NASBE
Discussion Guide

National Association of State Boards of Education

November 2011

Summer Learning

A New Vision for Supporting Students in Summer Programs

NASBE

National Association of
State Boards of Education

NASBE
Discussion Guide

Summer Learning: A New Vision for Supporting Students in Summer Programs

by Chris Sun, Senior Project Associate

Contents

Cover illustration: CreativeArchetype/iStockphoto.

# Summer Learning: A New Vision for Supporting Students in Summer Programs

Each year in September, millions of students in the United States come back to school unprepared to learn and significantly behind academically from where they were from the previous school year. On average, students lose about one month of academic knowledge and content between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next.[1] Unfortunately, low-income students typically exhibit much steeper losses and the effect is cumulative over multiple summers. Many researchers note that the disproportionate impact of summer learning loss on low-income students is a major contributor to the achievement gap.[2] Fig. 1 below illustrates the cumulative impact summer learning loss can have on accelerating the achievement gap.

The good news is research has shown that effective summer learning programs have the ability to curb summer learning loss while preparing students for the upcoming school year. Knowing the role summer supports can have on student outcomes, many high-performing countries provide these kinds of year-round supports for students.[3] However, despite the positive impact of summer learning programs on student outcomes, 75 percent of U.S. students, or approximately 43 million students, do not participate in any summer learning programs. As state boards of education continue to address issues of access, equity, and achievement in schools, effective summer learning programs need to be a part of the out-of school support systems available to students.

Summer learning programs, after-school programs, and, to an extent, online learning opportunities will all need to play a role in supporting students outside typical school hours if students are to succeed in the global economy.

Figure 1. Potential Cumulative Impact of Summer Learning Loss on Low-Income Students Not Participating in Effective Summer Learning Programs
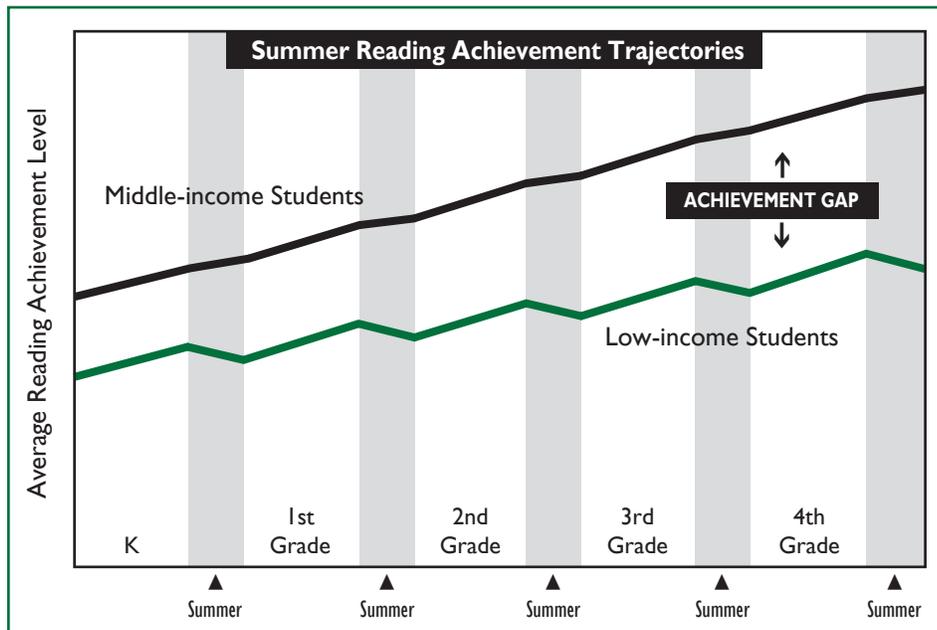
Source: In G.D. Borman and M. Boulay (Eds.), *Summer Learning: Research, Policies, and Programs* (Mahway, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2004). Adapted from G.D. Borman, "The Effects of Summer School: Questions Answered, Questions Raised," *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 65,* 1, Serial N. 260 (2000).

The purpose of this discussion guide is to examine the role summer learning programs play in helping support students outside school hours and throughout the calendar year. To accomplish this goal, the guide provides the following:

- contemporary research on the major issues facing students regarding summer learning;

- elements of effective summer learning programs;

- state-level actions to address issues in summer learning; and

- policy exercises state boards of education can use to discuss summer learning policy in a structured and meaningful way.

