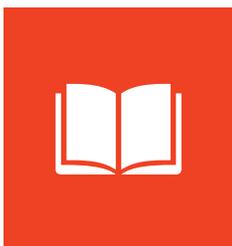
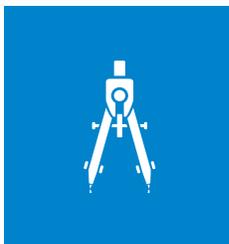
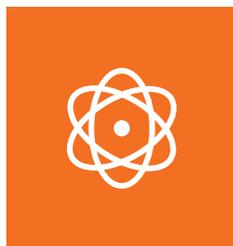


# Accelerating Achievement Through **SUMMER LEARNING**



the David & Lucile Packard  
FOUNDATION



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## About this Report

This report is designed as a resource for program providers, education leaders, policymakers, and funders who are making important decisions about whether and how to strengthen and expand summer learning programs as a way to accelerate student achievement. In addition to 13 case studies of diverse program models, this report includes a look at key research on what works in summer learning and an overview of supportive state policies. While the case studies focus on specific providers, the key themes and success factors are transferable to many settings and programs. The featured program goals of third-grade reading proficiency, successful middle school transitions, college and career readiness, and teacher training and retention are some of the most critical underpinnings of efforts to improve K-12 education today.

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) would like to thank the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for their support of this publication and for their leadership in expanding access to high-quality summer learning programs in California through the Summer Matters Campaign. To learn more about Summer Matters, visit [www.summermatters2you.net](http://www.summermatters2you.net).

## About the National Summer Learning Association

The National Summer Learning Association is the only national nonprofit exclusively focused on closing the achievement gap by increasing access to high-quality summer learning opportunities. NSLA recognizes and disseminates what works, offers expertise and support for programs and communities, and convenes leaders to advocate for summer learning as a solution for equity and excellence in education. NSLA's work is driven by the belief that all children and youth deserve high-quality summer learning experiences that will help them succeed in college, career, and life. For more information, visit [www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org).

# Summer Learning Accelerates Key Education Priorities

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*Summer learning is no longer an afterthought in public education policymaking, and for good reason.*

Expanded learning opportunities (before school, afterschool and summer), extended learning time (school day and school year), and year-round or “balanced” calendars are emerging across the country as key strategies in accelerating student achievement, closing the achievement gap and promoting 21st Century skill development. Consider these examples of state action that improves access to high-quality summer learning programs:

## **ARKANSAS: Positive Youth Development Grant Program**

Signed into law in 2011, the Positive Youth Development Grant Program is a competitive grant for afterschool and summer learning programs that prioritizes high-need schools and school-community partnerships and requires matching funds. The program was appropriated \$5M in funding in 2014.

## **CALIFORNIA: Expanded Learning Enhances Student Success**

Signed into law in 2014, this program focuses existing resources on summer and year-round programs; requires data-driven local quality improvement plans; leverages state data systems to track outcomes; and streamlines program administration. Implementation is supported by new quality standards from the California Afterschool Network.

## **NEW MEXICO: K-3 Plus**

During the 2012 legislative session, K-3 Plus was converted from a six-year pilot into a program of the Public Education Department. K-3 Plus provides funding for additional educational time for disadvantaged students in kindergarten through third grade by extending the school-year by at least 25 instructional days. The program is administered in schools with 80 percent or more of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or with a D or F grade the previous year. The program was appropriated more than \$21M in funding in 2014.

## **WYOMING: Wyoming Bridges**

Since 2004, Wyoming Bridges has prioritized about \$1,000 in supplemental per-student funding for summer learning programs for academically at-risk students. Forty seven of 48 districts participate in the K-12 program and measure their effectiveness through standard assessments. The program has narrowed the achievement gap in math and reading in most grade levels since 2008 and serves about 10 percent of students in each district. The program was appropriated \$16.5M in funding in 2014.

## **MASSACHUSETTS: After-School and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) Quality Enhancement Grant Program**

Since 2011, the ASOST program has provided grants to enhance afterschool and summer learning programs in areas such as professional development and STEM; address barriers to participation and expand summer learning programs specifically. The program was appropriated \$1.7M in 2014.

## Opportunities for Further Action

Summer learning action in states continues to build, and several states are weighing new programs designed to expand access and quality.

### **Texas House Bill 742**

This 2013 bill was signed into law, creating a statewide summer learning competitive grant program; however, the program did not receive appropriations in the last session. The program pairs new teachers with veteran teachers to deliver summer learning program in the state’s neediest districts for students who are behind in reading and math.

