How Did You Spend Your Summer Vacation?
What Public Policies Do (and Don't Do) to Support Summer Learning Opportunities for All Youth

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Executive Summary

Despite robust research literature on the need for and benefits of summer learning programs, surprisingly few federal policies target summer specifically as a time to support healthy youth development and advance learning. Providing appropriate childcare and enriching activities during the summer has traditionally been viewed as the private responsibility of families. While this arrangement may be sufficient for wealthier children, who typically access a wide variety of resources that help them grow over the summer, poorer families often struggle to access such basic resources as healthy meals and safe, appropriate childcare.

This review analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of six policy areas that either directly or indirectly support summer learning opportunities for young people in kindergarten through twelfth grades, focusing primarily on federal policies. It suggests the need for a) better policy coordination through strong intermediary organizations, b) comprehensive programming that meets the diverse needs of youth and families, and c) greater emphasis on enrichment programming for disadvantaged children that mirrors the types of experiences available to middle- and upper-class youth.

Imagine it's the first day of school. You're a sixth grade student. You walk into a new classroom in a new school, meet the teacher, greet old friends, and get into a new routine, perhaps very different from what you did during summer break. As students settle into their seats, the teacher writes a question on the board and asks you to write in your journal: "How did you spend your summer vacation?"

Many Americans have an idyllic image of summer as a carefree, happy time when "kids can be kids," enjoying such experiences as summer camp; time with family; vacations; and trips to museums, parks, and libraries. While this picture holds true for wealthier kids, summer break looks very different for poorer children. Wealthier children and youth typically access a wide variety of resources that help them grow both academically and developmentally over the summer, but poorer children often struggle to access basic needs such as healthy meals and medical care. Summer is thus a time when the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

Some of this difference is due to public policy. Although policies guarantee that all children and youth have access to public education and school-based resources from September to June, guaranteed access to summer resources is rare. This paper analyzes the current landscape of public policies that directly or indirectly support summer learning opportunities for young people in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Based on this review, we draw several conclusions.

First, policies supporting summer learning opportunities are scarce. Despite a clear need for summer programs, particularly for disadvantaged children and youth, surprisingly few policies target summer specifically as a time to advance learning, support healthy development, and keep kids safe while the school doors are closed.

Second, current policies tend to conceive of summer programs narrowly as falling into one of six domains, from education or child care to delinquency prevention. Policies do not necessarily encourage coordination or collaboration among programs across these domains, nor do they match programmatic realities. Many summer programs have broad goals that do not neatly fit into any one of the six policy domains. A summer program provider that wants to sustain itself must be savvy enough to navigate across the policy domains and combine funding streams to support its activities.

Third, private philanthropy plays a larger role in summer programming than in afterschool program-

ming. For nearly every policy area we examined, public funds are more likely to support afterschool than summer programming. One solution many local communities have devised to help programs navigate the policy and funding arena is to create an intermediary organization. Such organizations help drive the policy agenda, streamline funding opportunities, facilitate

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networking among providers, and provide training and technical assistance. Public policy that effectively supports the growing field of summer programming has yet to be developed.

While this paper examines only public policies supporting summer learning opportunities, it appears, on the surface, that private money funds the majority of summer experiences available to children and youth. Our review suggests that middle- and upper-income youth participate more in enrichment opportunities and camps paid for by family contributions, while lower-income youth tend to participate in summer school or summer programming that is focused on academic remediation rather than on enrichment. In those limited instances where enriching summer activities like those available to children from wealthier families are provided to disadvantaged children, funding comes primarily private fundraising efforts and foundations rather than from public monies.

In order for summer program providers to meet the full scope of youth and family needs, we argue for:

- A more coordinated approach to public funding and policy development and implementation at the local, state, and national levels
- Explicit language drawing attention to summer as a critical time for young people's learning and development
- Greater emphasis on programming for disadvantaged children that mirrors the types of experiences available to middle- and upper-income youth

The findings of our review offer insight into new policy directions that would result in sustainable and equitable expansion of summer learning opportunities for all young people.

THE SUMMER LEARNING GAP

Why should we care about what kids do during summer break? Since 1906, numerous studies have analyzed the impact of summer break on student learning. A meta-analysis of 29 such studies found that all students, regardless of income level or race, generally score lower on standardized math tests at the end of the summer than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). Students generally suffer the greatest losses in factual and procedural knowledge, including an average setback of more than two months of grade-level equivalency in computation skills (Cooper, et al., 1996).

Summer learning loss in reading, however, is more acute among low-income students. While middle- and upper- income children tend to stagnate or make slight advances in reading performance during the summer, low-income children experience an average loss in reading achievement of over two months (Cooper, et al., 1996). The differences in summer learning losses are often rooted in family and community influences and access to resources. Summer learning losses in reading are a main cause of the widening achievement gap in reading between lower- and higher-income youth; in fact, recent research shows that summer learning differences at an early age substantially account for achievement-related differences later in students' lives, such as whether they complete high school and attend a four-year college (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2006; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997; Heyns, 1978).

In addition to these academic setbacks, many young people face a broader set of risks due to lack of adequate adult supervision during the summer. Young people who are unsupervised during out-of-school time are more likely than those who benefit from constructive activities supervised by responsible adults to use alcohol, drugs, or tobacco; to engage in criminal or other high-risk behaviors; to receive poor grades; and to drop out of school (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1994; Newman, Fox, Flynn, & Christeson, 2000). Researchers examining childhood obesity among kindergarten and first-grade children found that growth in body mass index is faster during summer vacation than during the school year, especially among children who are African American or Hispanic and already overweight (von Hippel, Powell, Downey, & Rowland, 2006). This finding suggests that summer experiences that provide children with nutritional meals and opportu-

nities for physical activity could help reduce unhealthy weight gain.

Another concern is access to quality programs and childcare. In a public opinion survey conducted by Public Agenda, parents, particularly low-income parents, consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to find quality programming and care for their children. Fifty-eight percent of parents say summer is the hardest time to make sure their children have things to do, followed by 14 percent for afterschool hours and 13 percent for the weekend (Duffett, Johnson, Farkas, King, & Ott, 2004).