This guide is based largely on the findings from the 2011 *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning* report from RAND.[5] This Wallace Foundation-commissioned report examines the current state of summer learning and the impact summer learning has on student outcomes (see the textbox at left for more information). Results from a NASBE survey of state board of education members on issues in summer learning also informed the writing of this guide, which is also supported by The Wallace Foundation.

Defining Summer Learning Programs

Summer learning programs come in numerous forms. From the traditional "summer school" for students who need to catch up to summer enrichment programs for students who want to get ahead, summer programs vary in many ways, including purpose, provider, attendance requirements, length, and setting. While summer school is a subset of summer learning, many people associate all summer learning programs with summer school, traditionally a place where low-performing students reluctantly and without enthusiasm attend mandatory remedial education programs during the summer months. However, summer learning programs, as a whole, have the ability to provide much more than just remedial education. Fig. 2 on page 5 identifies some of the features that differentiate summer learning programs from summer school. For the discussion guide, the terms summer learning program and summer school will be used in the same context as in the figure.

Summer Learning Loss

Most students exhibit losses in math and literacy skills as a result of summer vacation each school year. Given the multi-step procedural process of many math skills, proficiency in math tends to decrease at a faster rate for students than literacy.[6] This section explores some of the devastating impacts of summer learning loss on student achievement. As state boards consider summer learning supports, it is vital to keep these findings in mind, since teachers need significant time at the beginning of each school year to mitigate these effects—time that could otherwise be spent on new instruction.

Summer learning loss typically has students performing, on average, approximately one month behind where they left off the previous school year.[7] The RAND report examined the role that socioeconomic status has on summer learning loss. Unfortunately, students from low-income families face much steeper losses compared both to the average student and students from high-income families. RAND's analysis of a case study in Baltimore found that students learn at nearly the same rate while attending

Figure 2. Summer Learning Programs vs. Summer School
Typical Characteristics of Each Kind of Learning Experience

Summer Learning Program	Summer School
● Engage Students in Recreational and Academic Enrichment Activities	● Focus on Academic Instruction
● Combine Academic Enrichment and Advancement with Some Remediation	● Emphasis on Remediation
● Attended by Students from a Variety of Backgrounds and Skill Levels	● Attended by Academically Struggling Students
● Usually Voluntary	● Frequently Mandatory
● Full Day of Activities	● Half Day of Activities

Source: Adapted from Mary Terzian, Kristin A. Moore, and Kathleen Hamilton, *Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically Disadvantaged Children and Youth* (Washington, DC: Child Trends, 2009), 10.

school, regardless of socioeconomic background. However, during the summer, students from low-income families lose significantly more ground than the average students, while students from high-income families typically stay the same or make gains in achievement during the summer. The researchers theorized that low-income students did not have the supports needed to maintain their achievement level through the summer.[8] Supports could include access to academic enrichment programs, emphasis on reading in the home, and for younger students, interactions with parents and adults to improve literacy comprehension and understanding.[9]

Many students from low-income families do not receive academic and social supports to curb summer learning loss over many summer vacations. The RAND report also examined the research on the role of this systemic problem on student outcomes. Unfortunately, there is evidence that summer learning loss sustained over multiple school years begins to pile up.[10] Despite limitations of the study, including a small sample size, researchers from the Baltimore longitudinal case study of student achievement noted above found that half of the reading achievement gap observed in the ninth grade between students from high-socioeconomic families and low ones could be attributed to the cumulative effects of summer loss during the first five years of schooling.[11] One theory is that the cumulative effect of summer learning loss is a major factor in the acceleration of the achievement gap after the fifth grade.[12] Additionally, these summer learning losses were associated with higher instances of dropout and lower college attendance rates.

While these outcomes challenge the education system at the beginning of every school year, there are a number of summer learning programs available to students to keep them engaged throughout the summer. The next section examines the role summer learning programs can play in addressing summer learning loss.

Impact of Summer Learning Programs on Student Outcomes

The research is clear that summer learning programs can reduce or eliminate the effects of summer learning loss. Regular attendance in effective summer learning programs have the ability to improve literacy and math skills for students, foster social skills in students, improve relationships between adults and students, and combat the effects of summer learning loss.[13] Following are some of the major findings from studies that evaluated outcomes associated with summer learning programs:

● One study found the average academic benefit to students outpaced the effects of summer learning loss.[14] That is, participation in the examined summer learning programs helped students maintain or improve their skills and achievement levels relative to the average loss associated with summer.

