

Status of our Youth During Summer



Summer Status of Youth For many children and youth, summer means family vacations, camping, or any other number of enriching activities. As for millions of other youth, when school comes to a close, their access to safe and academically-enriched environments diminishes and is replaced with lost opportunities and risk-taking behaviors. In fact, more than half of the achievement gap in ninth grade can be explained by summer learning loss that disproportionately affects our low-income students¹. Summer learning programs, however, are emerging as a key strategy to prevent summer learning loss².

What are summer learning programs?

As defined by in *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer*, summer learning programs are “safe, structured program(s) that provide a variety of activities designed to encourage learning and development in the summer months”².

Why are summer learning programs important?

Summer learning programs are beneficial to our young people for a number of reasons. These programs promote strong working relationships with school and community partners to fully support youth both academically and socially. Summer programs provide ample time to allow for the exploration and application of the regular school year content in a structured, yet cost-effective manner. Summer learning programs are in a unique position to provide hands-on, engaging activities that complement, *rather than replicate*, the school day learning while incorporating youth voice, inquiry, and family engagement. Studies now show that non-academic experiences during the



summer can support success during the school year, including higher grades and test scores².

Why are summer learning programs especially important to low income youth?

Summer learning programs provide a safe and engaging environment for all youth, but are especially beneficial in aiding ethnic minority and low-income students to narrow the achievement gap¹. In fact, ethnic minority and low-income children are more likely than others to be in a summer learning program, yet the unmet demand is great³.

Children without access to summer learning programs are at particular risk of losing academic, social, and emotional gains accrued during the school year. By increasing our investment in summer learning programs, we can better support our youth's learning.

National Summer Learning Program Statistics

From “America After 3PM Special Report on Summer”³

- **75% of America's school children are *not* participating in summer learning programs.**

- Approximately 14.3 million children do participate in summer learning programs. 43% of participants qualify for free/reduced price lunch.



- **There are many quality summer learning programs, but not nearly enough to keep pace with demand.**

- 56% of non-participating children (estimated 24 million) would be likely to participate, based on parent interest.
- 46% of those likely to participate are eligible for free/reduced price lunch.

- **While ethnic minority and low-income children are more likely than others to be in summer learning programs, the unmet demand is great.**

- 35% of African-American, 29% of Hispanic, and 27% percent of low-income children attended summer learning programs in 2008, compared to the national average of 25%.
- More than 3/4 African-American kids (77%) and at least 2/3 Hispanic (70%) and low income (67%) kids would likely enroll in a summer learning program, based on parent interest.

- **Parents overwhelmingly support summer learning programs, and there is even greater support among parents of minority and low-income students.**

- 8/10 parents (83%) support public funding for summer learning programs.
- 95% of African-American, 91% of Hispanic and 90% of low-income parent support public funding for summer learning programs.

1. Alexander, K., Entwistle, D., and Olson, L. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review*, 72, 167-180.

2. Miller, B.M. (2007). *The learning season: The untapped power of summer to advance student achievement*. Quincy, MA: Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

3. Afterschool Alliance. (2010). *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand*. Washington, DC.