How Summer Programs Help

The positive impact of summer learning programs is as well documented as is the need for such programs. A meta-analysis of 93 summer school program evaluations provided convincing evidence that summer programs have a positive impact on the knowledge and skills of participants (Cooper, Valentine, Charlton, & Nelson, 2003). Studies have also shown that the most beneficial programs are comprehensive ones that holistically address children's needs (Halpern, 2005). Such programs not only boost student achievement but also positively affect self-esteem and confidence; participants show important gains in safety, discipline, attendance, and avoidance of risky behaviors (Afterschool Alliance, 2007; Philliber Research Associates, 2005). Afterschool programs that contributed most significantly to participants' academic performance were those that focused not on homework help and academic content, but rather on children's developmental outcomes, relationship- and skill-building experiences, and access to a wide variety of enrichment activities (Birmingham, Pechman, Russell, & Mielke, 2005). Well-designed summer programs increase achievement, help keep children safe and healthy, increase connections to the workforce and community service, increase motivation for and engagement in learning, and develop and nurture new skills and talents (Borman & Dowling, 2006; Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006; Forum for Youth Investment, 2004; Miller, 2003; Philliber Research Associates, 2005).

When examining academic achievement over the summer in particular, two randomized studies of summer programs are worth mentioning. A 2006 study by the Urban Institute and Mathematica found that elementary students attending the BELL (Building

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Educated Leaders for Life) summer learning program showed improved reading performance and increased interest in reading. Participating students improved their reading skills by approximately one month of grade equivalency; they also took part in more academic activities, read more books, and were more encouraged by their parents to read (Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006). Similarly, findings from a randomized three-year longitudinal study of the Teach Baltimore Summer Academy Program suggested that students returned to school having gained close to one-half year in reading comprehension and vocabulary after at least two summers of regular attendance (Borman & Dowling, 2006).

Time to Address Summer Program Policies

If the need for and impact of high-quality summer learning opportunities is so unequivocal, we would

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expect public policy to address summer programming in a fairly comprehensive way. What are the strengths and limitations of current local, state, and national policies that respond to the research on summer learning

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loss and the significant needs of children and families during the summer?

In the past decade, there has been tremendous growth in federal support for out-of-school-time programming. In fiscal year 2006, Congress appropriated over $981 million for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, up from $453 million in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 also includes a major emphasis on closing the achievement gap through in-school and out-of-school interventions.

There is also evidence that the field of summer programming is growing. Estimates suggest that the number of public schools offering summer programs has doubled over the past 25 years (Borman, 2001). The total number of children attending public schools during the summer is estimated to be five million, or close to ten percent of public school children (Gold, 2002). Evidence about participation of children in summer programs run by other public agencies such as recreation departments is difficult to find, as are statistics about the growth of nonprofit and for-profit summer programs. However, the American Camp Association estimates that the number of day camps has increased by 90 percent over the last twenty years and that more than 11 million children currently attend day and resident camps each summer (Sundius, in press).

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Our analysis focused primarily on federal policies that are used to support summer programming for children and youth from kindergarten through twelfth grades. In some cases, as information was available, we went deeper into investigating how federal policies were communicated and implemented at the state and local levels.

We defined a *summer program* as any academic, enrichment, early childhood, recreational, youth development, or workforce development program operated during the summer by schools, camps, community- and faith-based programs, and government agencies. This definition guided our policy search by providing parameters. For example, what types of policies provide young people with workforce development or enrichment experiences?

We defined *public policy* as the laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning out-of-school time in general and summer opportunities in particular (Kilpatrick, 2000). We examined the research literature, actual pieces of legislation, and testimonials provided by programs to better understand the purposes of each policy and how each policy was implemented in practice. In all, we examined over 80 sources and analyzed nearly 40 policies. We also reviewed nearly 50 summer learning program models and interviewed staff from four organizations

that received Excellence in Summer Learning Awards in 2006 from our organization, the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University. While we certainly did not examine every policy that could be used to support summer programs, we selected policies based on the following criteria:

- Is the policy or funding source cited frequently in the literature or in interviews with program providers as a major source of funding for summer programming?
- Are the words *summer*, *summer learning loss*, or *summer program* explicitly used in the legislation?
- Does the policy support a major emphasis of summer programming, such as enrichment, academic achievement, childcare, or crime prevention?

If the policy met one of these three criteria, we included it in this analysis.

At the beginning of the study, we anticipated encountering difficulties in identifying federal policies that focused on summer programming or summer learning loss in particular. With a few notable exceptions, our hypothesis was correct. We found few examples of public policies that explicitly supported summer programs, and fewer yet that recognized summer learning loss or the summer resources gap. In some cases, summer learning loss was mentioned in relationship to some other issue, such as the need for extended time for learning. Surprisingly few of the education policies we examined actually addressed key findings of the research literature on summer learning loss. We also found little emphasis on the need to provide *learning* opportunities in the summer-related policies, with the exception of those that were specifically focused on education.

SURVEYING THE SUMMER POLICY LANDSCAPE

Based on our review, we grouped the policies we examined into six general categories or domains according to their primary purpose:

- Education
- Childcare and development
- Health and nutrition
- Employment development and service learning
- Delinquency prevention
- Informal and cultural learning

We chose these categories because they seemed to represent the full spectrum of types of programs available to youth over the summer. The policies typically fit

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very easily into one category without crossing purposes with another. Even though many summer program providers address several or all of the six categories, our review revealed a lack of coordination and comprehensiveness in the design and implementation of policies supporting summer programs.

The following sections provide details of the results of our analysis of the six domains. Each section ends with our recommendations of ways in which that domain's policies could be revised to better meet the needs of the children most in need—though finally our conclusion is that the very existence of these rigid categories is part of the problem with current policies affecting summer programming.

Education

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. In some cases, the only option available to low-income youth is remedial summer school—whether or not the children require remediation.

In this section, we examine the following policies:

- The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), with a particular emphasis on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and the Supplemental Educational Services Provision
- State and local policies on summer school
- State and local efforts to modify the school calendar
- The proposed STEP UP Act, one of the few policies we found whose primary purpose is to stem summer learning loss in order to help close the achievement gap.

The NCLB policies discussed in this section were the most frequently cited policies in our literature

review; they were generally the first public policies mentioned when we asked programs how they were funded.

No Child Left Behind

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) has two provisions that specifically support out-of-school-time interventions: the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and the Supplemental Educational Services provision. Minor enhancements to both of these provisions could dramatically catalyze growth in summer learning programs that would mirror the growth in afterschool programming in the past decade. Additionally, many state and local education agencies use NCLB resources to support summer school or extended-year programs.