● In one evaluation of a summer learning program, the longer a student participated in the program, the higher a student scored on fall reading tests.[15]

- Using the same data set from the preceding bullet point, another study found that there was no significant achievement difference between students who attended summer learning programs less than 39 percent of the time for two summers and those who did not attend any summer learning program.[16]

Simply put, students need to be actively participating in summer learning programs over a period of time to enjoy the benefits of such programs. Attendance is a key factor in effective summer learning programs, and it has a positive impact on student achievement.

Despite these encouraging findings, current summer learning programs in many ways fall short of providing the support students need to achieve these kinds of outcomes for students. The next section examines the current state of summer learning programs and the context in which these programs operate.

Current State of Summer Learning Programs

When beginning a discussion of summer learning, individuals typical conjure up images of remedial summer school taught with methods of instruction similar to the traditional school year. Unfortunately, closer examination of this assumption confirms that most public schools provide remedial summer school as the only option for school-based summer programming. Almost 75 percent of public schools provide academic assistance for students during the summer, typically in the form of

summer school.[17] However, participation in these summer learning programs ranges from between 6 and 30 percent of district enrollment.[18] One theory on the large gap between participation rates and availability is that parents simply do not want to enroll their children in a summer school program that mimics instruction during the school year and explores little to no new academic content. A recent survey noted that of those parents with children not participating in summer learning programs, over half would be interested in summer learning programs that are more engaging for students and cover a broader range of activities, but these are either unavailable in the area or prohibitively expensive.[19]

Compounding the problem is that funding streams for summer learning programs outside of traditional summer school are complex or nonexistent. Summer learning programs typically cobble together funding from a variety of sources to remain in operation. At the federal level, Title I allows funding to be used for summer learning programs; however, lack of reliable spending data makes it unclear how much is actually being used for non-remedial summer learning programs, with the assumption that only a small fraction gets spent in this way.[20] In addition, in many instances there is no state-level dedicated funding for summer learning programs.[21] As a result, many summer learning programs have to rely on local funding or tuition from parents. Given the current economic climate, summer learning programs are some of the first items cut from local budgets,[22] while increased reliance on tuition from parents disproportionately

excludes the low-income students who benefit most from these programs. Such funding issues make it extremely difficult to provide quality summer learning programs at scale across a state.

Remedial summer school programs cannot continue to be the typical summer learning experience for students. Summer learning programs have the ability to engage students, allow time to explore new topics that interest them while also mastering concepts covered in the previous school year, and develop interpersonal and leadership skills. However, to accomplish these goals for summer learning, state and local education boards need to provide new objectives for summer learning programs and a clear vision for change. The RAND report compiled characteristics and attributes commonly associated with effective summer learning programs that lead to improved student outcomes. The next section provides the key elements of these successful summer programs.

Effective Summer Learning Programs

Despite the challenges facing summer learning programs mentioned above, there are a number of practices that have proven to be effective in supporting students during the summer months. The RAND report examined the research available on summer learning programs and provided the following nine elements common to quality summer learning programs:

- **Smaller Class Size** — Much like student-to-teacher ratios in classes during the school year (especially for at-risk students), researchers found that class size has an impact on student outcomes. Summer learning programs with no more than 20 students per class were more effective in realizing growth in achievement.[23]

- **Differentiated Instruction** — Summer learning programs that provide individualized instruction

---

A New Vision for Summer School: Nine Principles

The National Summer Learning Association developed a set of nine principles to guide what summer learning should be. These principles encompass many of the elements of effective summer programs, but also help to change the notion of summer learning from remedial education summer school programs to comprehensive supports for students during the summer.

1. **Increase duration and scope of summer programs** to 6 weeks, full time, and integrate these programs into any district reform strategy.

2. **Expand participation beyond academically struggling students –** all students can benefit from summer learning programs, not just struggling students.

3. **Blend academic learning with engaging activities –** remediation simply cannot continue to be the focus of summer schools if we expect these programs to keep students engaged throughout the summer.

4. **Strengthen and expand partnerships –** one persistent challenge for summer programs is the lack of coordination between programs, agencies and funding streams. Consistent and meaningful partnerships need to be a part of any summer learning program.