### **Oregon House Bill 2650**

The purpose of House Bill 2650 is to provide grants to keep up to 130 school libraries open in the summer. Eligibility is based on the number of students who qualify for the free and reduced-price lunch program and the school’s reading scores. The proposed bill will create a framework to increase access to summer meal programs, summer learning programs, and expanded learning opportunities and

is based on the successful two-year pilot of the SL3 program, led by OregonASK. Partners include the Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Volunteers, Child Nutrition Programs, Oregon State Library, and Oregon School Library Association.

Much of the summer learning action in states like Rhode Island, California, Texas, and Massachusetts has been generated through statewide expanded learning task forces. These representative groups hear testimony and recommendations from expanded learning providers and other experts before making recommendations to state lawmakers. Washington is the most recent state to pass legislation forming such a task force, and New Jersey lawmakers are considering similar legislation this session.

## District Investments in Summer Learning

These state-level efforts are creating opportunities to test a variety of strategies designed to improve access to high-quality summer learning opportunities for the young people who need them most. States are enhancing existing programs, pilot-testing new models of drop-in and enrollment-based programs, and creating better systems for tracking and improving participation and quality.

Similarly, many major school districts are turning to the summer months to accelerate the goals they are hard-pressed to achieve during the school year. Dozens of large urban school districts have joined NSLA's New Vision for Summer School Network over the past six years as a means to learn from their peers and other experts on how to maximize the summer months. These districts are partnering with community-based organizations (CBO) and using a combination of Title I, General Funds, 21st Century Community Learning Centers and private funding to offer innovative, full-day programs in the summer. Learn more at [www.summerlearning.org/nvss](http://www.summerlearning.org/nvss).

## A Focus on Summer Learning Programs that Work

As education decision-making continues to devolve to states and districts, we hope this publication will be a resource to education leaders and policymakers who are deciding whether and how to allocate expanded learning resources. *Accelerating Achievement* profiles more than a dozen diverse programs that are accelerating one or more key education priorities, including third-grade reading proficiency, middle school transitions, college and career readiness, and teacher training and retention.

These priorities are rooted in a strong evidence base.

### Summer learning programs can erase early reading deficits

More than 80 percent of low-income youth in this country are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade, making them more than four times as likely to drop out of high school as their peers to who reach this critical benchmark<sup>1</sup>. K-3 summer learning programs, such as Y Readers\* featured in this report, have been shown not only to mitigate summer learning losses in reading in the early grades, but to accelerate skill development to get young people up to grade level by third grade.

### The summers before and after middle school are some of the most critical transitions in a young person's academic career

A large body of research confirms that the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school<sup>2</sup>. Students who make school transitions in the sixth grade are absent more often than those who remain in one school through eighth grade and are more likely to drop out by tenth grade<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, the transition from eighth to ninth grade is one of the most pivotal moments in a student's education, and one of the most treacherous. In fact, a ninth grade student is three to five times more likely to fail a class than students in any other grade<sup>4</sup>. Students participating in programs like Higher Achievement\* navigate those transitions with the extra support of adults and peers and are more likely to improve or maintain their grades and graduate from high school on time.

### High-quality summer learning programs level the college and career playing field

Alarming data on the skilled workforce pipeline and need for remedial coursework in two- and four-year colleges have created a national sense of urgency around work-embedded learning, apprenticeships and college preparation programs, particularly for first-generation attenders. Students who participate in NJ LEEP\* in Newark, New Jersey, may begin the program in ninth grade with little knowledge of skilled careers and low SAT scores, but they finish with a strong professional network, experience with rigorous coursework, SAT scores that outpace the state, and a 100 percent rate of college matriculation.

### Pre-service and in-service teachers want to make the most of their summers

Quality teaching is consistently linked to successfully closing achievement gaps, but the United States is facing a collapse of the teaching pipeline from both ends. With baby-boom teachers flooding into retirement, most teachers today have between one and two years of

experience. Attrition rates of first-year teachers have increased by a third in the last two decades, and between 40 and 50 percent of teachers leave within the first five years of entering the profession. Summer learning programs like Aim High\* are an increasingly likely place to find the kinds of pipelines into and through the teaching profession that are working. Offering training, mentorship, leadership, and ownership of their work, community-based programs like Aim High might be the best place to look for answers to this nationwide crisis.

\*In addition to the case studies in this publication, learn more about these Excellence in Summer Learning Award-winning programs and 30 others at [www.summerlearning.org/excellence](http://www.summerlearning.org/excellence).