21st Century Community Learning Centers. A rare exception to the compartmentalized nature of most funding streams that support summer programs, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st 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 21st CCLC. Enrichment activities during non-school hours must be designed to complement a child's regular academic programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). For fiscal year 2007, the program was authorized to receive $2.5 billion, but only $981 million was actually appropriated by Congress (Afterschool Alliance, 2006). Approximately two-thirds of the grantees operate programs during the summer; somewhere between 40 and 65 percent of Title I schools report that they use 21st 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, Finance Project interviews with grantees and state administrators suggested 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,

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2006); our own interviews confirmed these findings. As funding "sunsets," programs are forced to decide between maintaining services during the school year or continuing summer programming.

Supplemental Educational Services Program. The Supplemental Educational Services program (SES), a more recently developed federal program, can be used to support tutoring for struggling students during non-school 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.

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. Finally, a typical SES voucher ranges from approximately $800 to $1,400 per year, which is not sufficient to provide both afterschool and summer support (Sunderman & Kim, 2004).

A report by Public/Private Ventures reveals additional challenges in the implementation of SES. Large numbers of eligible students are not being served, often because parents are not getting timely or adequate information about SES and thus have limited opportunity to make informed decisions about the program or providers (Public/Private Ventures, 2005). The U.S. Department of Education estimates that in the 2003–04 school year, only 18 percent of eligible students received the free services. Though locally operated afterschool and summer programs can serve as known and trusted institutions for service delivery, they face hurdles that have prevented many from becoming providers. Administrative requirements, difficult recruiting environments, and the financial reimbursement mechanism SES employs keep such smaller organizations scarce among SES providers (Public/Private Ventures, 2005).

Our interviews with qualified SES providers reveal that few programs currently use SES funds to support their summer programs. However, several providers expressed interest in using SES dollars more flexibly to promote comprehensive year-round programming. A variety of reforms listed under Recommendations below would help more providers use SES funding, though the cumbersome reimbursement mechanism could remain an obstacle.

State and Local Summer School Policies

Although 21st CCLC and SES stand out as the most prominent NCLB funding sources for out-of-school-time programs, many state and local agencies tap other NCLB resources and Title I funds to support summer school programs. To date, summer education policies at the local and state levels have concentrated nearly exclusively on providing remedial summer school for students who fail to meet promotion requirements (Zinth, 2006). Many elected officials and education policymakers view summer as a logical and convenient time for remediation only. A 2006 survey by the Education Commission of the States 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 remedi-

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ation 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)

Summer school is widely viewed as an alternative to social promotion or in-grade retention. Nearly all of the 100 largest school systems in the country offer remedial summer instruction for failing students (Borman, 2001). Some districts also offer summer enrichment courses, but these programs are smaller and typically fee-based, so that participation can be limited. While some evidence suggests that summer remediation leads to short-term achievement gains, research shows a number of shortcomings in such an approach, including:

- **Limited opportunities for enrichment.** Remedial programs do not typically provide opportunities for enrichment, despite evidence that the gap in reading achievement between low-income and middle- or

upper-income students is primarily due to the fact that more affluent children have access to enrichment opportunities during the summer (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Rothstein, 2004).

- **Limited "dosage" and duration.** Policies typically limit summer remedial programs to three or four hours a day for up to four weeks. The research literature suggests that most high-quality summer programs run for six hours or more for six to eight weeks, combining academic instruction with enrichment opportunities (Borman & Dowling, 2006; Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006).

- **Inability to meet the needs of children and families.** Despite the fact that parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to find adequate activities for their children, many families are unable to take advantage of summer school programs because limited hours of operation don't meet their need for full-day childcare.

One example of a local summer policy initiative that seeks to foster more comprehensive programming in conjunction with its formal summer school policy is Chicago's Keep Kids Learning effort. Developed as a partnership between the mayor's office and the Chicago public schools, the pilot initiative involved 11 schools in the Englewood community in 2006. The initiative extended Chicago's three-hour mandatory summer school program to address both academics and enrichment for six weeks, six hours a day. The program included students in mandatory summer school who wanted an extra three hours of enrichment, as well as students who weren't required to attend any summer school at all but wanted to participate. Preliminary data from the pilot suggests positive benefits for students, teachers, and parents (Carran, Brady & Bell, 2006). Keep Kids Learning, along with other citywide models such as those operated by LA's BEST in Los Angeles and TASC (The After-School Corporation) in New York City, offer insights into how local and state policy makers can connect formal summer school initiatives to more comprehensive models of summer programming.

School Calendar Modifications
An alternative to summer school involves modifying the school calendar. In recent years, many local school districts have pursued year-round schooling as an effort to redistribute the standard 180 days of school into various calendar formats. Such efforts often result

in shorter, more frequent breaks from school rather than a prolonged summer vacation. One reason for calendar modification is economic: More students can use existing school buildings. Another is an increasing desire on the part of educators to provide more instructional time prior to standardized tests, which are typically administered in February or March. Many states and school districts have sought to begin the school year in late July or early August, a process sometimes referred to as "calendar creep."

Calendar modification faces serious opposition from the tourism industry and some parent groups. In general, parent groups cite valuable family time and a needed break from school as their primary reasons for opposition. These parent groups are currently comprised mainly of families who are fortunate enough to take advantage of summer as an ideal time for such enrichment opportunities as family vacations, summer camps, and recreational or cultural opportunities. Opposition efforts have been successful enough to inspire several states to enact or consider laws prohibiting schools from beginning prior to Labor Day.

However, the most critical flaw in many calendar-modification policies is that they do not result in more time spent learning. Research on the benefits of vacation redistribution suggests that such a strategy may have far less potential impact on student achievement and development than actually expanding the number of days and hours that students are involved in constructive learning activities (Cooper, et al., 2003).

The Proposed STEP UP Act
Despite the growth in summer school at the state and local levels, there are no current federal policies that focus exclusively on summer as a time to improve children's academic or developmental outcomes. In response, Senators Barack Obama (D-Illinois) and Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) proposed the Summer Term Education Programs for Upward Performance (STEP UP) Act in 2006. STEP UP would provide 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–3, would entitle each student to the equivalent of 30 full days of instruction. The criteria in the proposed 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

The proposed legislation addresses several of the shortcomings of traditional remedial summer school policies by providing programs of longer duration that can be administered by a greater variety of providers. However, the implementation would need to be carefully structured so that the targeted young people would receive services that mirror the enrichment experiences available to middle- and upper-class youth.

Recommendations

Our analysis revealed many opportunities to build on existing summer-related education policies to more fully support high-quality summer learning programs for children and youth. At the state and local levels, policymakers should develop more proactive and collaborative approaches to summer school policies that focus on enrichment in addition to remediation. State and local officials should consider how best to leverage the relatively small federal investment in remedial

services. Rather than choosing between offering half-day programs to more children or full-day programs to fewer children, school districts should be able to join forces with, for instance, parks and recreation departments or community service agencies to deliver comprehensive, full-day programs.