5. **Incentivize attendance and participation –** programs need to encourage attendance in a variety of ways, such as providing comprehensive supports and engaging programming.

6. **Emphasize professional development –** as in any youth-serving profession, staff in summer learn-

ing programs need training in youth development and other issues they will encounter.

7. **Provide ways for older students to catch up –** traditional summer school will not help older students who are more than one year behind schedule for graduation. Summer learning programs need to incorporate proficiency-based learning and credit recovery to help students significantly behind.

8. **Target key transition periods –** transition to kindergarten, middle school, high school, and college are four periods when students need additional support given the significant changes in their educational setting. Summer learning programs can meet this need.

9. **Develop effective infrastructure, data collection, and evaluations –** as with any effective component of the education system, summer learning programs need supports to operate successfully. Effective data systems of student outcomes and evaluations of programs are vital to ensuring the quality of summer learning programs.

Source: National Summer Learning Association, *A New Vision for Summer School* (Baltimore, MD: author, 2009).

and support for students are more likely to yield positive outcomes.[24] It is not surprising that this element is closely associated with smaller class sizes, as well. As class sizes increased, the ability to provide differentiated instruction decreased.

● **High-Quality Instruction —** Similar to what happens during the school year, instruction plays a significant role in improving achievement for students participating in summer learning programs.[25] RAND cites professional development and coaching as two strategies for improving instruction in summer learning programs.[26]

● **Curriculum Aligned with School Year —** Aligning the school curriculum with a summer learning program could improve the effectiveness of summer learning programs.[27] The RAND report notes that this can take two forms: alignment with the previous school year for remediation and alignment with the upcoming school year for advancement. Alignment with curriculum is one of the major policy levers available to state and local boards.

● **Comprehensive Programming —** Research and expert opinion on summer learning note that emphasis on the curriculum beyond remediation is a key component of effective summer programs.[28] Comprehensive summer programs that provide students with engaging and enriching learning opportunities help all students learn new material and revisit previously learned material. Such programs also increase attendance rates, which in turn improves student outcomes.

● **Encouraging and Supporting High Attendance Rates —** Regardless of how effective a summer learning program is, students need to attend the program to realize any benefits.[29] Effective programs maximize attendance by addressing some of the key factors impacting attendance, such as transportation, a full day of programming, and engaging activities blended with academic content.[30]

● **Appropriate Duration of the Program —** Effective summer programs provide support for students over a defined and appropriate period of time. The longer students engage during the summer, the more likely they are to have positive achievement outcomes the next year. However, research is unclear as to the ideal amount of time students need to engage with summer learning programs to yield benefits, with recommendations ranging from a minimum of 80 hours[31] to 360 hours in the summer.[32]

● **Parent Involvement —** All education programs benefit from meaningful parental engagement, and summer learning programs are no different. Researchers found that parental involvement with summer learning programs was associated with positive student outcomes.[33] The researchers theorized that greater parental engagement increases buy-in from parents for these programs. Increased buy-in could lead to increased attendance and greater incorporation of learning strategies into the home.

● **Effective Evaluations —** Effective evaluation of summer learning programs ensures programs continuously—and successfully—integrate these key elements of effective summer programs. Such evaluations have been shown to increase program quality,[34] while also helping identify program objectives, areas in need of improvement, and outside supports needed.[35] Because evaluations help establish clear standards for what summer learning programs need to exhibit, they can be an important tool boards can use in developing quality summer learning programs across the state.

Clearly, many of the elements of effective summer learning programs are similar to, if not the same as, the strategies used in successful schools during the school-year. As state boards continue to examine summer learning programs and the supports students need throughout the year to be successful, the next section examines how some states are addressing these issues through state-level policies and actions.

State-Level Actions to Address Issues in Summer Learning

In many ways, summer learning is just beginning to take hold at the state level. Despite years of significant and meaningful work in developing summer learning programs at the local and programmatic level, state-level action in summer learning has been surprisingly sparse. However, continued research on the importance and effectiveness of summer learning programs and growing public and private investment give state boards a unique opportunity to develop a comprehensive policy framework from the beginning. A comprehensive framework for summer learning embraces elements of the New Vision for Summer School: Nine Principles (see textbox on page 7), while developing policies to support effective practice summer learning practice (as mentioned above). This section provides examples of how some states are working towards this new vision of summer learning programs.

