet that recognized summer learning loss or gaps in critical resources during the summer months. Surprisingly few of the education policies we examined actually addressed key findings of the research literature on summer learning loss, most notably the need to provide programs for all low-income elementary school children for multiple summers. We also found little emphasis on the need to provide *learning* opportunities in policy domains other than those specifically focused on education. While not surprising, this underscores the point that current federal policy generally does not reflect a more expansive view of when, where, and how young people learn beyond the traditional school day and year.

Each section includes our recommendations for ways in which that domain's policies could be revised to better meet the needs of children who face the greatest risks during the summer – though finally our conclusion is that the very existence of these rigid categories is part of the problem with current policies affecting summer programming, particularly as they play out in the context of programs at the local level.

## **Education Policy**

For all of its focus on the achievement gap, the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) was strikingly silent on the impact of summer learning loss on the achievement trajectories of young people. The legislation contains no explicit references or requirements for state or local education agencies to dedicate any federal funds for efforts to close the achievement gap during the summer months. This is

particularly disappointing given the legislation's emphasis on "scientifically based research" and the fact that there is such robust research literature supporting the need for additional summer services for low-income students.

### *Title I*

As we describe later in the local policy portion of this paper, many districts use a small portion of Title I funding for remedial summer school or extended year programs. While the total allocation for Title I in FY2008 was \$15.5 billion, the vast majority of federal Title I dollars currently are focused on interventions that take place within the traditional school day and year. Despite our best efforts to ascertain exact figures, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) is currently unable to determine how much Title I money is used to support summer learning opportunities. The only available data we found from a 1996 survey by USDE suggests that roughly 37% of principals in Title I schools utilized funds for summer learning programs. Beyond that, there is an absence of systematic data on the quality, scope, duration, and results of programs that use Title I funding.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which was signed into law on February 17, 2009, provides nearly \$13 billion in additional federal revenue for Title I to help disadvantaged students reach high academic standards. Summer learning programs are an allowable use of funds under Title I. This new federal funding is unprecedented and represents an opportunity for school districts and their partner organizations to invest more heavily in summer learning programs over the next two years. However, since no funds are explicitly targeted for summer, summer learning advocates must make a compelling case to school leaders and other key stakeholders that a portion of the funds should be invested for this purpose. There is also an opportunity for school districts to utilize these funds to help create a more robust vision of summer school and at a minimum, increase engagement with other public and private partners that can provide integrated enrichment programs and a more seamless full day of programming for students.

Beyond providing general Title I dollars, NCLB has two specific provisions that support out-of-school-time programs: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program and the Supplemental Educational Services provision. Enhancements to both of these programs could dramatically catalyze growth in summer learning programs.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers**

A rare exception to the compartmentalized nature of most federal funding streams that support summer programs, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) is designed to support a wide array of youth development and academic enrichment activities for low-income youth in low-performing schools. Both afterschool and summer programs are eligible for funding through 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC. Enrichment activities during non-school hours must be designed to complement a child's regular academic programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). In fiscal year 2008, the program received a \$100 million increase in funding; it's first increase in six years which resulted in an overall funding level of \$1.08 billion nationally. However, current funding remains well short of \$2.5 billion, the level originally authorized by Congress.

Approximately two-thirds of all 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grantees operate programs during the summer and somewhere between 40 and 65 percent of Title I schools report that they use 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC to support all or a portion of their summer programming (as cited in Winship, Hollister, Horwich, Sharkey, & Wimer, 2005). Although two-thirds is a relatively high percentage of grantees operating summer programs, interviews with grantees and state administrators suggest that summer programs are the first to be eliminated when programs are forced to make substantial cuts, which typically coincides with the end of the three to five year funding cycle (Szekely & Padgette, 2006). As funding "sunsets," programs often are forced to decide between maintaining services during the school year and continuing summer programming.

### *Enhancing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC*

Policymakers should fully fund 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and make renewal funding for local programs a function of grant performance rather than an arbitrary three to five year grant period. This would enable more programs to operate both during the afterschool and summer hours. It is important that policymakers work to support more comprehensive programming, rather than choosing between funding afterschool and summer programs. Our analysis suggests that that highest quality and most cost effective programs operate both during the school year and the summer. This is particularly true when you consider the issue of staffing and the need for professionals in the field to have year-round

rather than seasonal employment. Thus, the cost and administrative support associated with extending existing programs into the summer are typically much lower than starting a new program that only operates during either time of year.

In addition to providing more funding, the USDE should provide stronger regulatory guidance to states about the need for funded programs to offer services that expand time for learning during the summer months. Greater priority should be given to grant applications that demonstrate the capacity to deliver year-round programming over those that only propose nine months of direct services to young people. States could also give priority to applicants that demonstrate the capacity to leverage other funding and achieve higher levels of sustainable funding beyond the three to five year grant period.

In addition, guidance should explicitly encourage states to allow applicants to apply as “summer only” programs as a part of efforts to build more innovative, comprehensive, year-round programs. Our interviews revealed that several states do not currently permit this practice, making it impossible for 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC applicants that already have other funding in place to support afterschool programming to secure federal dollars only for summer activities. Moreover, the federal grant reporting and compliance systems are configured on the basis of a typical nine-month afterschool program, which creates additional challenges and administrative burdens for these providers. We believe greater flexibility in this area would result in more comprehensive programs for a greater number of children.

### **Supplemental Educational Services (SES)**

The Supplemental Educational Services program (SES), a more recently developed federal program, can be used to support tutoring for struggling students during nonschool hours. Under NCLB, a Title I elementary or secondary school that has not made “adequate yearly progress” for three years is required to provide supplemental educational services to help eligible students increase their academic achievement, especially in reading, language arts, and mathematics. Opportunities must be provided in out-of-school settings, including before or after the regular school day, on weekends, or during the summer. Low-income students who are determined by the local education agency to require Title I support are eligible; within this group, the lowest-achieving students have priority. Parents can choose

a supplemental service opportunity for their child from a list of providers approved by the state education agency.

### *Limitations of SES*

Though SES appropriately targets the neediest children and youth, several features limit its effectiveness in addressing summer learning. Most importantly, the non-regulatory guidance for SES clearly states that the intent of the program is to provide tutoring services during the school year rather than the summer (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). In addition, parents must choose a provider in the fall of each school year, making it unlikely that they would reserve the voucher for summer tutoring. Third, a typical SES voucher provides services that range in cost from approximately \$800 to \$1,400 per year. This level of service is not sufficient to provide both afterschool and summer support (Sunderman & Kim, 2004).

Our research shows that few districts currently use SES funds for summer programs and a 2009 survey by USDE found that only 12 percent of parents of children receiving SES said their child received services during the summer. However, we know that many providers have both the capacity and interest to access these funds to provide year-round programming. We argue that summer should be considered a preferred time for SES delivery, and that state and local education agencies should notify parents of SES opportunities twice a year, with the second notification happening at the end of the school year. There is the possibility that new Title I funding through ARRA could result in an additional \$2 billion for SES, which may provide an opening to achieve this goal. We are currently exploring this possibility with the USDE, and working with partners to find promising examples of districts that have SES funded summer programs, as well as determine the percentage of SES funds currently dedicated to summer programs.