On the federal side, full funding at the authorized level for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and structural changes to the Supplemental Educational Services provision of No Child Left Behind should be priorities for policymakers who seek to facilitate sustainable and equitable expansion of summer learning opportunities. Fully funding 21st CCLC, as well as including incentives to encourage providers to pursue year-round programming, would allow communities to build comprehensive, multi-year efforts. Year-round service delivery would also enhance the effectiveness of SES in building and sustaining comprehensive summer learning programs that include math and literacy learning. SES language could be changed to refer to summer as a preferred time for service delivery. SES should also require state and local education agencies to notify parents of SES opportunities at least twice a year, with the second notification happening as the end of the school year approaches. In addition, making the reimbursement mechanism more flexible would allow smaller community-based providers to access SES funding.

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Child Care and Development

Many families in high-poverty communities face an urgent need for childcare during the summer. Mezey, Greenberg, and Schumacher (2002) estimate that 15 million U.S. families are eligible for state childcare assistance, yet only 14 percent actually receive it. More than one in ten children regularly spend time in self-care, either alone or with a sibling younger than 13, during the summer months (Capizzano, Adelman, &

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.

Stagner, 2002). While this percentage is consistent with self-care during the school year, the number of hours per week increases from 4.8 during the school year to more than 10 hours during the summer.

The quality and type of childcare also varies widely based on parent income. Higher-income families more frequently enroll their children in organized activities such as camps; they also pay far more for summer care than they do for care during the school year (Capizzano, Adelman, & Stagner, 2002). Lower-income families, by contrast, devote a larger percentage of their income to childcare generally (Matthews & Ewen, 2006) but pay less for summer care than they do for care during the school year. Since higher-

income and lower-income families are equally likely to pay for care over the summer, these findings suggest that economically disadvantaged children receive lower-quality summer childcare and engage in fewer enrichment activities (Capizzano, Adelman, & Stagner, 2002).

The two primary federal policies that address the need for childcare for low-income families during the summer are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

TANF, which was funded at $17.278 billion in fiscal year 2005, 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], 2006b). 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, 2006a).

Child Care and Development Fund

CCDF is the largest federal childcare subsidy program, funded at $4.8 billion in fiscal year 2005. 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.

Approximately 1.78 million children per month received CCDF childcare services in 2005. This number has remained relatively consistent since 2000 (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2006). State agencies often use a portion of CCDF funds to operate summer programs in cooperation with local departments of social services. County and city social service

departments often contract with community-based organizations that run camp programs, such as YM/YWCAs and Boys and Girls Clubs, to provide summer care. Contracts are awarded to providers in low-income neighborhoods that otherwise lack summer program options, typically providing enough funding to subsidize the cost of participation. These summer programs are open to all children, not just those who qualify for subsidies. By awarding contracts in this fashion, states are able to increase the supply and quality of care while extending the benefits of CCDF to a wide range of children and families.

Recommendations

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.

Several strategies could improve the quality of investments in summer care. The Center for Law and Social Policy recommends that policies 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 schools, 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

The third category of summer-related policies we considered 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 should 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 (as 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. Even local parks and recreation departments, according to our research, use most of their summer funding for upkeep of facilities, providing only limited programming in the form of sports leagues that function only a few hours a week. More comprehensive programs usually result from partnerships with local community-based organizations. Several of the policies we discuss elsewhere in this paper, including 21st

The unique feature of the USDA policies 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.

Century Community Learning Centers (under Education) and Byrne Grants (under Delinquency Prevention), have physical fitness or recreation as an "allowable use" of funds in summer programs. Such programs, however, were not frequently cited in the literature as a major source of summer funding and are not explicitly dedicated to summer programming. 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

Coalition for Hispanic Family Services Arts and Literacy Program

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.

School Lunch and Summer Food Programs

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provide funding for state agencies to reimburse providers for meals and snacks served to children during the summer. Eligible providers include public and private schools, nonprofit school authorities, residential childcare institutions, local governments, national youth sports programs, and private nonprofit organizations. For children with family incomes are below 130 percent of the federal poverty line, meals are free. Children whose family incomes are between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty line receive meals at a substantially reduced price. These are entitlement programs, meaning that all eligible children are entitled to receive meals. An advantage of entitlement programs is that providers do not have to compete for funding, since the amount of funding available to them is not capped.

SFSP is the single largest source of funds for local providers that want to serve meals as a part of their summer programs. The program is designed to ensure that low-income children and youth remain healthy, engaged, and mentally and physically fit during the summer months. In order to be considered as an SFSP site, programs must either serve a student population of which at least 50 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or operate in a geographic area where at least half of the children are eligible (Food Research and Action Center [FRAC], 2006).

Unfortunately, the abundance of reporting and paperwork required by both the SFSP and the NSLP has deterred many summer programs from applying. Only 18 of every 100 children who participate in the free and reduced-price meals program during the school year receive meals over the summer. Participation rates in these programs have been on a steady decline for the past seven years. If states could increase participation so that just two-fifths of eligible children receive meals over the summer, an additional $188.8 millions dollars would be directed to states for summer nutrition (FRAC, 2006).

Newer Options for 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 NSLP 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).

Recommendations

Summer nutrition programs strengthen existing summer programs and make them more attractive to children from low-income families who need the extra meals. Young people who receive free meals typically do so through a summer program that addresses more than simply their nutritional needs, so that they receive additional educational or health benefits by participating. A rare exception to the rule, these federal nutrition programs are designed and implemented to benefit children and young people specifically during the summer. The documented success of the Simplified Summer Food Program, or Lugar Pilot, suggests that the program should be expanded to include providers currently enrolled in other summer nutrition programs. Expanding this program would streamline administrative burdens while maximizing reimbursement and participation rates.

Employment Development and Service Learning

The summer months offer many of the nation's teens 16 and older an opportunity to gain valuable first-time experience in the labor market as well as connections to community businesses. In summer 2006, an average of 8.5 million young people aged 16–19 were either working or actively looking for work (Sum, McLaughlin, & Khatiwada, 2006).

To respond to the summer influx of young job seekers, the nation's employers have typically expanded their hiring of teens. Local governments often provide funds to help government agencies and nonprofit organizations hire additional teens during the summer. In addition to workforce development programs, service learning opportunities expose youth to experiences that prepare them for productive adulthood."

