



# NCASE Summer Learning Brief

## Why Summers Matter

**Summer is a time of great inequity for young people. Over the summer many young people and their families lose access to critical supports that keep them safe, healthy, and engaged in learning.**

The summer “opportunity gap” contributes to gaps in achievement that persist and widen over time, particularly for low-income students. This brief is intended to surface the critical issues related to summer for the school-age care community and suggest some promising practices for success and innovation. Throughout this brief, the story of the Esperanza Elementary Summer Youth Program is spotlighted as evidence of the importance of summer learning.

Summer learning is a key solution to closing academic and opportunity gaps that plague many communities across the country. Recent research from the RAND Corporation funded by The Wallace Foundation shows that high-quality summer learning programs can not only curb summer learning loss, they can even help boost student achievement. When children continue to learn during the summer, they are healthier, safer, and smarter, and their schools and communities are more successful.



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## Did You Know?

- ★ Research suggests that three to four consecutive summers of high-quality learning beginning in pre-kindergarten can get kids reading on grade level by third grade, making them four times more likely to graduate from high school.
- ★ Summer learning loss in the elementary school years alone accounts for at least half of the ninth-grade reading achievement gap.
- ★ High-quality summer learning programs have been shown to also improve school attachment, motivation, and relationships with adults and peers.
- ★ Only one in eight children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals access them in the summer months.

# Esperanza Elementary Summer Youth Program, Utah

Esperanza Elementary School, supported by a grant from the Department of Workforce Services Office of Child Care, provided Summer Youth Program services 4.5 hours a day, five days per week,



for six weeks to prevent summer learning loss among Esperanza Elementary students. Through continued funding, Esperanza will continue to provide the same program in the summer of 2016 and 2017.

The program provided reading intervention using the *Reading A-Z* curriculum, math instruction using the *Bridges in Mathematics* curriculum, hands-on science exploration, and recreation and enrichment activities. Students were

## Quality Counts! Summer Learning Program Quality and Improvement

Regular attendance in high-quality summer programs is associated with a range of positive academic and social development outcomes, including improved skills in literacy,<sup>2</sup> improved self-esteem and leadership skills.<sup>3</sup>

While summer learning programs have the potential to help close the achievement gap and provide valuable opportunities for children, not all summer programs are created equal. Research in afterschool has shown that program attendance alone is not

sufficient to make a difference for young people and that as many as half of existing programs show no positive youth outcomes.<sup>4</sup> It takes high-quality programming to make a lasting impact on children and youth.

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Among the defining characteristics of high-quality summer learning programs that RAND identifies are:

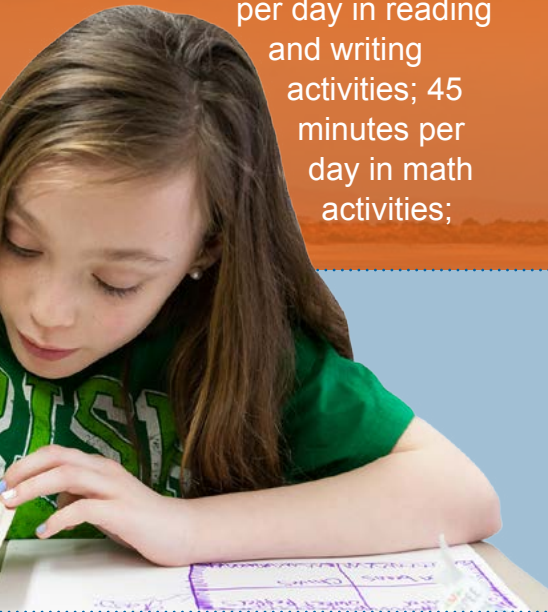
- ★ Highly-qualified and specially trained staff, along with early planning that engages partners with clearly delineated roles
- ★ Smaller class sizes, individualized instruction, and sufficient time on task (operating the program for at least five weeks, with three to four hours of academics per day)
- ★ Involving families and maximizing student attendance with firm enrollment deadlines,

Read more about high-quality summer learning programs at work at [summerlearning.org/summerexcellence](http://summerlearning.org/summerexcellence).





actively engaged 90 minutes per day in reading and writing activities; 45 minutes per day in math activities;



30 minutes per day in science activities; and 45 minutes per day in enrichment activities. Enrichment activities included recreation and physical activity, cultural activities in music and Mariachi, and the opportunity to learn and master playing chess.

Especially for English Language Learners (ELLs), who make up 59 percent of Esperanza's student body, participation in afterschool and summer learning designed specifically with their needs

in mind has been associated with improvements in academic performance and improved social and linguistic development.<sup>1</sup>

1. Hirsch, B. J. (2011). Learning and development in after-school programs. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(5), 66–69.

Garcia, E. E., & F Tellez, K., & Waxman, H. C. (2010). A review of research on effective community programs for English language learners. *The School Community Journal*, 20(1), 103–119.

Pray, L. (2012). Supporting English language learners in school and in afterschool and summer programs. In T. K. Peterson (Ed.), *Successes and Potential of 21st Century Community Learning Centers: Expanded Learning Opportunities, Partnerships, Afterschool and Summers Across America*. Flint, MI: Mott Foundation.