### *Summary Recommendations for Federal Education Policies*

Our review of federal education policy suggests that relatively small changes to existing policies on Title I, 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, and SES can produce meaningful results in terms of placing a higher priority around summer. Changes in Title I, specifically with respect to SES, could potentially require districts to use new or existing funding in different ways during a different time of year than they are accustomed. Given the relative infancy of such policy efforts and low levels of current capacity, there is also a significant need



for the federal government to foster innovation and enable state and local education agencies to pilot new approaches and address unanswered questions. Finally, there is a significant need to collect data to determine how much funding from these programs is currently dedicated to summer and what the impact has been. The Association will be leading efforts to collect this information and disseminate it broadly to make the case for increased federal investments.

### **Potential New Federal Education Policies**

#### *The Summer Term Education Programs for Upward Performance (STEP UP) Act*

In 2006, then-Senator Obama sponsored the first federal legislation focused exclusively on summer as a time to improve children’s academic and developmental outcomes. The program was authorized in the summer of 2007 as part of the America COMPETES Act, a comprehensive bill focusing on research and development to increase economic innovation. While there is currently no funding appropriated for the program, the National Summer Learning Association and other organizations are pushing for up to a \$300M appropriation in the President’s FY10 budget request to Congress.

The STEP UP Act would create a five state pilot program that provides grants for “summer opportunity scholarships” to local educational agencies, for-profit educational providers, nonprofit organizations, or summer enrichment camps. The scholarships, available for students in grades K–8, would entitle each student to the equivalent of 30 full days of instruction. The criteria in the legislation would mandate that summer opportunity programs:

- Employ research-based educational programs, curricula, and practices
- Provide a curriculum that emphasizes reading and mathematics
- Be aligned with the standards and goals of the school year curriculum
- Measure student progress in the skills taught, disaggregating the results of student assessments by race and ethnicity, economic status, English proficiency, and disability category

Beyond providing much needed high-quality summer learning opportunities for thousands of students in high-poverty communities, the program would address three other critical priorities:

**Research and evaluation:** Funding of STEP UP would provide the largest and best opportunity to study the effectiveness and impact of varying summer learning program models. While extensive research documents the positive impact of summer learning programs, additional study is needed to determine which types of programs yield the best results and are most cost-effective. While the current authorization of STEP UP includes provisions for research and evaluation, additional efforts could strengthen these provisions by including an emphasis on answers to remaining questions in the field. Resulting studies of the program would yield important data to guide future federal investments in summer opportunities.

**State and local capacity:** Most state and local education agencies have not made summer learning a policy priority. As a result, there is a significant lack of capacity at both levels to implement, monitor, and scale-up high-quality programs. Funding of STEP UP would allow states and districts to develop the capacity to provide technical assistance to summer programs and ensure they are connected to existing school year reforms and the larger expanded learning movement. Such capacity building would also provide for more sophisticated tracking of resources and outcomes, and help leverage federal, state, and local investments in summer learning offered through other public agencies or community- or faith-based organizations. There are very few examples of state or local education agencies that have dedicated offices or departments for expanded learning opportunities that reflect the breadth and diversity of potential funding streams and policies in this area.

**Data collection:** While the federal government allows for investments in summer learning through a variety of programs such as Title I and 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, there is little tracking of how much funding is dedicated to summer or what the impact has been. States and districts are currently NOT required to disaggregate data for the summer months for most federal programs and few are able to provide a complete picture about how the current level of resources and programming compares to the need. We do know, however, that despite being an allowable use for many federal and state programs, summer programs are often not prioritized by school districts and are often the first to be cut in challenging economic times. As a result, we recommend that the federal government begin requiring state and local

agencies to collect data on the use of funds for the summer months for Title I (including Supplemental Education Services) and the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program.

### *Additional Funding Opportunities*

Securing funding for STEP UP would represent a major new opportunity to advance the issue of summer learning in the context of federal education policy. In addition, there are numerous bills and proposals for federal policymakers to consider as they move forward with the re-authorization of NCLB and other efforts to expand learning time. The Association recommends the following as strategic opportunities to expand the federal role in supporting summer learning as a part of more comprehensive programming:

- Authorize and fund the **Kindergarten Plus Act** (S. 2759). Kindergarten Plus would provide low-income children with additional time in school during the summer before and the summer after the traditional kindergarten school year to ensure that more children enter the first grade with the tools they need to succeed in school.
- Authorize and fund the **TIME Act** (S.3431) as part of NCLB reauthorization. The *Time for Innovation Matters in Education* (TIME) Act, is modeled after the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time Initiative and would provide federal funding to support states' initiatives to expand learning time in low-performing, high poverty schools in order to boost student performance, close academic achievement gaps, allow more time for teachers' professional development, and expand enrichment opportunities for our nation's most under-served students.
- Include pilot funding for **Teaching Fellows for Expanded Learning and Afterschool (T-FELAS) Act** (S.778). T-FELAS would authorize the U.S. Secretary of Education to award competitive grants to recruit, select, train and support teaching fellows to strengthen expanded learning initiatives and afterschool programs.

In addition to all of these new policy opportunities, the U.S. Secretary of Education now has a discretionary budget of approximately \$5 billion through ARRA that can be used to fund innovative

reforms in public education, including \$650 million focused on partnerships between districts and non-profit organizations. Given this broader context, there is likely to be considerable interest, opportunity, and flexibility in positioning summer learning as a priority within federal education reform efforts.

Despite significant recent progress on federal policy, it is important to recognize that there remains a fundamental challenge to many of these education policy efforts. Summer program providers tend to conceive of education broadly as any activity that supports and advances young people's learning and development. In contrast, public policies often narrowly define *education* as advancement in reading and math. Notably, *all* of the education policies we examined target low-income or low-performing students. Few seem to approximate the types of experiences available to middle- and upper-income youth during the summer. As a result, the only option available for many low-income youth at the local level is remedial summer school—whether or not the children actually require remediation.

### **Childcare and Child Development**

The three primary federal policies that address the need for childcare for low-income families during the summer are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program. TANF, which was funded at \$16.5 billion in fiscal year 2008, has four primary purposes, one of which is to end the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage (White House Office of Management and Budget [OMB], 2006a). Since preparing for or holding down a job can leave children home alone, states often use TANF funds to provide subsidies to parents for out-of-school-time care for their children. States can also choose to transfer up to 30 percent of their TANF funds into the Child Care and Development Fund to increase the overall amount of funding directed toward childcare (White House OMB, 2006b).

CCDF is the largest federal childcare subsidy program, funded at \$2.9 billion in fiscal year 2008. Eligible recipients of CCDF subsidies are children under the age of 13 residing with families whose income does not exceed 85 percent of the state's median income and whose parents work or attend a job training or educational program. One goal of the subsidies is to expand parental access to a range of childcare options, including arrangements that promote development and learning (Finance Project,

2001). The policy does not make specific recommendations, however, about the structure of learning and developmental activities in the childcare setting. States also received \$2.1 billion in block grants to support child care subsidies in fiscal year 2008 through CCDBG.