Summer programs provide these opportunities in a variety of ways, including service learning that combines community service with classroom instruction; school-to-career activities such as career fairs, interviewing opportunities, and job shadowing; and work-based learning

In the past, summer was explicitly recognized as an optimal time for youth employment, and public policies 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 particularly local governments have attempted to make up the difference, they have not been able to compensate for the decline in federal funding. One promising strategy is to combine workforce development funding with service learning resources to offer young people work experiences that meet key community needs.

Federal Youth Employment Programs

Subsidizing summer youth employment for youth ages 14–21 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 com-

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bine "learning and earning" by offering an academic component within their summer youth employment programs (M. Pines, personal communication, November 11, 2006). 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 deliv-

ery 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 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.

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).

State and Local Jobs Programs
Many state and local governments have responded to federal cuts by increasing their investment in summer jobs. New York City, for example, operates one of the largest summer youth employment programs in the nation. During the summer of 2006, the city spent approximately $53.4 million on summer youth employment programs, using $26.9 million from city taxes, $21.1 million from state TANF funds, and only $5.4 million in WIA funds (New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, 2006). Since the passage of WIA in 2001, cities where mayors and communities value summer jobs programs because they keep older youth productively engaged and out of trouble have had to significantly increase their own investment in summer youth employment programs to compensate for the loss in federal support.

Other localities recognize the value of summer youth employment programs but are not as well positioned to provide summer jobs without federal support. In fiscal year 2006, the Maryland Summer Youth Connection program authorized use of a mere $150,000 in Cigarette Restitution Funds, an amount that met only a small proportion of the need in Baltimore, a primary recipient of such funding given its high concentration of young people in poverty.

Baltimore City contributed $7 million, raised mostly through private donations, to provide summer work experiences to 7,000 young people between the ages of 14 and 21. The city anticipates the need to secure additional funding, as participant numbers are expected to increase (Baltimore Workforce Investment Board, n.d.).

Summer Service Learning
Service learning can be defined as providing "thoughtfully organized experiences that integrate students' academic learning with service that meets actual community needs" (RMC Research Corporation, n.d.). Several agencies and policies support summer service learning opportunities, including WIA, as a part of the leadership development and community service elements, as well as NCLB. Title I of NCLB, for example, recommends that service learning can be part of a school reform strategy offered before and after school, as well as during the summer, to provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum (RMC Research Corporation, n.d.).

The primary agency responsible for administering service learning programs, however, is the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), a public-private partnership. The AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America programs funded by CNCS provide opportunities for youth, college students, and educators to engage in rich service-learning experiences over an extended period of time during summer break as well as other times during the year. Two primary goals of CNCS are to engage more college students in service and to encourage more K–12 schools to incorporate service-learning curricula. Roughly half of the Corporation's annual program budget, which was $900 million in 2006, supports the AmeriCorps and Learn and Serve America programs (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2007).

The Summer of Service Act, introduced by Senators Dodd (D-Connecticut) and Cochran (R-Mississippi) and Representative DeLauro (D-Connecticut) in both Houses of Congress in November 2006, would add to CNCS's program offerings by providing an additional $100 million in federal funding in the first year to engage middle school students in intensive and structured community service during the summer. Participating youth would have the opportunity to earn $500 in educational awards after completing 100 hours of service, offering an additional earning incentive for participation (Innovations in Civic Participation, 2006). This legislation would help bridge

the gap in programming available to middle school students over the summer, engaging youth in work-like experiences before they are eligible to participate in summer jobs under WIA.

Recommendations

Though WIA is designed to provide disadvantaged youth with educational and work opportunities, and despite the efforts of state and local governments to supplement federal funding for summer jobs, low-income and minority youth are not keeping pace with their higher-income peers. While young people residing in families with annual incomes above $75,000 are employed at a rate of 51.9 percent, low-income Asian- and African-American youth are employed at rates of 16.8 percent and 17.4 percent, respectively (Sum, McLaughlin, & Khatiwada, 2006). The higher the family income, the more likely a teen in that family is to have paid employment. Thus, young people who are already at a disadvantage have less work experience and fewer connections to employers than more privileged, higher-income peers. This disparity has grave implications for the future employment prospects of lower-income and minority youth. If federal policies continue to minimize the importance of summer youth employment, many youth may finish school with little or no connection to the workforce.

One strategy to increase investment is greater coordination among policies that emphasize both summer employment and service learning. Coordinating NCLB, WIA, and CNCS resources, directing them to agencies that are able to offer service-oriented work experiences, could make the best use of existing funds and better connect education and workforce efforts. 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 (Met Center, n.d.). Such models merit additional attention and support.

Delinquency Prevention

Another frequently cited reason for investing in summer programs, particularly in programs for older youth, is the increase in crimes committed by or against young people during non-school hours. In the area of delinquency prevention, we examined both local and federal programs.

> **If federal policies continue to minimize the importance of summer youth employment, many youth may finish school with little or no connection to the workforce.**

Local Initiatives

Several local governments cite crime statistics as one of the primary reasons they invest in summer jobs programs. Our policy review identified several communities, including Chicago, Washington, Denver, and San Francisco, where well-publicized events involving youth violence over the summer months contributed to the development of summer programs and policies focused on positive youth development.

One example is the Summer Scholars Program in Denver, Colorado. In 1993, Denver experienced a period of escalating youth violence, dubbed the "Summer of Violence" by the local media, characterized by a series of gang-related shootings that took the lives of several innocent victims. Legal remedies included expanding prosecutors' powers to deal with juvenile offenders, but "home-grown" violence prevention programs such as Summer Scholars focused on giving younger youth opportunities to interact with caring adults in a supportive, enriching environment as an alternative to engaging in risky behaviors. Over its 11-year history, Summer Scholars has provided over 11,000 low-income children, ages 5 to 11, with high-quality reading and writing instruction as well as enrichment and athletic activities such as swimming lessons. Strong partnerships with the Denver Public School System and the Denver Department of Parks and Recreation support Summer Scholars in its mission to offer literacy and youth development to low-income children. Financial support comes from both public and private funds, including more than 1,500 individual donations (Summer Scholars, n.d.).

Department of Justice Initiatives

The largest source of funds to support summer delinquency prevention resides with the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) in the Department of Justice (DOJ). In 2004, OJP provided approximately $2 billion to states and localities in support of efforts to prevent and control crime, improve the criminal and juvenile justice systems, increase knowledge about crime and related issues, and assist crime victims (Dobbins, 2005). Afterschool pro-

grams, which broadly defined can
include summer programs, are eligi-
ble to receive funding under several
of OJP's grant programs (Padgette,
2003).