## Spotlight on Quality

In Esperanza Elementary's Summer Youth Program, 99 percent maintained or increased reading proficiency levels. Students' abilities in mathematics were also maintained and improved, as 82 percent of students maintained or increased math proficiency levels.



99%

maintained or increased reading proficiency levels

Students demonstrated increased awareness of the importance of physical activity and nutrition as 81 percent of students maintained or increased knowledge of physical activity and nutrition according to pre- and post-tests.

82%

of students maintained or increased math proficiency levels



The program also enjoyed excellent parent engagement outcomes with a higher than anticipated rate of parent participation in Summer Youth Program family activities, including National Summer Learning Day, ongoing parent volunteer opportunities, and the end-of-summer family celebration.



81%

maintained or increased knowledge of physical activity and nutrition


clear attendance policies, and electronic student records

- ★ Strategic use of partnerships
- ★ Using evidence-based, commercially available curricula, and standardizing its use across sites
- ★ Providing carefully planned, engaging enrichment activities

2. Chaplin, D., & Capizzano, J. (2006). *Impacts of a summer learning program: A random assignment study of Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL)*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute/Mathematica Policy Research.

3. Bialeschki, M.D., Henderson, K.A., & James, P.A. (2007). Camp experiences and developmental outcomes for youth. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 16, 769–788.

4 Granger, R., Durlak, J. A., Yohalem, N., & Reisner, E. (April, 2007). *Improving after-school program quality*. New York, NY: William T. Grant Foundation.



# Funding for Summer Learning and School-Age Care

**Given the demonstrated need for high-quality summer learning experiences and the impact such programs can have on promoting outcomes for children and youth, it is critical that public and private organizations understand available funding sources to provide greater access to quality programs.**

A major source of public funding for summer learning programs comes from the Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), which provides Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) support to states, territories, and Tribes across the U.S. to help offset the cost of child care for children in families of low income. These CCDF funds offer critical support to working families to provide access to high-quality child care year-round, including during the summer.

In 2014, Congress reauthorized the CCDBG Act for the first time since 1996, ushering in sweeping new changes to

health and safety, licensing, monitoring of license-exempt programs, consumer education, and other changes designed to increase safety and improve



quality of child care programs, including summer learning programs. In addition to the provisions included within the CCDBG Act, the December

2015 passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act through 2020) ensures significant investments in summer learning. This new bill maintains many important protections for low-income students, while giving states and districts greater flexibility to choose the education strategies that fit their needs. It has changed the funding landscape for out-of-school time and community-based programs. As a result, a [growing number of states have prioritized summer learning](#), which has led to increased support at the community level.

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**Learn more about summer learning funding at [summerlearning.org/summer-opportunity-project](https://summerlearning.org/summer-opportunity-project).**



# Summer Learning Resources

## Program Quality and Improvement Resources

[Making Summer Count: How Programs Can Boost Children's Learning](#)

[Summer Starts in September Planning Timeline](#)

[Summer Learning Program Quality Intervention](#)

[Tip Sheets for Parents](#)

## Policy and Funding Resources

[Recommendation for Policymakers and Funders](#)

[2016 Funding Resource Guide](#)

[Summer Learning Research-in-Brief Series](#)

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# Summer Learning Funding at Work

Esperanza Elementary's Summer Youth Program is currently operating with Department of Workforce Services Office of Child Care grant funds and supplemental

income generated by the school funding formula from the Utah State Office of Education, which cover facilities costs and a portion of the cost of program management and administration.

Esperanza Elementary is actively seeking other funding sources to expand services and provide long-term sustainable revenue for the Summer Youth Program through a variety of funding streams. This will ideally be a combination of low-cost sliding scale fees; corporate, public, and private foundation funds; and government formula funding and grants.



# How to Create a Successful Strategy for Accessing Federal Funds for Summer Learning

Several key strategies can help summer learning providers improve their chances of effectively accessing federal funding:

- ★ Understand the landscape for federal programs, including how and when the grants are funded, who is eligible to receive the funds, and the purpose or goals for the funding.
- ★ Partner with Child Care and Development Fund lead agencies to support summer learning programs.
- ★ Plan early to best synchronize timing for grant awards, school district budget cycles, and high-quality summer learning. Ongoing research from the RAND Corporation has found that program leaders who began planning in January were able to run programs more smoothly, with less disruption to academic instruction.
- ★ Continually work to build partnerships so that summer learning programs can access funding even if they do not directly receive funds through formulas, or cannot apply directly for competitive grant funds.
- ★ Collect, analyze, and share strong outcome data to prove that summer learning programs are successful.
- ★ Make communities, schools, and parents aware of summer programs and their benefits in order to build support and advocacy.

## Partnerships at Work

Esperanza Elementary developed several key partnerships that provided volunteer and in-kind donations over the summer. These partnerships were cultivated through cooperation between school administration and the Summer Youth Program staff:

Utah State University provided valuable in-kind resources in personnel, materials, and curriculum for their Summer Finance Camp and Summer Service Learning: Sharing Is Caring. The University's Department of Art and Art History also provided volunteer art teaching

students, as well as curriculum and guidance in implementing 4-H curriculum in health, nutrition, and physical fitness.

A partnership with the local library made it possible for summer program students to learn about the many library resources available to them and to participate in summer library programs.

