

Overview

Summer offers member programs the unique opportunity to build stronger connections with students and to provide them with exposure to new opportunities. Through providing high-quality summer programming, member programs address the lack of affordable summer programs traditionally available in low-income communities, help prevent summer learning loss, keep participants' physical activity levels high, and enable participants' continued growth as scholars, athletes, and individuals.

Dosage

SEA requires that programs engage at least 70% of their students during the summer for a minimum of 20 days, and recommends that programming take place for a minimum of 4 hours day. Academic, athletic, professional or other enriching summer experiences not directly run by the program count toward a student's total. Programs should offer their own summer programming as well as connect their students to high-quality opportunities provided by external organizations such as overnight camps, squash camps, and summer learning programs.

According to [*Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*](#)¹, there is a clear link between high-quality summer program dosage and students' achievement outcomes. Recommendations for strong summer programs point to the need for a variety of engaging opportunities for students, not simply "summer school" (see recommendations below). There are various recommendations for the appropriate duration of summer programs, ranging from 80 hours to 360 hours (360 hours translate to nine hours a day, five days a week, for eight weeks).

Internal Programming

Without the time constraints present during the school year, SEA programs can be creative in their approach to their summer programming, focusing on a mixture of squash, health and wellness, academic enrichment, community service, and exposure to new opportunities and activities through field trips and guest speakers.

A variety of research has demonstrated that the following best practices contribute to strong summer learning programs.

¹ Sloan McCombs, J., Augustine, C.H., Schwartz, H.L., Bodilly, S.J., Mcinnis, B., Lichter, D.S., Brown Cross, E. (2011). Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Ca-n-Boost-Childrens-Learning.pdf>

- Have highly-qualified and trained staff
- Offer small group and individualized instruction
- Provide carefully planned and engaging enrichment activities
- Integrate academic, physical, recreational, and cultural enrichment activities
- Maximize student attendance with clear attendance policies and fun activities
- Involve families by getting their buy-in, keeping them informed, and encouraging them to engage with their children in the program and/or at home.
- Make the program affordable and easily accessible
- Promote positive relationships with caring adults and role models
- Intervene more intensively with at-risk students

External Opportunities

SEA programs should look for opportunities to connect students to high-quality opportunities provided by other organizations. Exposure to these opportunities helps expand students' horizons, teaches new skills, and increases students' sense of independence. Overnight programs that push students to overcome challenges and expose them to a diverse set of peers can be especially impactful in helping students develop the skills they will need later in life as they acclimate to college.

Member programs should consider the following as they connect students to external opportunities.

- Have a budget set aside for financially supporting summer opportunities for students
- Research, connect, and develop partnerships with summer program partners
- Guide and support students in submitting applications to summer programs
- Ensure that families are aware, supportive of, and committed to the student's participation in external programs, including financial and date commitments
- Ensure that students have a transportation plan for getting to/from the opportunity safely
- Check in with students while they are participating in the program to ensure they are doing well and help troubleshoot any issues or concerns

Research

In thinking about the importance of providing high-quality summer opportunities to students, consider the following points from [*Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children and Youth*](#)².

² Terzian, M., Anderson Moore, K., Hamilton, K. (2009, July). Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children and Youth. Retrieved from

- ❑ Parents with limited resources often cannot afford to send their children to summer programs. Children with a high socioeconomic status background were about 8 times more likely to participate in summer programs than children with a low socioeconomic status background (42.5 percent versus 5.4 percent).³
- ❑ Low-cost, high-quality summer learning programs are an important component to narrowing the academic gaps between low- and higher-income students. About two-thirds of the ninth-grade academic achievement gap between economically disadvantaged and advantaged teens can be explained by summer learning loss during the elementary school years.⁴
- ❑ Summer learning programs have been shown to improve the educational and career development outcomes of economically disadvantaged students.
- ❑ Summer programs have also been shown to increase students' positive identity, social skills, physical and thinking skills, and positive values and spirituality.

Additional Resources

- ❑ [Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children and Youth: A White Paper for the Wallace Foundation](#) - Child Trends and the Wallace Foundation
- ❑ [Making Summer Count: How Programs Can Boost Children's Learning](#) - Rand Education and the Wallace Foundation
- ❑ [Why Summer Matters](#) - The National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment
- ❑ [Summer Starts in September: A Comprehensive Planning Guide for Summer Learning Programs](#) - The National Summer Learning Association

<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/effective-and-promising-summer-learning-programs.pdf>.

³ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). ECLS-K Longitudinal Kindergarten-Third Grade Public-Use Data File (CD-ROM). (NCES 2004-089). Washington, DC: Author.

⁴ Alexander, K. L., Entwisle D. R., & Olson L. S. (2007b). Summer learning and its implications: Insights from the Beginning School Study. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 114, 11-32.