The recently enacted ARRA provides an additional \$2 billion in support for childcare and development block grants and \$3 billion in new funding for TANF. These funds could be used to provide important resources to young people during the summer months. Although neither TANF nor CCDF are specifically designed to advance young people's learning and development during the summer, these funding streams do provide critical resources for summer programming. Our interviews with summer program providers suggested that only a few were able to use childcare subsidies to enhance their programming. A primary reason is that providers must be licensed to access subsidized childcare program dollars. Many summer day camp providers are exempt from licensing requirements because they operate as recreational programs for fewer than four consecutive months. Though some public and private agencies, such as 4-H, YMCAs, and Boys and Girls Clubs, become licensed in order to receive subsidies, many enrichment camps that cater to upper-income families are not licensed and are therefore inaccessible to lower-income kids.

#### *Using Child Care Dollars for Summer Learning*

Several strategies could improve the quality of investments in summer care. First, policies should prioritize full-year care and early learning opportunities for disadvantaged children. Integrating childcare and pre-kindergarten programs has the potential to provide opportunities in the face of cuts to state childcare programs. While state policies do encourage programs to offer full-day, full-year opportunities, they do not require, coordinate, or fund such activities (Schumacher, Ewen, Hart, & Lombardi, 2005). Most state programs are part-day, part-year programs intended to benefit a limited number of four-year-olds based on family income.

Policymakers should consider strategies to generate greater awareness among summer program providers about the uses of CCDF and TANF. Incentives for summer day camps to become licensed and widen their recruitment efforts to include children from disadvantaged and diverse backgrounds should be included in the legislation. Policies should explicitly discuss the need for continued learning and enrichment over the summer months; they should prioritize funding for organizations that collaborate

effectively to increase the opportunities available to children and youth. For example, a partnership among the public school, community-based organizations, and the public library could result in a well-rounded experience that incorporates a wide variety of learning experiences, while maximizing and combining funding streams, such as those that fund library summer reading programs.

## **Health and Nutrition**

Another important category of federal summer-related policies relates to the health and well-being of young people, specifically with regard to food and nutrition. In the face of alarming statistics about the rise of childhood obesity across the country, summer programs provide children with good nutrition and physical activity. Numerous studies show that good nutrition is a vital component of a child's education: It stimulates a student's learning, improves school attendance and behavior, and contributes to cognitive development (cited in Finance Project, 2000). Good food is also a meaningful incentive for children and youth to attend out-of-school time programs.

We focus specifically on nutrition in this section to the exclusion of physical fitness programs simply because we found no large funding stream specifically dedicated to sports and recreation during the summer. Although local parks and recreation departments are one of the primary agencies administering programs over the summer months, virtually no federal funding currently supports summer recreational programs. More comprehensive programs that combine recreation with academic and developmental opportunities usually result from partnerships with local community-based organizations. Several policies, including 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, have physical fitness or recreation as an "allowable use" of funds in summer programs.

In contrast, the nutrition policies we explore below are focused on summer and are frequently discussed as a source of guaranteed funding for summer programs that choose to enroll. All of the providers we interviewed accessed summer nutrition programs relatively easily. The nutrition programs we explore below are all administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The unique feature of the USDA programs is that they were created to address the gap in nutritional resources that students experience when school is out—a rare example of a policy that targets summer specifically as a time when young people experience a loss in access to needed services.

### *Recent Changes to Summer Nutrition*

USDA has adopted two policy changes that have made progress in addressing the underutilization of its summer nutrition funding. One solution has been to offer a Seamless Summer Food Option, under which schools offer summer meals as a continuation of National School Lunch Program without having to fill out additional paperwork. A second policy change has been the implementation and growth of the Simplified Summer Food Program (SSFP), formerly known as the “Lugar Pilot.” Congress created this pilot program to reduce paperwork and maximize reimbursement. The SSFP eliminates time-consuming accounting procedures and allows sites to earn the maximum reimbursement as a standard for all meals. As a result, sponsors complete less paperwork and gain potentially higher reimbursements (FRAC, 2006).

Since the program’s inception in 2001, the thirteen original “Lugar states” increased summer nutrition participation by 41.3 percent, while non-participating states fell 11.9 percent (FRAC, 2006). In Ohio, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported that the Cincinnati public schools partnered with the Children’s Hunger Alliance and the city’s Recreation Commission to serve 163,000 free meals to children in the summer of 2006, up from 19,500 the summer before (“163,000 free meals,” 2006). In late 2007, the program was expanded to all 50 states which should greatly increase the amount of children receiving summer meals.

### **Employment Development and Service Learning**

In the past, summer was explicitly recognized as an optimal time for youth employment, and federal policy directed funding to summer jobs. In recent years, however, the focus on summer jobs has been diluted, at least at the federal level. Though some state and local governments have attempted to make up the difference, they have not been able to compensate for the dramatic declines in federal funding for summer jobs.

Subsidizing summer youth employment for youth ages 14 to 21 was a major youth investment strategy of the federal government from the 1970s through the 1990s. One of the primary reasons for this investment was the research that revealed the impact of summer learning loss. Policies encouraged local areas to combine “learning and earning” by offering an academic component within their summer youth employment programs. Several major national youth programs, including YouthBuild and the

Youth Conservation and Service Corps, redesigned their programs to incorporate an academic component, particularly GED preparation for students who had dropped out of high school.

In 1998, the passage of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) represented a change in youth service delivery that resulted in less federal emphasis on summer employment programs. Rather than providing a direct funding stream specifically for summer jobs, WIA funds summer employment as one of ten possible year-round services: tutoring, alternative secondary school services, work experience and internships, occupational skills training, leadership development and community service opportunities, transportation and childcare support, adult mentoring, follow-up services, and guidance and counseling (Finance Project, 2003).

This focus on integrated services was an attempt to more closely connect education and employment. Although program providers are not required to provide all ten services, local Workforce Investment Boards must ensure that all ten are available to eligible youth. While the intention was good, the resulting de-emphasis on summer jobs opportunities has had detrimental effects on summer youth employment. WIA funding for youth education and training has been on the decline: from \$996 million in fiscal year 2005 to \$951 million in fiscal year 2006 and a proposed \$851 million for fiscal year 2007 (White House OMB, 2006c). Teen summer employment rates have shown a corresponding decline, falling from 45.2 percent in 2000 to 37.1 percent in 2006 (Sum, McLaughlin, & Khatiwada, 2006).

#### *Ways to Capitalize on Workforce Investments*

One strategy to increase investment is greater coordination among policies that emphasize both summer employment and service learning. Funding streams through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) should be leveraged and connected to WIA dollars. The Summer of Service program run by CNCS provides education awards for young people in middle school who complete at least 100 hours of service. Some summer jobs programs already involve young people in academics, service learning, and workforce development simultaneously. For example, the Met program in Providence, Rhode Island, connects its students at six small high schools with mentors and service-oriented internship opportunities in the community. Such models merit additional attention and support from policymakers.



With passage of the ARRA, there is now \$1.2 billion in new federal resources designated for youth employment and training, with the goal of creating up to 1 million summer jobs for youth. Additionally, there is \$160 million in new funding for AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps VISTA programs, which provide critical staffing support for many summer programs. Our research suggests that state and local policymakers should consider strategies for combining workforce development funding with service learning resources to offer young people meaningful work experiences that more fully meet key community needs.