The Bureau of Justice
Assistance (BJA) also supports out-
of-school-time programs by pro-
viding funding, training, technical
assistance, and information to
state and community criminal jus-
tice programs and by emphasizing
the coordination of federal, state,
and local efforts. The BJA's Byrne
Memorial Justice Assistance Grants program funds
state and local efforts to reduce illegal drug activity,
crime, and violence and to support the work of local
police departments. While community-based and
statewide prevention programs, which may include
afterschool and summer efforts, are two of the specific
activities that can be supported by the grant, such pro-
grams must compete for scarce resources with other
priorities, including adjudication, corrections, and
treatment programs, as well as efforts to improve pro-
grams and systems.

Additionally, the Office of Juvenile Justice and
Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides some fund-
ing to support programs engaged in preventing and
reducing delinquency, including afterschool and sum-
mer programs. Allowable program activities include
mentoring, gang prevention, substance abuse preven-
tion, and youth development. For example, the Ella J.
Baker House, a faith-based youth services agency in
the Dorchester area of Boston, operates summer and
afterschool programs as part of its larger mission to
reduce youth violence and help at-risk youth achieve
literacy and access jobs (Dobbins, 2005). The Baker
House relies in part on an OJJDP Juvenile Accoun-
tability Block Grant through a partnership with the
Boston Police Department.

Recommendations

The federal delinquency prevention policies we exam-
ined direct relatively small amounts of funding to
summer and afterschool programs. The Baker House
is one of a few local agencies that have been able to
use DOJ funding for summer programming. The
grants are highly competitive and often include
restrictions on allowable activities that make it diffi-
cult for afterschool and summer programs to com-
pete. In its guide to federal funding sources for out-

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of-school-time programming, the Finance Project
(2003) identified only three DOJ programs that per-
mitted "academic enrichment" as an allowable activity.
This restriction flies in the face of research suggesting
that one of the most fundamental strategies for pre-
venting delinquency is to re-engage young people in
learning and help them understand the critical role
that education plays in achieving their life goals
(Noguera, 1996, 1997, 2001). Since summer pro-
grams have demonstrated results in using academic
enrichment to motivate young people to pursue
higher levels of academic achievement (McLaughlin,
2000), our findings suggest that summer programs
should be more fully used as part of a delinquency
prevention strategy during a time of year when other
educational resources are scarce.

Informal and Cultural Learning

A rich array of policies at the federal, state, and local lev-
els recognizes the critical role that the arts, libraries,
museums, and other informal learning institutions play
over the summer months. These disciplines and institu-
tions are an important part of the fabric of summer
learning opportunities for young people and their fami-
lies, consonant with the belief that summer is a unique
time when children can explore their interests, talents,
and skills. They also reflect the types of learning experi-
ences available to middle- and upper-class youth during
the summer. Interestingly, these policies do not appear to
target disadvantaged youth, but rather seem designed to
reach young people from families of all income ranges.

While the arts is a learning discipline in and of
itself, we include it in this section rather than under
Education because our analysis revealed that summer
arts learning is often connected to and delivered
through museums and cultural institutions rather than
schools. Though policies and funding streams that

support the arts, libraries, museums, and other informal learning institutions are too numerous and varied to list, our research revealed several agencies that lead the way in providing arts and informal learning experiences over the summer, particularly the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences, and the National Science Foundation. We chose the three initiatives we discuss in this section because of their focus either on summer specifically or on summer and afterschool programming.

Despite the funding available from these federal agencies, our interviews with program providers indicated that they used other sources for programming centered around the arts and informal learning. Nearly every provider regarded arts and informal learning as essential ingredients for summer programming, particularly for engaging and retaining youth. However, most providers funded those opportunities either through another grant with a different primary purpose—for example, through a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, whose primary purpose is education—or through private philanthropy. In fact, though we do not emphasize private philanthropy in other sections of this report, philanthropy seemingly plays a large role not only for arts programs but for all summer programming—much larger, in fact, than it does in afterschool programming. The role of philanthropy in summer arts and informal cultural learning provides an example of a larger issue on which we will elaborate in the conclusions section of this report.

Summer Library Reading Programs

For over a century, public libraries have played a critical role in providing summer learning opportunities to young people in the United States. At a time of year when many public institutions close their doors to children and families, more than 122,000 public libraries provide summer reading programs and a variety of educational activities to enrich communities. Today, 95 percent of all public libraries in the United States operate summer reading programs (Fiore, 2005). Youth participation rates vary by community but generally range from 10 to 20 percent of the eligible youth population. Multiple studies explain the positive benefits of library summer reading programs (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Heyns, 1978). In fact, a recent study found that volume of summer book reading was positively related to fall reading achievement independent of prior reading and writing skills and student background characteristics (Kim, 2004).

Summer reading programs offered by libraries are supported by several funding sources at the federal, state, and local levels. Federal grant dollars are available through the Institute for Museum and Library Sciences under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, which is administered by each state. In addition to general library funds, most public library systems raise significant private philanthropic support annually for their summer reading programs. In fact, we found that many public library systems relied nearly exclusively on private funds—from local foundations, corporate sponsors, local chambers of commerce, and friends of the library foundations—to support summer reading programs.

At a time of year when many public institutions close their doors to children and families, more than 122,000 public libraries provide summer reading programs and a variety of educational activities to enrich communities.

While such broad-based support is generally viewed as positive, it also presents a number of challenges in terms of the prospects for expanding access to library summer reading programs. The reliance on private grant dollars creates significant planning challenges for libraries, as they often have to prepare to operate programs prior to receiving all of the necessary funding. This uncertainty potentially limits young people's access to reading programs. Given the research on the potential benefits of such programs and the relatively low cost of additional outreach activities, policymakers should consider strategies for increasing public investment in these programs.

One such strategy is the development of partnerships. We identified several promising models that integrated school district and public library summer reading programs in order to increase participation and coordination. In many cases, such integration reduced duplication of effort and ensured that librarians knew what books the schools required for summer reading and were able to promote the summer reading programs in the schools.

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Informal Science Education Initiatives

Informal science education initiatives are currently being championed as one strategy to help increase the nation's global competitiveness in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). One of the most important sources of funding for informal science institutions at the federal level is the National Science Foundation (NSF). For fiscal year 2006, NSF provided $25 million in competitive grants for informal science education designed to increase interest, engagement, and understanding of STEM subject matter on the part of individuals of all ages and backgrounds. NSF also funds projects that advance knowledge and practice of informal science education (National Science Foundation, n.d.).