Michigan's Model Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs

State standards are one of the primary policy tools state boards have to set expectations and directions for the education system. In 2003, Michigan used this policy tool to address out-of-school time learning by adopting the Model Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs. Michigan is one of the only states to provide such standards. While voluntary, the standards provide guidance on the programmatic elements of out-of-school time programs, including summer learning initiatives.[36]

Development of standards on any issue requires research on effective practices, understanding of critical elements of quality, and consideration of the state context. The Michigan state board's adoption of the standards was a product of approximately three years of work to achieve these conditions for action. In 2000, collaboration between the Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services and the Department of Health Services resulted in a pilot program on out-of-school time. The pilot aimed to improve the quality, increase sustainability, and evaluate the effectiveness of out-of-school time programs. From there, various statewide, out-of-school time committees developed research-based, practical standards on the topic. Without these steps, the Michigan State Board of Education would not have had the information or insight it needed to adopt standards for out-of-school time programs.[37]

Comprehensive Summer Learning: Duval County's Superintendent's Academies

Duval County Public Schools' Superintendent's Academies embody many of the elements of an effective summer learning program. Recognizing the opportunity to address summer learning loss and prepare students for the upcoming school year, local policymakers in Duval County dedicated a portion of the district's Title I money to the development of summer Superintendent's Academies. Academies are not just for struggling students in need of remediation. Any student in a turnaround school is eligible as well. In its third year, these Academies span grades K-12, have seen attendance rates of up to 98 percent and now provide summer support for over 6,300 students. Following are some of the characteristics of the Superintendent's Academies:

- 29-day program for six-and-a-half hours per day;

- Emphasis on reading, math, and science enrichment;

- A curriculum developed through examination of summer learning programs across the country;

- Comprehensive support such as provision of meals;

- Academy teachers receive an intensive three-day professional development experience that provides background in youth development and the curriculum; and

- Special versions of the program, known as Bridges Academies, exist for students making key transitions such as entering middle school, high school, and college.

To implement some of these program elements, Duval County developed a strong relationship with the local teacher's union. Through a memorandum of understanding with the union, teachers must demonstrate learning gains with students and have the recommendation of their principal to be eligible to teach in the the Superintendent Academies. Academy teachers typically have three years or more of teaching experience.

The Duval County Public Schools system is receiving Wallace support to expand its current summer programming for the elementary Academies by adding staffing for enrichment activities tied to instruction in reading, math and science. Starting in 2013, Wallace support will include Duval County in a rigorous evaluation.

Source: Author's interview with Kathryn LeRoy, Chief Officer–Academic Services, Duval County Public Schools on August 24, 2011.

The Model Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs in Michigan encompass five distinct areas for comprehensive out-of-school time programs for elementary and middle schools. While not specifically designed for high schools, the state board notes in the document that they could also prove useful in a high school setting.[38] The Model Standards are as follows:

- Health, Safety, and Nutrition;
- Human Relationships and Staffing;
- Indoor and Outdoor Environment;
- Program and Activities; and
- Administration.[39]

Through the Program and Activities Standards, a concerted effort is made to ensure that academic content and growth is integrated into out-of-school time programs. For example, indicators of a quality out-of-school time learning program include alignment with the school curriculum, linkages to academic development, and collaboration with schools.

Additionally, each standard area has approximately ten standards and each standard provides indicators of quality. For example, an indicator of providing a sufficient age-appropriate curriculum is that a quality program delivers a minimum of three developmentally appropriate activities for each child daily. In addition, there is an accompanying self-assessment for programs to find out where they stand.

Model Standards for Out-of-School Time Programs in Michigan are available at: www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/OST_Standards_revised_9-08_283850_7.pdf.

Program Self-Assessment on the standards is available at: www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/OST_Standards_Self-Evaluation_Checklist_261455_7.pdf.

Rhode Island's Basic Education Program

A state's basic education program is the foundation of authority for the state's education system. It provides the standards and methods districts and schools must use to develop a quality education for students. From curriculum to graduation requirements, the policies in the basic education program are powerful tools because they can direct both the goals of an education system and the methods to achieve these goals. In 2009, Rhode Island included expanded learning opportunities such as summer learning programs as a method for addressing student achievement issues within the education system.