### **The State Policy Landscape**

To date, state policies related to summer learning have concentrated primarily on providing remedial summer school for students who fail to meet promotion requirements. A 2006 survey by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) revealed the following findings:

- Thirty-five states and the District of Columbia have *summer remediation policies* in either statute or administrative code; 18 states have multiple remediation policies, which are frequently targeted at different age groups or subject areas.
- Twelve states operate summer remediation programs designed exclusively to ensure their students are reading at proficient levels. These policies are typically found at the elementary level and are especially common for students in kindergarten through third grade.
- Thirteen states explicitly include both *mathematics and science* as subjects in their remediation policies. An additional seven states and the District of Columbia include mathematics but not science.
- Ten states have policies that *target specific districts, schools, or students in specific schools* for remediation. These districts or schools are identified for various reasons: not making adequate yearly progress under NCLB, the size of the district's population, or measures of poverty in the population.
- Nine states operate summer remediation programs explicitly designed to *help high school students meet graduation requirements*. In addition, two states have policies relating to remediation of future or current high school graduates who intend to attend or are currently enrolled in a college or university. (Zinth, 2006)

To deepen our knowledge about the full scope of current and potential investments that states can make in young people during the summer months, we recently began conducting policy and resource scans. Currently, there is very little data available to answer even the most basic questions about access, participation, and funding levels available to support summer learning programs.

We completed our first resource scan in Maryland and published results in early 2008. We collected and analyzed data in four local jurisdictions in Maryland both to provide critical information to state and local policymakers on public investments in summer programs and to test a data collection methodology that could be replicated in other locales. The four jurisdictions analyzed are the city of Baltimore, Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and St. Mary's County. Five key funding agencies were surveyed for each jurisdiction: the public schools, the local parks and recreation department, the local management board, the local workforce investment board, and the state child care agency. Key findings of this research included:

- **The public schools served the largest number of children in publicly funded summer programs,** with parks and recreation departments and local workforce investment boards coming in a distant second. Child care vouchers supported the smallest number of children in summer programs, and with one small exception, local management boards did not fund summer programs.
- **Among school districts, the number of students served in summer programs ranged from just 6 percent of district enrollment up to nearly 30 percent of district enrollment.** Except for public schools, programs offered by the other funding agencies are serving only a very small fraction of the total student population.
- **Some parks and recreation departments offered a comprehensive set of free or low-cost summer programs.** Most of these programs, however, were fully supported by parent fees and received no public funding.
- **Most publicly funded programs were geared toward elementary-age children;** high school-age children were served primarily in youth employment and summer school programs. Very few programs for middle school students existed.

- **Public spending per program participant varied considerably across both jurisdictions and the various funding agencies**, from a low of \$93 per participant in a parks and recreation program to a high of \$2,043 in a summer youth employment program. This variation can be explained by differences in staffing costs, program length, and/or the degree to which programs relied on parent fees or other private funding in addition to public sources. (Parent fees and other private funding are not included in the spending figures.)
- **Public funding for summer programs comes mainly from local and federal sources** (about 50 percent each), with a very small share from state sources.

We plan to gather similar data from other states and use it to inform an emerging set of state task forces and workgroups that are developing stronger policies to support summer learning at the state level. The Association is currently engaged in this work in California and Indiana. We also recently completed a review, *Issues in Funding Summer School Programs (April 2009)*, with the Education Commission of the States that examines education funding for 11 key states, including policy recommendations and best practices around summer learning.

#### *Summary of State Investments*

What follows are brief analyses of several states' efforts to fund summer learning programs. Based on our knowledge of the field, most state funding designated for summer learning opportunities currently falls into one of the following categories: 1) Remedial summer school for low-performing students; 2) Combination academic and enrichment programs; and 3) Specialized enrichment programs for particular groups of students.

Our examination of state education agencies (SEAs) revealed that most do not have staff dedicated explicitly to implementation of summer learning programs. While all states have staff that work on the federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program, they are much more likely to focus on afterschool programs, rather than a comprehensive expanded learning portfolio. Additionally, summer programs tend to be scattered across the agency - one department might administer a summer enrichment program, while separate departments focus on summer food programs and summer remedial programs.

This lack of alignment is also found at other state and local agencies as well and represents a major challenge to policymakers and researchers seeking to collect data and evaluate summer programming. As a result, the Association hopes to lead efforts to build state capacity through an aligned administrative approach at the state level to better coordinate all expanded learning efforts. An additional goal is to require more data collection and evaluations from state and locally funded summer programs, which we are trying to do in Maryland.

Finally, another challenge is that most states that currently have funds for expanded learning initiatives have focused on school-year after-school programs as opposed to summer or year-round models. For example, the historic Proposition 49 legislation in California led to a \$428 million increase in statewide afterschool funding. However, none of this funding is available for summer programs because priority was given to school-year programs. In Massachusetts, the state-wide Expanded Learning Time (ELT) initiative expands the school day by at least 300 hours per year for the purposes of improving student outcomes in core academic subjects, broadening enrichment opportunities and improving instruction by adding more planning and professional development time for teachers. However, there currently are no school districts in Massachusetts that have focused ELT funding on summer programming. While not included in the profiles below because the policies aren't currently focused on summer, both states are locations where summer learning opportunities could expand dramatically given the existence of these well-developed policy frameworks and dedicated providers and advocates.

Rather than providing detailed, comprehensive descriptions of each state's respective policies and programs, the paper instead briefly highlights a few key factors and recent developments that constitute strategic opportunities to expand and/or deepen its efforts to address summer learning. We examined the following general criteria to select a few states to include in this analysis:

- Level and trajectory of dedicated funding that could be better aligned and/or re-focused to support a broad vision of summer learning opportunities;
- Level of support from high-profile champions within state and local government;
- Level of involvement of private philanthropy as a catalyst for policy change;
- Level of political will and sense of urgency in addressing this agenda on the part of key constituencies and/or stakeholders;
- Level of expertise in service delivery within the provider community; and

- Level of infrastructure at the state level both in terms of intermediary organizations and public agencies.

The state descriptions that follow are based on the Association’s collective knowledge and experience working at the national level for the past six years and reviewing publicly available information about relevant policies. While providing such a high-level overview of state activity can shed important light on recent policy developments, we are also cognizant of the fact that much more detailed inquiry and analyses are necessary in order to obtain precise data and draw definitive conclusions about the overall levels of funding, service delivery, and participation at the state level. We view such analysis as an important next step in building a more thorough understanding of what these states and others need in order to strengthen their capacity to develop summer learning policies.

## **Wyoming**

Wyoming has a state-funded summer learning initiative called Wyoming Bridges. The policy is noteworthy as an example of one state’s effort to address a common tension between what is typically considered as “academic” and “enrichment” programming in state policy. The legislation emphasizes the importance of ensuring summer and extended day programs offer instruction that is “*different*” from instruction administered during the traditional school year. This is one of the few pieces of state legislation that actually encourages school districts to adhere to a “research-based approach to differentiated instruction by embedding enrichment in intervention and/or remedial learning strategies on a regular basis that is not optional to students, but instead is an inherent part of the instructional approach.” Further, the legislation actually defines and formally codifies the value of summer enrichment as “...a learning opportunity engaging students in rigorous, higher order thinking through pragmatic and/or real-world application. It incorporates learning through manipulative hands-on experiences relevant to a student’s learning style.”