## What is “High-Quality” Summer Learning, and How Can it Accelerate Student Achievement?

This publication is comprised of case studies that demonstrate how high-quality summer learning programs address a variety of education objectives and deliver strong outcomes. These case studies present a clear picture of what “high-quality” summer learning looks like and, perhaps most importantly, how it accelerates student achievement.

A growing body of research also supports the notion that high-quality summer learning programs help students succeed and sheds light on what it takes to do so. The RAND Corporation’s multi-year series of reports, commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, is one of the most comprehensive investigations of how summer programs boost young people’s learning<sup>5</sup>. The 2011 report, *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning*, uses literature reviews, interviews with providers, and site visits in five cities to come to these conclusions:

- Summer learning loss, which is disproportionate and cumulative, contributes substantially to the achievement gap.
- Students who attend summer programs have better outcomes than similar peers who do not attend these programs.
- Strategies for maximizing quality, enrollment, and attendance are critical to achieving benefits.
- Partnerships can strengthen summer learning programs.
- Developing and sustaining district-based voluntary summer learning programs is challenging but feasible.

RAND’s 2013 report, *Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success*, builds on the 2011 report and focuses on evaluations of summer programs in six urban districts—Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Duval County, Florida (Jacksonville), Pittsburgh, and Rochester, New York—committed to serving a significant number of at-risk students.

Among the defining characteristics of high-quality summer learning programs that RAND identified 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, clear attendance policies, and electronic student records;
- Strategic use of partnerships;
- Using evidence-based, commercially available curricula, and standardizing its use across sites; and
- Providing carefully planned, engaging enrichment activities.

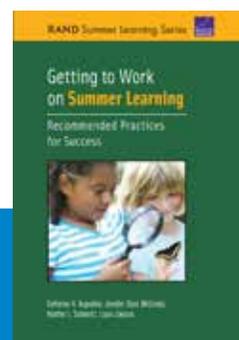
<sup>1</sup>The Annie E. Casey Foundation, “Double Jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation,” Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2010.

<sup>2</sup>ACT, “The Forgotten Middle,” 2008. Iowa City, IA.

<sup>3</sup>Sparks, S. D., “Learning Declines Linked to Moving to Middle School,” *Education Week*, November 28, 2011.

<sup>4</sup>Southern Regional Educational Board, “Opening Doors to the Future: Preparing Low-achieving Middle Grades Students to Succeed in High School,” 2002.

<sup>5</sup>McCombs, Jennifer Sloan, Catherine H. Augustine, Heather Lee Schwartz, Susan J. Bodilly, Brian McInnis, Dahlia S. Lichter, and Amanda Brown Cross, *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, MG-1120-WF, 2011. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG1120.html>. Augustine, Catherine H., Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Heather L. Schwartz, and Laura Zakaras, *Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2013. [http://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR366.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR366.html).



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# Aim High

## Teacher Training and Retention

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA (and surrounding areas)



Photos left to right: 1) Students exploring what DNA looks like. 2) Our 3rd successful summer at our Tahoe/Truckee campus. 3) Students research different colleges in Issues and Choices Class. 4) Aim High hires a diverse teaching corp.

### THE PROGRAM

Aim High has been changing the lives of middle school students from under-resourced neighborhoods since 1986. Its academic and enriching summer program builds on what educators recognize and studies confirm: that intervention during the middle school years correlates strongly with future success. A tuition-free, award-winning program, Aim High supports more than 1,700 students and employs 400 teachers at 15 locations in Northern California.

Aim High's summer program provides participants with a positive, supportive classroom experience that helps low-income students expand their horizons and develop a love of learning, self-esteem, and confidence. These gains, in turn, prepare students for a successful transition to high school, college, and adulthood.

Aim High also functions as a teaching laboratory for experienced and novice educators, high school students, and college interns committed to careers in teaching. Through its "Pathways to Teaching" initiative, the program strives to increase both the number and diversity of people who enter the teaching profession; to nurture a love of teaching and boost classroom confidence and skills; and to provide teachers with leadership opportunities—all in a highly supportive environment. The program's team teaching model cultivates a collaborative, innovative project-based approach to teaching and learning, and gives teachers the autonomy to revise the curriculum based on their own interests and the needs of students. By employing diverse, young educators, Aim High improves student outcomes and performance, and creates a pathway to teaching for the next generation of educators of color.

### Outcomes and Results

Aim High's "Pathways to Teaching" program seeks to reverse high teacher turnover rates and the shortage of teachers of color in the Bay Area. Across the country, the average teacher turnover is 17 percent, and in urban school districts specifically—Aim High's target communities—the number jumps to 20 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future offers even starker numbers, estimating that one-third of all new teachers leaves after three years, and 46 percent are gone within five years.