Rhode Island's basic education program directs local education agencies (LEAs) to develop a system for the

provision of high-quality, expanded learning opportunities to "strengthen school engagement, support academic success, and expand all students' education experiences."[40] To fulfill this mandate, LEAs are responsible for the following:

- Developing and implementing policies and protocols that allow out-of-school time for activities that meet rigorous criteria to fulfill academic, graduation, or credit requirements;

- Providing students with opportunities for experiential learning, community service, and skill building; and

- Creating and maintaining partnerships with various state and local service providers to ensure that dropouts and youth at risk of dropping out will achieve a high school credential and be ready for work and/or postsecondary education and training or apprenticeship.[41]

In addition, Rhode Island policymakers continued this effort by developing a Joint Legislative Taskforce on the issue in 2010. Through this taskforce, summer learning stakeholders from across the state met monthly over the course of six months to identify statewide issues in summer learning and make policy recommendations. The taskforce examined issues such as increasing linkages between schools and summer learning programs, increasing coordination between summer learning programs and community-based organizations, and identifying key elements of summer learning that could be addressed through policy. Recommendations included development of additional data systems to track provision of summer learning programs by districts; use of summer learning programs as a strategy for school reform and turnaround; and alignment of federal, state, and local funds.[42]

Rhode Island policymakers took bold steps toward creating a comprehensive education system that supports students in and out of the classroom and followed up this work with continued examination of summer learning issues. While districts will take different approaches in implementing these requirements, they all now have the same goal—providing quality supports for students outside the classroom. Provision of quality summer learning programs is still a long way away from being the norm in many districts and states; however, Rhode Island's efforts illustrate the steps needed to create a framework to support summer learning programs.

Wyoming Bridges Initiative

The Wyoming Bridges Initiative represents one of the few state-led summer learning programs that explicitly

describes what a summer learning program should look like and the methods to accomplish that goal. Recognizing the need for a policy framework to support summer learning programs, Wyoming policymakers integrated specific supports and program requirements into the policies governing the state-led Bridges Initiative.

Policies for the initiative require summer programs offer instruction to students that is distinctly "different" from the instruction received during the school year. Districts should implement a "research-based approach to differentiated instruction by embedding enrichment in intervention and/or remedial learning strategies" that are an "inherent part of the instructional approach." Additionally, summer enrichment should consist of "a learning opportunity engaging students in rigorous, higher order thinking through pragmatic and/or real world application."[43]

Wyoming lawmakers acknowledged that summer learning is more than just school-year instruction provided during the summer and codified this idea into policy. While Bridges is a state-funded program, the initiative provides a model state boards can use in developing the overarching policies necessary to guide the direction of and support for summer learning programs.

Sound policymaking requires a significant base of knowledge and practice from which to draw. While it is still an emerging area in terms of policy, summer learning is now developing a sufficient foundation in research and practice—including research from the RAND Corporation, continued investment from The Wallace Foundation in effective summer learning programs (see textbox at right), and the examples of pioneer states discussed above—to help policymakers make informed decisions. Promising summer learning programs at all levels need policy supports to operate effectively. State boards have the opportunity to integrate summer learning supports into their education frameworks to support students throughout the year. The next section provides some policy exercises for state boards to begin or continue conversations in summer learning.

About the Discussion Worksheets

The following worksheets are intended to guide discussions around each of the major policy areas in summer learning. Included in each worksheet is a process for examining and inventorying current policies and a set of questions for boards to consider.

Prior to beginning these exercises, gathering the following information will help the state board use the worksheets more effectively:

Investments in Effective Summer Learning Programs

The Wallace Foundation recently launched a multi-year, $50 million summer learning initiative aimed at improving and evaluating summer learning programs in six cities across the country. Children in low-income communities in the cities of Boston, Cincinnati, Dallas, Duval County, FL, Pittsburgh, and Rochester, NY will take part in improved elementary summer learning programs beginning in 2011. Through 2014, these district-based programs will provide evidence on how schools can improve summer learning programs and the impact sustained participation in these programs can have on student outcomes.

These communities were selected because their school districts and nonprofit community organizations already operate large summer learning programs aimed at reducing summer learning loss. Full-day programs, ranging from four to six weeks in length, provide reading, writing, and math instruction, as well as such enrichment activities as studio art, zoo field trips, and cooking—all components of effective summer learning programs.