Annual funding for the program is currently approximately \$9 million, and funding levels have increased for the past three years. There is a broad base of support for the issue of summer learning both in the legislature and among key stakeholders in the education and youth development community. The presence of a strong statewide intermediary organization, the Wyoming Afterschool Alliance, is also a critical asset for efforts to support legislation and the issue of summer learning is a critical asset for the state. The statewide network receives private philanthropic support from the C.S.

Mott Foundation and others that enable it to engage in this work. In addition, there are successful, well-funded models of summer learning programs at the local and district level with positive evaluation results. Program providers in the state have participated in national outreach activities such as Lights On Afterschool and Summer Learning Day, which suggests broad interest in participation in a national movement to support summer learning. Governor Dave Freudenthal is a vocal champion of expanded learning opportunities and views summer and afterschool as “a valuable opportunity to have a positive impact on the intellectual and social growth of our youth.” Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), the Ranking Member of Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions committee, has expressed support for the STEP UP program at the federal level and could serve as an important ally in moving this agenda forward. In addition, as a predominantly rural state, Wyoming has the potential to demonstrate how to significantly expand summer learning opportunities while addressing important transportation barriers common in many states with significant rural populations.

## **New York**

New York State offers a variety of funded summer learning initiatives. Prominent examples of policies include annually providing funding for: small-scale middle school science and math programs at community colleges throughout the state; summer professional development institutes for K-12 math and science teachers; public library summer reading programs; a state summer school program for talented young artists and musicians; and more general funding for “interventions” that can be used to support formal summer school programming out of the New York State education budget. While several of the programs are not currently funded on a large scale, they collectively represent an important example of how many states develop policy related to summer learning. As is the case in our analysis of federal policy, we would argue that there is a significant opportunity for better policy coordination and alignment in the state of New York and more comprehensive policies that meet the diverse needs of youth and families. Our analysis further suggests the need for greater emphasis on enrichment programming for disadvantaged children that mirrors the types of experiences available to middle- and upper-class youth.

In addition to the existence of diverse funding streams to support summer learning, New York has other important strategic assets that enhance its readiness to address the issue of summer learning more broadly and comprehensively. The Afterschool Corporation (TASC), an important intermediary organization in New York City, is currently developing a strategy for directing and focusing state funding through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers grant program to establish new models for

summer learning in the programs it funds in New York City. In addition, within the past two years, the city's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has begun the process of shifting from 9-month to 12-month contracts for the youth organizations that DYCD funds to run afterschool and summer programming. The state of New York also has a rich array of summer camp programs that serve as powerful models of quality programming to a growing national audience. Association staff has worked closely with New York-based organizations such as Harlem RBI and Trailblazers that have a proven track record of success and exemplify the characteristics of research-based, high-quality programs. Finally, the New York State Afterschool Network has developed a Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool that the Association views as a model to inform the development of a set of quality assessment tools specifically designed for summer learning programs.

### **New Mexico**

New Mexico has a high level of readiness to address the need for expanded summer learning opportunities based on the recent growth in summer-related education funding and a broader integrated services initiative that is underway at the state level. First, New Mexico's Kindergarten Plus policy, which began in 2003 as a three-year pilot program to provide summer programming before and after the kindergarten year, recently expanded statewide. Results from the three-year pilot demonstrated a number of positive outcomes including: improved student performance on the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assessment; decreased number of students classified with delayed skills in prekindergarten; strengthened social maturity; and greater parental involvement. It is particularly noteworthy that New Mexico is the only state identified by the Association that successfully integrates its approach to pre-school policy with a strategy to expand summer learning opportunities for young people in high-poverty schools. In addition, the program successfully leverages federal Reading First funding from the U.S. Department of Education, making it one of few states that to access the funding for this purpose. The program has strong support from both the state legislature and Governor Bill Richardson.

In addition, the New Mexico Integrated Services in Schools Initiative (NMISSI) is a statewide effort recently begun to provide critical supports to middle school youth designed to help them succeed in school and life. With private philanthropic support and increased public funding, the initiative focuses on extended-day learning; comprehensive school-based healthcare; and family supports. As the lead fiscal agent on the project, the New Mexico Community Foundation seeks to demonstrate that, when

carefully integrated, education, healthcare, and family support form a strong basis for student success. In the context of this initiative, there has been tremendous interest on the part of schools and other service providers in making summer learning programs a central component in the initiative's strategy.

## **Illinois**

Illinois' current state policies related to summer learning focus primarily on remedial summer school interventions and the expansion of summer nutritional programs for young people who qualify for federally subsidized meals. The Illinois Summer Bridges initiative is an example of a state policy that provides funding for an extended learning program designed to improve the reading, writing, and mathematical skills of students enrolled from pre-kindergarten through grade 6 in districts where a significant number of students do not meet state learning standards based on the Illinois state assessment. While state funding is insufficient for local school districts to provide full-day, comprehensive summer learning opportunities, in some cases state investments have helped generate increased attention and funding at the city level for summer programming. For example, the City of Chicago and the Chicago Public Schools collaborated and began a summer learning initiative in 2006 called "Keep Kids Learning." This fills in gaps created by state funding by allowing students who were not mandated to participate in summer school to receive extra academic help as well as take part in afternoon enrichment activities.

Illinois is unlike many other states in its policies on summer nutrition. Nationally, only 1 in 5 children who qualify for federally subsidized meals receive them during the summer months. Illinois is planning to address that gap and ensure greater access to its summer food service program. The state legislature and Governor approved Public Act 095-0155 on August 14, 2007, which will result in significant increases in the number of children who receive breakfast and lunch during the summer months in Illinois. With this new law in place, school districts that have at least one school where 50 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals AND that have a summer school program operating during the summer months must announce a plan to serve breakfast and/or lunch at each school that meets the criteria above by February. Schools must serve either breakfast and/or lunch to the children in their summer school program along with opening the doors to all young people who are eligible in the community.



## State Policy Challenges

Often state policymakers think of summer learning only in terms of remedial summer school. While the Association and many research studies advocate a more comprehensive model, most states have not yet embraced this vision.

The challenge for the Association and other organizations is to encourage states and districts to broaden their vision of summer learning programs to incorporate hands-on learning, enrichment activities, and other activities that look and feel different than the traditional school day. One way to achieve this is to encourage and require partnerships with a wide variety of community based organizations, universities, and other non-profits. These types of comprehensive programs have been proven to boost student achievement and engagement while fostering creativity and innovation, two skills critical to success in the new global economy. Such an approach would move these programs in the direction of more sustainable, reliable funding from state and local education agencies.

Another potential model for state consideration is already being funded by many states. Several states including those profiled above currently fund summer programs for Gifted and Talented youth. These publicly funded programs provide exactly the type of innovative, hands-on learning experiences which are hallmarks of quality, research-based summer learning opportunities. While some aspects of these programs may need to be altered to meet the needs of varying groups of students, they do provide an important publicly funded model which could help narrow the summer opportunity gap between low-income students and their middle and higher-income peers.