In addition, studies show that students of color do better on a variety of academic outcomes if they're taught by teachers of color, most notably in the STEM disciplines (1, 2). Yet only 44 percent of teachers in the San Francisco Unified School District are teachers of color, compared to the district's 88-percent minority student population. In San Mateo County, 75 percent of teachers are white, while 71 percent of the students are of color (3).

In contrast, Aim High's math and science educators in the summer of 2014 were 74 percent of color and 48 percent bilingual, while students were 97 percent of color and 74 percent bilingual. Across all content areas that same summer, Aim High employed:

- 153 lead/master teachers
  - 80 had a teaching credential.
  - 40 are in the process of completing a credential program.
  - 60 percent were teachers of color.
  - 60 percent had fewer than 3 years of teaching experience.

- 110 college students as teaching interns
  - 80 percent were youth of color.
  - 65 percent said that because of Aim High they are considering becoming a teacher.
- 96 high school students as teaching assistants
  - 60 percent were Aim High graduates.
  - 85 percent were youth of color.
  - 80 percent of them said that Aim High was their first professional experience.

Among those educators enrolled in a credential program:

- 92 percent reported that their site leadership gave them valuable feedback about their teaching.
- 92 percent reported that their site leadership was accessible when they needed support with their teaching.
- 100 percent said they believed Aim High would make them a better teacher during the academic year.

Fifty-seven percent of Aim High's teachers who are not professional educators reported that because of Aim High, they now want to pursue a teaching career.

*"Our teacher candidates spend their first year in BATTI as full-time paid assistant teachers in independent schools, sometimes under the watchful gaze of an overly protective veteran mentor teacher. Thus the chance to be an Aim High lead teacher and work with bright, motivated public middle schoolers becomes a refreshing opportunity to try out new techniques and teach new subjects."*

BOB HOUGHTELLING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
BAY AREA TEACHER TRAINING INITIATIVE

### Costs

Aim High spent \$960,000 to employ 383 educators in 2014, and an additional \$125,000 to provide them with training, professional development, and ongoing support from its director of academics and a dozen academic and curriculum coaches. The teacher development budget has grown by approximately 20 percent from 2013 to 2014. While some of these funds come from targeted teacher development support, most come from the general operating budget.

### How It Began

Teachers Alec Lee and Eleanor McBride co-founded Aim High in 1986, with the idea of giving urban middle school students a summer of high quality learning in an environment that promoted education as a way to unlock the future. They chose to focus on middle school students because research pointed to the time between elementary school and high school as a critical juncture for keeping at-risk students engaged in their education, a moment when a little intervention could go a long way in helping students graduate from high school.

Over the past 30 summers, Aim High has expanded from one campus to 14, and from 50 students and 12 teachers to more than 1,900 students and 450 teachers. The program has become a pipeline for developing young teachers, thanks in part to a strong partnership with the Bay Area Teacher Training Institute (BATTI) and Teach Tomorrow in Oakland (TTO). In addition, many of Aim High's graduates continue to work as teaching assistants and interns during their high school and college years, often working alongside the very teachers who inspired them while they were in the program.

### Partnerships and Key Players

Aim High's success depends on its long-term relationships with school districts and independent and charter schools. While these partnerships ensure that the program provides appropriately targeted support to students, they also guarantee that the program's teacher professional development efforts are relevant and aligned with area schools. Furthermore, Aim High's relationships with dozens of programmatic and other community partners support its project-based, experiential curriculum by engaging students and training teachers in innovative methods, while its partnerships with BATTI and TTO provide classroom experience, mentoring, and other professional development resources to aspiring teachers.

### Replication Potential

High-quality summer learning programs generally offer both new and experienced teachers opportunities to develop skills and tools in a supportive atmosphere with less pressure than the school year. Partnerships with schools of education and teacher training initiatives like BATTI and TTO can furnish summer programs with enthusiastic staff members who are eager to share their passion for learning with students. The challenge is to identify programs that recognize the value of summer as an opportunity for teacher professional development and to build working relationships that address the objectives of all partners. Because professional development is basically integral to summer teaching, its cost can largely be incorporated in staffing line items to ease the budget burden.

Citations: 1) [http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/11/pdf/teacher\\_diversity.pdf](http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/11/pdf/teacher_diversity.pdf). 2) <http://stemwire.org/2013/05/22/the-paradox-of-minority-teacher-recruitment/>. 3) California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Office (CBEDS, 1/11/13).