Districts will use their Wallace grants to improve and expand effective practices. The RAND Corporation will help school leaders identify improvements for the programs and evaluate their effectiveness. These efforts will help build the knowledge base on summer learning and create the conditions for policymakers to make informed decisions about summer learning in the future.

Source: The Wallace Foundation, "Six School Districts to Participate in Major Project to Test Whether Summer Learning Programs Produce Lasting Academic Gains for Low-Income Students" (Press Release, July 6, 2011).

- A brief inventory and general understanding of current policies related to summer learning;

- Challenges the state faces in summer learning; and

- An assessment of the strengths and limitations of the current policies around summer learning.

Summer learning is an extremely complex issue. However, state boards have the opportunity to significantly improve the education system by developing policies for summer learning programs as a part of the supports students need to succeed. The worksheets will help state boards consider these tough and sometimes volatile issues in a structured and productive manner.

Finally, it should be noted that because states are at various points in addressing issues in summer learning, the worksheets provided are not intended to give a comprehensive list of issues that your state board should be considering. Rather, they are to help boards explore the role the state and specifically state policy has in addressing summer learning issues.

Worksheet 1: Defining a New Vision for Summer Learning

Summer learning programs need to be an integral part of the education system. State boards of education from across the country have the opportunity to develop a comprehensive education framework that includes supports for effective summer learning programs. Much like Rhode Island and Wyoming, effective use of policy supports can guide state-level action in summer learning. To begin this process, state boards need to provide a clear vision for what summer learning should look like and how these programs fit into the larger education system.

	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Action
Vision Setting for Summer Learning	• What challenges does the entire education system face regarding student outcomes; for example, an increased need for remediation or a growing achievement gap? • How do districts or programs within the state use summer learning programs to address these challenges? Are these summer programs effective? • What state-level policies exist to support these programs in addressing challenges within the education system? • If none, what experiences, activities, and programmatic features are vital to student success when participating in summer learning programs? • What is the state role in providing guidance and resources on these experiences, activities, and programmatic features that are important for summer learning?

Worksheet 2: Summer Learning Standards

State standards in education have the ability to guide the direction and quality of any district or program. State boards of education have the opportunity to guide development of quality summer learning programs, as was done in Michigan. While voluntary in nature, the Michigan standards give summer learning providers the overarching structure for gauging effectiveness and content. Below are guiding questions to consider when developing standards for summer learning programs.

	Who Has Authority Over This Part of the System?	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Action
Standards Development		- Does the state have standards regarding summer learning programs? - If not, do standards currently exist for any out-of-school time learning programs? How might these standards apply to summer learning? - Besides funding, what are the current challenges that districts and providers are facing in summer learning? Examples include curriculum alignment, staff to student ratio, and partnership and collaboration with other state or local organizations. - What are the critical elements of standards for summer learning given the challenges facing districts and providers?

Worksheet 3: Quality Summer Learning

Quality summer learning programs are more than remediation and definitely more than supervised childcare. However, the immense variability in funding and evaluation of summer learning programs leads to different levels of effective support for students during the summer. State-level guidance and support can help address the variability in quality by helping educators and decisionmakers uniformly identify quality programs and practices.

	Who Has Authority Over This Part of the System?	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Action
Quality Summer Learning		• How do summer learning programs align their academic content with previous school-year material for mastery and upcoming school-year material for advancement? • How are summer learning programs evaluated at the state or district level? • What criteria are summer learning programs evaluated on if there are currently no state standards? • What data systems exist to both track enrollment and participation rates of students in summer learning programs and academic progress of students before and after participation in a summer learning program? • What resources are available for districts or providers to help them identify state and federal funding streams for summer learning programs? • If none, what role can the state or district play in aggregating these learning opportunities?

Worksheet 4: Summer Learning for Special Populations

Low-income students stand to gain the most from quality summer learning opportunities, given the increased impact of summer learning loss on these students. However, low-income families have greater difficulty accessing and participating in high-quality summer learning experiences. Additional summer learning supports for low-income students will be vital to addressing the achievement gap.

	Who Has Authority Over This Part of the System?	Questions to Ask When Considering Policy Action
Summer Learning for Special Populations		• What kinds of supports are available to low-income and academically struggling students during the summer besides remedial summer school programs? • Do districts currently have sufficient policy flexibility to offer such programs? • What kind of recruiting and publicizing do districts engage in for summer learning programs such as parent nights or promotional materials? • If none, how do districts ensure that those students who could most benefit from summer learning enroll and attend these programs? • What resources are available for parents to identify quality summer learning programs? • If none, what role can the state or district play in aggregating and publicizing these learning opportunities?