NSF defines *informal learning* as learning that happens throughout people's lives in a highly personalized manner based on their particular needs, interests, and past experiences. This type of multi-faceted learning is voluntary, self-directed, and often mediated in a social context (Dierking, Ellenbogen, & Falk, 2004; Falk, 2001); it provides an experiential base and motivation for further activity and subsequent learning. The NSF's Informal Science Education (ISE) program invests in the development of experiences that encourage informal learning in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It promotes public engagement with and understanding of STEM content through such means as exhibitions, media projects, and educational programs. ISE projects reach audiences of all ages and backgrounds across the nation in museums, theaters, community centers, and many other settings, including outdoor environments and people's homes.

Much of the funding granted by NSF for youth ISE focuses on afterschool and summer programs. Funding for the program is connected to revenue derived from H1-B visas issued to workers from foreign countries to fill U.S.-based jobs in technical fields. The rationale for the program is to invest in programs that prepare young people in the U.S. to eventually fill those positions, thereby reducing the need for H1-B visas in the future. We found this approach to using summer programs as a means for fostering greater career and educational development in STEM very compelling. One limitation of the program is that it provides only about $25 million in total funding for approximately 50 grants each year across the country. Another is that the funds aren't necessarily reaching the neediest youth.

Summer and the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), according to its 2005 annual report, offers several grants that either directly or indirectly support summer opportunities:

- **Access to Artistic Excellence** funds projects that encourage and support artistic creativity, preserve our diverse cultural heritage, and make the arts more widely available in communities throughout the country.
- **Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth** funds projects that help children and youth acquire appreciation, knowledge, and understanding of and skills in the arts. The focus is on children and youth in the general age range of 5 to 18. Included in this area is the Summer School in the Arts program.
- **Challenge America—Reaching Every Community** funds simple, straightforward local projects that involve experienced professional artists and arts professionals in small or mid-sized communities where opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability (National Endowment for the Arts, 2005).

The Summer Schools in the Arts program, included in Learning in the Arts for Children and Youth, provides up to 50 grants per year, ranging from $15,000 to $35,000, to nonprofit organizations and agencies. The intent of the grant program is to offer "rigorous, challenging summer arts education programs that enable children and youth to acquire knowledge and skills in the arts as well as gain lifelong interests in the arts and culture" (NEA, 2006). While this program explicitly focuses on summer, the amount of funding is small, and the number of organizations, and therefore youth, affected is very small. In 2005, only 24 organizations received funding through this grant program (NEA, 2006).

Recommendations

The most striking distinction of informal and cultural learning policies, compared to the other policy areas we researched, is that they reach a broad cross-section of youth, rather than a subset of youth who have been targeted as low-income or low-achieving. However, public funding streams for informal and cultural learning tend to be very small, albeit numerous, so that few young people can benefit. Families have increasingly used their own income to provide cultural learning experiences for their children during the summer, but public funding has yet to do the same for disadvantaged youth.

More coordinated policymaking and funding could, in this case as in many others, lead to better use of scarce dollars. Partnerships between public libraries and public schools to coordinate summer reading programs, for example, leverage scarce resources at the local level. State departments of education, school districts, and public library systems need to encourage more such collaboration between public libraries and schools. States should provide incentives for collaboration and discourage competing or parallel programs that operate in isolation from one another in local communities. Federal and state funds should be dedicated to fostering stronger partnerships that promote free voluntary reading programs in schools and public libraries.

INCREASING SUMMER OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL YOUTH

Summer is a unique time of year in our culture. Despite occasional perceptions that the typical school-year calendar is outdated, many Americans feel strongly that summer is a time for rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation. Kids expect summer to look and feel different from the school year; parents look for summer opportunities that ensure their children are well cared for while having fun; and working parents need access to programs that allow them to continue working with minimal interruption.

So how do we honor our cultural beliefs and simultaneously respond to the research on summer learning loss? What can we do to ensure that summer programs are able to meet the expectations of children and families while offering learning experiences that help close the achievement gap? How can policies be redesigned to support high-quality programming?

The very existence of public policies to support children and families during out-of-school time is encouraging. Funding for summer programs cuts across many federal departments and programs, serving many purposes. We applaud the intent of and support for the public policies in each of the six areas we discussed; however, a more coordinated approach to public policy and funding would better leverage scarce dollars. In order for summer program providers to meet the full scope of youth and family needs during the summer months, policies should more explicitly focus on summer as a critical window of time for young people's learning and development—and as a time when families have particular need for safe and enriching childcare options. A comprehensive approach to summer programming should place particular emphasis on providing programming for disadvantaged children that mirrors the types of summer experiences available to middle- and upper-income youth.

Coordinated Opportunities

Each of the six policy areas examined in this report meets a critical need over the summer, but resources could be leveraged much more effectively if the policy areas were better coordinated. Without such coordination, we will continue to see the development of "niche" programs that provide specific interventions to special populations at the expense of programming for the broader population of youth and families in need of services.

However, it may be unrealistic to expect the inter-agency collaboration necessary to streamline funding priorities and to develop shared agendas at the federal level. An alternative is to support the development of local, state, and national intermediary organizations that focus on coordinating summer learning policies and funding streams and on supporting the work of summer providers.

An intermediary organization "operates in a position between the youth-serving organizations they assist and a body of knowledge, skills, contacts, and other resources. They take a deliberate position as brokers and facilitators, functioning both as representatives and as agents of change" (Wynn, 2000, p. 11). Some intermediary organizations focusing on out-of-school-time or summer learning already exist. At the national level, they include the Afterschool Alliance, the Center for Summer Learning, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, and the National Afterschool Association. A few of the state intermediary organizations are the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time and the New Jersey School Age

Care Coalition. Some of the many local organizations are The After-School Corporation in New York City, the After-School Institute in Baltimore, the DC Youth Investment Trust Corporation, and LA's BEST.

Whether their focus is local, state, or national, intermediaries typically meet a variety of needs: They help to shape the vision and define the field; build consensus; aggregate demand; convene stakeholders to provide a forum for networking and professional exchange; collect and disseminate relevant research, information, best practices, and resources; facilitate communication among providers, researchers, and policymakers; locate funding sources and raise funds to support programs; track policies and advocate for change; define quality standards for how programs should operate; develop competencies for program staff; assess program quality; work directly with summer program providers to deliver training and technical assistance; and develop and pilot new program approaches. In short, intermediaries offer "expertise, outside support, legitimation, and clout" (Schorr, 1997, quoted in Wynn, 2000).