### *A New Vision for Summer School*

States should also encourage school districts and their community partner organizations to strategically utilize ARRA funds and other funding sources to develop a new vision for summer school that incorporates the following seven principles:

1. **Increase the duration and intensity** of the traditional summer school model to a comprehensive research-based, 6-week, full-day model.
2. **Expand participation** from only those students struggling academically to all students in school-wide Title I programs.
3. Change the focus from narrow remediation and test preparation to a **blended approach of both academic learning in core subject areas AND hands-on activities** that foster critical 21<sup>st</sup> century

competitiveness skills like collaboration, innovation, creativity , communication, and data analysis.

4. **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.
5. **Provide incentives to students that improve attendance and engagement by making enrichment activities** such as arts, music, sports, and free breakfast and lunch through the federal Summer Food program an essential component of summer programs.
6. **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.
7. Lastly, summers need to move from the periphery to the center of school reform strategies through **better planning, infrastructure, data collection, and accountability.**

### **Local Innovations and Implications**

Using the same general criteria that we applied to the above state profiles, the Association also gathered information on promising local initiatives that address some of the cross-cutting challenges and opportunities in building a more coordinated, systemic approach to summer programming. What follows are brief vignettes designed to illustrate how public agencies, non-profits, and other organizations are beginning to respond to the different challenges we describe.

#### **Summer Food Service – Washington, DC**

In most major cities, the lack of access to affordable, nutritious food during the summer months can be a leading factor in high accounts of childhood hunger and obesity. In Washington, D.C., D.C. Hunger Solutions (DCHS), an initiative of the Food Research and Action Center created to maximize participation in all federal nutrition programs, addressed this challenge by launching a strategic campaign to increase participation in the D.C. Free Summer Meals Program. Since its inception, DCHS targeted a diverse set of stakeholders to educate the public and key audiences of the stark reality of hunger during the summer months and the resources that were being underutilized.

DCHS enlisted the sponsorship of the D.C. Department of Parks and Recreation and advocated before the D.C. agency that managed the summer food program. Connecting with the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Child Nutrition, the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and others, DCHS was able to leverage support to streamline the payment process, systematically identify the highest need areas, simplify the summer food application, recruit new partners, and enlist 150 new sites for the program.

The local marketing of this federal entitlement was a strategic effort using extensive dissemination of multilingual flyers, a combination of billboard and radio advertisements, and a public endorsement by the Mayor. A major cable company also participated in the marketing campaign to increase feeding sites and subsequent participation. In addition, the effort succeeded in extending the number of weeks that the summer food programs operated to help close the nutrition gap for children at risk of hunger and obesity. This multi-year coordinated initiative played a central role in increasing the number of children receiving free, nutritious summer meals from the D.C. Free Summer Meals Program generating a return of 29,158 children served at 404 sites in 2007 up from 13,213 in 2002.

### **Comprehensive Summer School – Chicago, IL**

Since 2006, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) have provided a comprehensive summer learning program, Keep Kids Learning (KKL), targeted at students from low-income households. The program includes opportunities for academic, recreational, and social enrichment by enabling selected schools to expand their mandatory summer school program to include an afternoon enrichment component and additional morning academic programming for youth not required to attend summer school. The number of students benefitting from this program has grown over the past three years as CPS expands the number of participating schools.

Each KKL elementary school offers morning academic instruction in reading and math. This instruction is done by certified teachers, sometimes in conjunction with a college education major teaching intern. Afternoon enrichment content is determined by each individual elementary school. Individual schools may choose to work with a community organization to offer all of the afternoon content or a portion of the content, or hire staff of their own choosing. Sports, drama, cheerleading,

dancing, drum corps, nutrition classes, and arts are some of the enrichment programs offered. In the afternoon, high school students participate in a paid internship that supports the elementary school's enrichment programs. Schools tailor the afternoon content to meet the needs of their students by creating summer programming that complements the themes from the school year, such as character education. For the community organizations invited into the schools, KKL provides an opportunity to build partnerships that allow them access to the population they want to serve.

Chicago Public Schools' Keep Kids Learning initiative is an innovative model of how school districts can address the issue of summer learning loss in partnership with community partners. It is rare and noteworthy for a large urban school district to design a summer learning initiative that provides consecutive years of high-quality programming, encourages collaboration, and combines elements of both academic remediation and enrichment. By focusing resources on a select group of schools in one high-poverty community, CPS demonstrates how state funding for summer school can be extended and leveraged by a local school district and city agencies.

### **Summer Youth Program Fund – Indianapolis, IN**

The Summer Youth Program Fund (SYPF) in Indianapolis, Indiana is a collaborative of 11 private philanthropies, corporate foundations, and government agencies that collectively provided more than \$2.2 million in funding for summer programs in 2008. The nature of the collaborative has allowed the funders to set common expectations for performance and provide a system of supports so that programs have a greater likelihood of success.

The SYPF uses a common request for proposals to simplify the process for applicants and provide a consistent framework for program expectations. The collaborative also engages local and national technical assistance providers to offer professional development workshops and program support. The SYPF recently also engaged the Association to assist them in reaching out to public agencies and other large youth-serving organizations to better coordinate summer programming efforts across the community. SYPF serves as a catalyst for a summer system-building effort that seeks to promote more streamlined funding and greater opportunities for youth and families.

The collaborative is made up of a range of funders that spans the breadth of the philanthropic community from small family foundations to large national foundations. Without the collaborative,

some of the smaller funders may not have the capacity to provide technical assistance, professional development opportunities, or even a framework for expectations. The collaborative allows smaller funders to leverage their dollars to participate in an effort greater than their investment alone.

The collaborative is also unique in that it supported community organizations' offering 173 programs each summer. Some of these organizations are very small and would not otherwise be eligible for public funding streams available to support summer programming. The SYPF allows these community organizations to meet specific needs within their communities and offer programming to the youth and families they serve at a time of year when public support for youth programming wanes.

### **School District & CBO Partnership – Springfield, MA**

In 2008, BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) and the Springfield Public School System spearheaded a collaborative summer learning program for 800 young people at 11 school sites. The young people who became "BELL scholars", were either at risk of being retained in Grades 5 or 8; or had received grade point averages below a "C". As a result of the collaborative effort, the new scholars gained 9 months' grade equivalent skills in literacy and math; and 100% of scholars who were at risk of not being promoted to the next grade advanced to the next grade level.

BELL and the Springfield Public School System brought together district officials, principals, teachers, parents, and union representatives to provide high-quality summer learning programs at 11 sites. Reaching out to other stakeholders in the Springfield community, the partners were able to significantly augment the school district's funding with contributions from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Through this leveraged investment for youth, BELL and the Springfield Public Schools system were able to deliver a dynamic summer learning program model resulting in great outcomes for the 800 scholars.

By leveraging the experience of BELL program managers from New York and Baltimore with the Springfield Public Schools site facilitators, who are familiar with the school environment, student population, and community resources - BELL and the Springfield Public Schools system ensured that each site would maximize its resources necessary for the development of the scholars. At the beginning

of the eight hour days in July and August, the scholars had breakfast provided by the school. Scanning technology, utilized by BELL, was used to track and reinforce daily attendance. In the morning, academic instruction included three hours of instruction in literacy and math Monday through Thursday using Houghton Mifflin's *Summer Success: Reading* and *Summer Success: Math* curricula, which are designed for an intensive six-week summer learning environment. In the afternoon, enrichment activities included social or physical science class, arts class, and a physical activity class along with community service activities and field trips in Springfield. The structured balance of enrichment activities helped scholars apply abstract concepts learned during the academic instruction component to real life situations. The program administered tests to scholars to quantify gains in literacy and math skills. Surveys were administered to collect qualitative data from teachers, parents, and scholars. The scholars enrolled in this summer learning program outpaced national norms in acquiring new literacy skills and math skills as demonstrated by positive NCE (Normal Curve Equivalent) gains. The collaborative effort is an example of a successful model that can be used to demonstrate how program providers can leverage resources from partnerships to supplement government funds and produce quality summer learning programs.