Endnotes

1. Jennifer S. McCombs, Catherine H. Augustine, Heather L. Schwartz, Susan J. Bodilly, Brian McInnis, Dahlia S. Lichter, andAmanda B. Cross, *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*, (Arlington, VA: RAND Education, 2011), 20.

2. Ibid., 23.

3. OECD, *Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons from PISA for the United States* (2011), 93. Available at dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264096660-en.

4. After School Alliance, *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand* (Washington, DC: author, 2010), 4.

5. McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*.

6. Ibid., 24.

7. Ibid., 20.

8. Ibid., 21-22.

9. Ibid., 22.

10. Ibid., 22-23.

11. Karl L. Alexander, Doris R. Entwisle, and Linda S. Olson, "Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap," *American Sociological Review 72*, No. 2 (April 2007), 175.

12. McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 23.

13. Brenda McLaughlin and Sarah Pitcock, *Building Quality in Summer Learning Programs: Approaches and Recommendations* (Washington, DC National Summer Learning Association, Washington, DC, September, 2009), 5.

14. Harris Cooper, Kelly Charlton, Jeff C. Valentine, and Laura Muhlenbruck, with Geoffry D. Borman, "Making the Most of Summer School: A Meta-Analytic and Narrative Review," *Nonograph of the Society for Research in Child Development 65*, no. 1 (2000), 89-90, in McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 32.

15. Geoffrey Borman, James Benson, and Laura Overman, "Families, Schools, and Summer Learning," *Elementary School Journal 106*, no. 2 (November 2005), in McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 30.

16. Geoffrey Borman and N. Maritza Dowling, "Longitudinal Achievement Effects of Multiyear Summer School: Evidence from the Teach Baltimore Randomized Field Trial," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2006), in McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 30.

17. G.A. Strizek, J.L. Pittsonberger, K.E. Riordan, D.M. Lyter, and G.F. Orlofsky, *Characteristics of Schools, Districts, Teachers, Principals, and School Libraries in the United States: 2003-04 Schools and Staffing Survey* (Washington DC: NCES 2006-31, 2006), 33.

18. Ron Fairchild, Jeff Smink, and Ashley B. Stewart, *It's Time for Summer: An Analysis of Recent Policy and Funding Opportunities* (Baltimore, MD: National Summer Learning Association, September, 2009), 25.

19. After School Alliance, *America After 3PM*, 3.

20. Fairchild et al., *It's Time for Summer*, 12.

21. Ibid., 26.

22. Ibid., 13.

23. Cooper et al., "Making the Most of Summer School," in McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 32.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 33.

26. McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 33

27. McLaughlin and Pitcock, "Building Quality in Summer Learning Programs: Approaches and Recommendations," 23-24.

28. Ibid., 27.

29. Borman et al., "Families, Schools, and Summer Learning," 33.

30. McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning*, xvi.

31. Ibid., 5.

32. Scott Winship, Matissa Hollister, Joel Howich, Pat Sharkey, and Christopher Wimer, *Promoting Education Achievement and Opportunity Through Summer Scholarships* (Washington, DC: New Vision and Center for American Progress, 2005), 4 and 8.

33. Cooper et al., "Making the Most of Summer School," in McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 34.

34. McLaughlin and Pitcock, *Building Quality in Summer Learning Programs: Approaches and Recommendations*, 27.

35. McCombs et al., *Making Summer Count*, 34.

36. Michigan State Board of Education, *Model Standards for Out-of-School Time/After-School Programs in Michigan* (Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Eduation, 2008), 1.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., 2.

39. Ibid., 2.

40. Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education, *Basic Education Program Regulations* (Providence, RI: Rhode Island Department of Education, June 4, 2009), 26.

41. Ibid.

42. Rhode Island Joint Legislative Taskforce on Summer Learning Programs, *Findings of the Joint Legislative Taskforce on Summer Learning Programs* (Providence, RI: Rhode Island General Assembly, May 2010).

43. Fairchild et al., *It's Time for Summer*, 28-29.