Intermediary organizations can often act more nimbly than government agencies in responding to the needs of the field. As a given public agency shifts priorities and program resources wane, an intermediary can assess opportunities to "fill the gap" and redirect programs to alternate sources. Another advantage is that intermediary organizations are mission-driven around a particular issue, so that they can bring together seemingly disparate stakeholders and resources—for example, museums, schools, and libraries—to align them toward a common purpose. Finally, because summer learning is so closely connected to private philanthropy, many intermediaries have the distinct advantage of being networked to private philanthropists, foundations, and other community resources, so that they can leverage investments in ways that public agencies are often unable to do. Though the level and quality of support intermediary organizations provide varies and is somewhat dependent on the amount of their funding, providers generally have a favorable view of intermediaries as needed resources. Providers often must neglect the functions listed above in favor of meeting the immediate needs of young people; thus, intermediary organizations fill an important need.

Though the functions intermediary organizations fulfill are important for developing and sustaining the field over time, few intermediaries currently focus on summer as a priority, and fewer yet take summer pro-gramming as their primary focus. If intermediaries are part of the solution to coordinating funding for summer programs, policymakers need to recognize their immense value to the field, include these entities in legislative language, and make them eligible to receive technical assistance and training grants (Blank et al., n.d.). Policymakers and private funders can work together to increase the amount of funding set aside for the functions provided by intermediaries. Simultaneously, intermediaries, the research community, and practitioners should work together to define appropriate measures for gauging the success of an intermediary's efforts. At present, few resources suggest ways to measure the success of, for example, advocacy or training efforts. Such measures would provide much needed guidance and benchmarks for organizations serving in this capacity, thus improving their effectiveness.

Comprehensive Opportunities

Another challenge for policymakers is addressing the needs of working families by supporting full-day, year-round programming for kids. From a public funding perspective, summer has traditionally been an after-thought —secondary to afterschool, with little recognition of the difficulties parents face in finding adequate, affordable, engaging summer care. Summer and afterschool need to be considered equally in public policy; quality programs must be made available and accessible to families year-round. The difference between summer and afterschool programming goes beyond the fact that they operate at different times. Summer programs operate for more hours per day; they also get kids when they're fresh rather than after a seven-hour school day. Thus, the structure of summer programs is often very different from that of afterschool programs; those differences should be taken into consideration when designing public policy.

While some communities look to year-round school as the answer to the need for year-round childcare and education, there's merit in exploring what summer programs, specifically, can do to "round out" a child's education. Summer programs can offer experiences that children can't get in school. Summer programming often involves the community and local institutions in deep and authentic ways. Particularly for young people who attend low-performing schools, summer programs can make a powerful difference when compared to a year-round school that may be offering more of the same, only on a different schedule.

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- Low-income children tend to receive remedial summer programming, whether they need it or not.
- Learning embedded in enrichment experiences is often more beneficial and more easily committed to long-term memory than learning delivered in the context of punitive remedial programs.

All these findings add up to a vision of summer programming that supports all youth in achieving not only academic outcomes, but also developmental milestones. For example, a program could focus on reading comprehension and self-esteem through teaching performing arts. Another program might build math skills, foster teamwork, and teach conflict resolution in the context of playing basketball. Middle- and upper income families are already investing in such experiences and programs for their children, yet policies for low-income youth tend to narrowly target remedial reading and math or a particular developmental need, such as childcare or nutrition, without taking into consideration children's individual needs, their potential to excel in a different type of learning environment, or their unique interests and hobbies.

One exception is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which has fostered many unique summer learning programs that combine academic, developmental, and workforce development efforts while keeping children safe and healthy. We believe these programs should be applauded and expanded. Four programs we studied—Harlem RBI in New York City, BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts, Trail Blazers in Montague, New Jersey, and Higher Achievement in Washington DC—used 21st CCLC funding to advance learning, support positive youth development, and meet youth and family needs. These programs illustrate the ways in which public funding can support a broad range of learning opportunities for disadvan-

Opportunities for All

Policymakers must take a stronger role in supporting enriching summer learning experiences for low-income children. Nearly all parents want safe, fun, engaging experiences for their children over the summer, but access to these experiences is not equally distributed among poorer and wealthier children and communities. The research-based rationale for funding summer programming for all children that provides the kind of enrichment activities now available primarily to middle- and upper-income children is clear:

- All kids experience some learning loss if they don't have opportunities to practice skills over the summer months.
- Summer losses in reading are more pronounced for low-income kids because they have less access to enriching literacy activities.
- Middle- and upper-income families are increasingly relying on enrichment camps and programs to provide much-needed childcare while offering the types of experiences they deem appropriate for their children during summer break.

Harlem RBI

taged children that mirror the summer opportunities available to more privileged kids.

Harlem RBI's REAL (Reading and Enrichment Academy for Learning) Kids Summer Program prevents summer learning loss in reading, teaches sportsmanship, and exposes children to new experiences, using baseball as the "hook" to get kids in the door. In morning literacy workshops, certified teachers and two college coaches lead kids through balanced literacy activities that are linked to the afternoon baseball game. REAL Kids prioritizes youth choice and collaborative learning to keep kids engaged and motivated to succeed. Kids score runs both on the field and in the classroom. To measure participants' success, Harlem RBI tracks their literacy, social, and emotional growth, as well as their physical health. As was true of many of the high-quality summer programs we studied, Harlem RBI is funded primarily by private philanthropy, with only about ten percent of its funding coming from public sources.

Trail Blazers provides youth from low-income urban areas the opportunity to grow in academic knowledge and social experience by participating in a 20-day residential camp in rural New Jersey. Trail Blazers seeks to instill in youth the values of caring, cooperating, and learning to settle differences

peacefully while developing literacy skills. Throughout the camp experience, young people read independently and together, record their experiences in a journal, deliver presentations, perform plays, and write articles for the camp magazine. These activities are paired with more traditional camp activities, such as swimming, hiking, and sleeping under the stars. Trail Blazers, too, is funded largely through private philanthropy, in this case individual contributions. The program has also creatively combined various public funding streams, including the Summer Food Service program, Supplemental Educational Services, TANF, and some local funding.

Summer learning should be different from school-year learning; it should offer young people new experiences and give them opportunities to develop talents and skills. In other words, the research on summer learning loss and our cultural beliefs about the meaning of summer are not in conflict. Kids can continue to learn during the summer while having fun in a safe, nurturing environment. Private philanthropy has often led the way in funding the development and implementation of high-quality summer experiences for low-income children. It is time for public policymakers to follow the lead of foundations and individual contributors by adopting a coordinated and comprehensive approach to summer learning that can benefit all children and their families.

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