#### **Enhanced Collaboration – Baltimore, MD**

With the support of several local private foundations, the Association has played an important role in many initiatives and policy changes in Baltimore that promote a longer-range vision for high-quality summer programming. We have worked closely with the Baltimore City Public School System (City Schools) over the past five years to help generate several major policy changes including that all K-8 schools in the district now offer a 4-week, half-day summer learning program to all of their students regardless of promotion status. In 2006 and 2007 the district increased funding for summer programming and served over 23,000 young people.

The Association is currently focused on promoting stronger collaboration between public agencies (schools, parks and recreation, youth employment, and libraries) to ensure more equitable access to well-balanced summer programs for young people that successfully integrate academics and enrichment. Within the school district, we have positioned ourselves as a resource to facilitate a transparent process of integrating community based-organizations in the summer school context. We convened a work group with the four large public agencies offering summer programming to enhance coordination and collaborative planning around issues of scheduling and transportation. Finally, our advocacy before the city council has engaged municipal leadership around the issue of quality summer

programming and the need to ensure equitable access for all children and youth in Baltimore. Initial results include 1) raising public awareness about the benefits of high-quality summer programming; 2) leveraging current investments in summer and negotiating better provision of services; and 3) fostering stronger inter-agency collaboration.

These efforts have also created an environment where new partnerships and innovative program models can thrive. One outstanding example of this is The Middle Grades Partnership (MGP), which was established in 2005 as a collaborative summer and after-school learning program sponsored jointly by ten Baltimore independent schools working in direct partnership with ten Baltimore City public middle schools. Currently serving more than 600 Baltimore City middle school students, the MGP pairs one independent school with one public middle school; teachers from both schools then work together to create a five week summer learning program and two days per week after-school program for middle school students. The resulting programs have dual goals: to expand the number of 9<sup>th</sup> graders prepared to excel in Baltimore's most challenging college preparatory public high schools and to bring public and private school institutions together in authentic working relationships that are based on mutual respect and a sincere willingness to reach across racial and cultural divides.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the first goal is being met: MGP students are both setting their sights higher for high school and expressing stronger motivation and self-confidence when thinking and talking about their own academic futures. 64% of MGP's current 8<sup>th</sup> graders qualified to apply for the top tier of Baltimore's most academically rigorous high schools and 93% qualified for a college preparatory high school with academic entrance criteria. An independent evaluation of MGP, conducted by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health is expected in the late spring or early summer.

MGP's second goal is also being met. Increasingly, the public school system is recognizing the small and locally-run school as the model most likely to increase student engagement and achievement, especially at the middle school level. Each independent school is in a strong position to model for its public school partner both small-school practice and philosophy. At the same time, with an ever-increasing and multi-cultural US population, public schools serve as powerful models of racial and class equity for their independent school peers.

MGP is a ground-breaking effort which could be replicated in any area of the country with a strong independent school presence. Nationally there are many programs serving the needs of public

middle school students through OST programming and there are many small examples of one independent school serving as an operator of such an endeavor. But nowhere in the US has an entire metropolitan community of independent schools partnered in this bold manner with its local school system around the promise of serving the needs of the local public school children while also challenging and strengthening the participating institutions themselves.

### **The Role of Private Philanthropy**

Our research into public policy and funding related to summer programming would be incomplete without mentioning the critical role that private philanthropy currently plays in this field, particularly in terms of helping level the playing field for disadvantaged youth during the summer months. Historically, we've viewed our public commitment to young people as a nine-month enterprise. Philanthropists have long recognized the need to supplement that support with direct investment in summer programs for youth. Our interviews with program providers suggest a strong reliance on private philanthropic support for summer program operations.

For decades, private philanthropy has funded relatively small-scale programs run by non-profits and other entities designed to expand summer learning opportunities for low-income youth. In most major U.S. cities, it is not difficult to find a small number of comprehensive, high-quality summer programs that use philanthropic support to provide disadvantaged youth with a mixture of academic enrichment and recreation during the summer months. Such programs often partner with public schools, but generally exist outside the formal structures and funding streams of large urban districts and other public agencies, which constrains efforts to bring comprehensive programs to scale. Those programs that do receive public funding, often from sources like the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program, face major challenges in expanding their services and sustaining investments beyond short-term grant cycles. Rather than being the preferred time for services, public funding often includes summer as an "allowable use," with the bulk of funding directed toward school day or afterschool programs. As a result, few innovative summer programs that rely primarily on either private or public grant funding have been able to scale their operations dramatically and to serve large numbers of young people consistently.

In addition to supporting program level innovation, funders and policymakers have invested in intermediary organizations at both the state and city level resulting in new infrastructure for out-of-



school time programming. City and state intermediary organizations have leveraged public and private investments in afterschool over the past decade. They have also created much stronger systems for data collection, inter-agency collaboration, and public engagement around the issue. Despite this progress, city and state funding and infrastructure is often not enough to result in adequate opportunities during the summer months. In general, current funding models are inadequate to meet the demand and need for year-round, comprehensive OST programming.

There is an increased interest on the part of private foundations and corporations to support research, professional development, and public policy initiatives focused on summer learning. Such investments can play a critical role in accelerating the pace of change required to break down many of the barriers described in this paper. What follows are specific recommendations for funders with an interest in advancing this agenda:

### ***Strategies for Stronger Alignment and Coordination of Resources***

- Local foundations and corporations should invest in city-wide summer funding collaboratives such as the models described in Indianapolis. These efforts have significant potential to ensure higher levels of program quality, utilize limited resources more efficiently, and increase leverage on public agencies.
- Foundations should invest in intermediary organizations in key cities that have the potential to include a more intentional focus on summer in their system-building efforts. These intermediaries can foster stronger inter-agency collaboration, push for 12-month OST contracts, and help build more sustainable, consistent approaches to summer from one year to the next.
- Foundations should invest in efforts to engage mayors in leading city-wide planning for summer programming that would help coordinate the work of public agencies such as libraries, schools, parks and recreation, child care bureaus, workforce development, and others. Foundations should support focused initiatives designed to increase participation in summer food service, public library summer reading programs, and other under-utilized publicly funded programs.

### ***Strategies for Increasing the Supply of Summer Learning Programs***

- Foundations should fund an initiative designed to test and promote a new model of summer school in large cities that more fully addresses key research findings and capitalizes on the opportunities associated with the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). For example, new investments in Title I and other education programs through the economic recovery bill could be used by schools and their partners to offer more comprehensive programs for more young people.
- Foundations should support a wider range of national meetings, toolkits, and capacity-building activities for public agencies and their non-profit partners in how to use Title I and other federal resources to support summer learning. States and cities need to prepare for increased federal funding dedicated to the summer months.
- Foundations should fund local, state, and national advocacy and public policy initiatives designed to secure new investments in summer learning. Foundations and corporations should fund a large-scale social marketing campaign designed to raise awareness about the need for young people to be engaged in constructive activities during the summer months.
- In states and cities with existing public funding for afterschool, foundations should fund efforts to catalyze expansion of those programs into the summer months in cost effective ways. Foundations should target funding on a time-limited basis to convert programs from operating on a 9-month schedule to a 12-month schedule. In addition to providing seed funding for this effort, foundations should provide resources to enable programs to identify, maximize, and integrate available local, state, and federal resources to sustain efforts.
- Foundations should fund an initiative designed to test and promote new models of summer youth employment programs in large cities that address the general scarcity of high school summer learning programs that combine meaningful work experiences with academic support. Foundations could provide seed funding to non-profits that partner with public agencies to capitalize on new funding for summer jobs within the ARRA.

### ***Strategies for Improving Data Collection and Reporting***

- Foundations could support pilot testing of an annual summer report card for cities that tracks key outcomes over time and strengthens existing data collection and reporting systems. There is a critical need for a common MIS system and data sharing among public agencies and non-profits that operate summer programs.

- Foundations should invest in data collection to help determine current levels of access and participation in summer programming at the state and local levels. Strategic grant-making in this area will provide critical information to policymakers and advocates about gaps in service and current levels of supply and demand.
- Foundations with interest in specific states should fund intermediary organizations to establish policy workgroups and /or convene taskforces to study the issue and build political will. This is a particularly effective strategy for moving the agenda forward without explicitly asking for more state funding during the economic crisis.

### ***Strategies for Improving the Quality of Summer Learning Programs***

- Foundations should fund new, summer-specific curricula for out-of-school providers that recognize the unique features and assets of summer programs as distinct from after-school programs as well as school-based curricula that make remedial summer school programs more engaging and enriching.
- Foundations should support the development of professional learning communities or consortia at either the state or local level to ensure that providers receive comprehensive expert help about summer program design and practice. Local foundations should fund small clusters of providers that are interested in ramping up the quality of their programs and being a resource to other providers in their community.
- Foundations should support unconventional partnerships and much more intensive networking between and among summer program providers. A key strength in the field is the rich diversity of providers including schools, camps, day care providers, and parks and recreation centers. However, this often leads to fragmented programs. Funders should provide incentives for program providers that are willing to combine half-day programs, reduce transportation costs, and make better use of existing facilities and community resources.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

The preceding analysis of current summer policies and funding opportunities has a number of immediate implications. First, policymakers at all levels (local, state, and federal) should place a much stronger emphasis on summer services within existing funding streams. The federal government and individual states should track Title I funding more carefully and disaggregate the amount of funding that

is currently going to services during the summer months. The re-authorization of NCLB should include a more explicit focus on intervening during the summer months to prevent growth in the achievement gap. The paper also identifies other federal funding streams that could be leveraged and expanded to support this broader objective. Policymakers should look for opportunities within the ARRA and other sources of funding to expand and strengthen programs that deliver jobs, child care, and nutrition during the summer months. Federal and state agencies should provide stronger incentives and regulatory guidance to ensure that more of these funding streams are braided together at the local level.

This underscores the importance of our second major conclusion – policymakers at the state and local levels must explore and invest in new models of collaboration and coordination between and among public agencies and private entities that serve young people over the summer months. State and municipal leaders (including governors, mayors, city council members, and others) must play a much more forceful role in breaking down barriers that prevent access to more comprehensive, full-day summer program models. By working together, we believe public and private entities can both serve more young people and serve them with better, more comprehensive programs. At present, models of intra-agency communication, let alone collaboration, about what is available for young people and their families during the summer months, are anomalies rather than the norm.

Lastly, it is clear that more funding is necessary for direct service programs, data collection, and systems-level infrastructure. It is impossible to envision that school districts will embrace a new vision for summer school, or that out-of-school time providers can move from 9-month to 12-month contracts, without utilizing new local, state, and federal dollars to do so. Moreover, there is an urgent need for resources to be directed at building the capacity of state and local agencies to provide oversight and leadership of these efforts, particularly as they begin to take root. Without thoughtful, well-timed leadership and support, summer is likely to become just another short-lived fad, and not part of a more comprehensive vision for education reform in the United States. We believe the policy and funding context is favorable for that type of leadership and hope that the ideas we offer in this paper inspire more action and activity in that direction.

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## Appendix of Summer Learning Terms

**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA):** The recently passed federal stimulus bill, which included over \$100 billion for education related expenditures. Summer learning programs are an allowable use of funding for many ARRA funding streams.

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB):** Passed in 2001, NCLB is the landmark federal education law that provides most federal education funding for K-12 programs throughout the nation. While several funding streams in NCLB can be used for summer learning programs, there is no dedicated funding for summer programs.

**Title I, NCLB:** The largest program in NCLB, Title I is the largest and oldest federal education program, serving 12.5 million children in over 50,000 schools. Funds are targeted to students and schools with high percentages of low-income families. The overarching goal of Title I is to provide extra academic support to low-income students through a variety of strategies, including extended programs such as summer and afterschool

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC):** This federal education program supports the creation of community learning centers that provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

**Supplemental Education Services (SES):** Title I schools that do not meet adequate yearly progress for three years in a row must offer low-income students in the school the option to receive supplemental educational services (tutoring) from a state-approved provider.

**Summer Term Education for Upward Performance Act (STEP UP):** First ever federal legislation to focus exclusively on the summer months as a strategy to close the achievement gap and promote healthy youth development. While STEP UP has been authorized, no funds have been appropriated to implement the program.

**Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF):** TANF is a federal program that provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states funds and wide flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs. The assistance is time-limited and promotes work, responsibility and self-sufficiency.

**Child Care Development Fund (CCDF):** The federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) assists low-income families, families receiving temporary public assistance, and those transitioning from public assistance in obtaining child care so they can work or attend training/education. Subsidized child care services are available to eligible families through certificates (vouchers) or contracts with providers.

**Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG):** CCDBG is a federal program designed to support families by increasing the availability, affordability, and quality of child care in the United States. 75% of funds are dedicated to child care services, provided to eligible children on a sliding scale fee basis, either as a contracted service or through a certificate program and 25% of funds are dedicated to improve the quality of child care and to increase the availability of before-and after-school services, and early childhood development services.

**Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):** Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides funds to organizations sponsoring summer programs to serve nutritious meals to low-income children when school is out. In late 2007, Congress extended the Simplified Summer Food Program to include all states. This program eliminates complex accounting requirements, reduces paperwork and ensures all sponsors receive the maximum federal reimbursement. Summer food sponsors can feed children at numerous sites throughout the community such as schools, Parks and Rec programs, low-income housing complexes, or community parks and pools, essentially any place children gather during the summer months.

**Workforce Investment Act (WIA):** The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) provides federal funding for state and local officials to establish broad-based labor market systems using federal job training funds for adults, dislocated workers and youth. The law mandates coordination among a range of federal job training programs, including the Employment Service, adult education and literacy programs, welfare-to-work, vocational education and vocational rehabilitation. WIA's goal is to provide workforce development services to employers and workers through a universally accessible, information-driven, one-stop career center system.