

# Learning in Summer Study Session #1: Making the Case for Summer Learning

## LESSON 1

*This lesson plan serves as a guide to the presentation on “Making the Case for Summer Learning” and associated materials. It is intended to assist board members seeking to conduct a board study session focused on summer learning.*

*The goals of this lesson are to introduce the board to the concept of summer learning programs that differ from traditional summer school and provide information about how such programs can support desired student outcomes. At the end of the session the board is called upon to think about whether summer learning should be a priority for meeting the needs of the students they serve.*

### SESSION MATERIALS

- PowerPoint Presentation: Making the Case for Summer Learning: Learning in Summer Study Session #1
- Video by Horizons National: [Summer Learning Loss](#)
- CSBA Video: [Summer Learning and STEAM](#)
- Survey: Should Summer be a Priority in Your District?

### ASSIGNED READING PRIOR TO SESSION

- Case Studies: What Powerful Summer Programs in California Look Like
- [Summer and STEAM Make an Ideal Match](#)
- [Supporting the Summer Learning Strategy to Boost Student Achievement](#)

### OUTLINE AND SUGGESTED PACING (80 minutes total)

#### Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Slide 1:** Welcome and introductions
- **Slide 2:** Open with the [Summer Learning Loss](#) video by Horizons National
- **Slide 3:** Review the questions that will be answered in the session. These include:
  - What do powerful summer programs look like?
  - Which students stand to benefit?
  - What are the learning opportunities?
  - What is the role of a governing board?

#### Powerful Summer Learning Programs Are Not “Traditional” Summer School (15 minutes)

- **Slide 4:** Explain how summer programs can look different than programs and school during the school year.
- **Slide 5:** Show [Summer Learning and STEAM](#) video. This video captures a bit of what is possible in powerful summer learning programs.
- **Slide 6:** Use video as springboard for discussion regarding how summer learning can look different from summer school. Ask: What did you see students doing that makes this different from traditional summer school?

Key points include that the students:

- Focus on motivation and engagement. The summer learning model is not a traditional summer school with the highest priority being remediation. A powerful summer learning program focuses on activities that motivate and engage young people.
- Provide enrichment experiences. Summer learning provides enrichment experiences (similar to those available to children from higher-income families who can pay for them). That includes field trips, themes, and a camp-like atmosphere. These are activities that get kids up and moving.
- Serve students most vulnerable to summer learning loss.

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Also important is that students want to be there. It's "cool" to attend instead of feeling like it's a punishment.

### Highest-Need Students Stand to Benefit Most (20 minutes)

- **Slide 7:** The next couple of slides will allow the group to explore how summer learning programs can benefit some of the highest-need students. Before moving to the next slide, briefly brainstorm which students summer learning programs can benefit the most and how they benefit. Encourage attendees to think about examples from *Case Studies: What Powerful Programs in California Look Like* and stories from their districts. Write down responses on chart paper.
- **Slide 8:** Review the benefits for students from low-income families. For middle and upper class Americans, "summer vacation" frequently entails family vacations, camps, and local enrichment programs (sports, arts, and music). Through these opportunities, children continue to learn in measurable and positive ways. For low-income families and children, however, it's typically a different story. They often lack the resources to participate in comparable activities. For them, summer is more likely an educational drought—a period when they are not only not learning anything new, but are also slipping backward and leaving behind knowledge they gained during the school year. Summer learning programs can change this by providing them with enrichment activities, healthy food, and physical activity. Also important is that these are programs that kids are excited to attend.
- **Slide 9:** Review the benefits for students who need extra time to learn (beyond the 180 days of the school year). The summer hours are a crucial resource if we want ALL students ready for college, career and life, because:
  - Not all children learn at the same rate;
  - English learners have more to accomplish; and
  - There are not enough hours in the regular school day and year for all that children need to learn before graduation.

The extra time does not just allow students to master basic skills, but it can also develop their interest and passion around subjects such as the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math (STEAM).

- **Slide 10:** Review the benefits for students who may not see themselves belonging in school. When a summer learning program includes youth development strategies that make it active and engaging, it also can support district social-emotional learning goals by giving new experiences of school to students who need to:
  - Improve their sense of self and their self-control in a safe environment;
  - Develop a better understanding of how they fit into their school and community; and
  - Strengthen their confidence that they belong in school and can learn successfully.

By their design and structure, high-quality summer programs have key features linked to social-emotional development. These features include projects and activities that are collaborative in nature; keep learning active (using students' bodies and minds); have meaning and relevance to students based on their interests and values; and broaden students' horizons by exposing them to new ideas, experiences, and people. When staff from afterschool programs help run these programs, students also get to know adults from the local community who can serve as positive role models.

- **Slide 11:** Participants pair with a partner to go over the discussion prompts:
  - In which of your schools might students be most vulnerable to summer learning loss?
  - For which student groups would more time be particularly important?
  - Are school climate and social-emotional development issues getting in the way of learning? For which students? How might summer learning help?

Participants then share the key points from their conversation, followed by a whole group reflection.

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### Summer Learning Programs Can and Should Align with Your District Goals (25 minutes)

- **Slide 12:** The group will now explore how summer learning programs can support the goals in your district. Emphasize that when we plan for summer, we are not planning for a program separate from the rest of the school year, but ideally for a program that supports the broader district goals. Remind attendees about the [\*Summer Learning and STEAM\*](#) video shown at the beginning and discuss learning strategies that were presented.

Ask: What struck you in the video related to strategies that supported learning? What resources made the programs possible?

Write down responses.

- **Slide 13:** Summarize responses and emphasize the key points, including that:
  - Summer learning programs align with school district learning goals in ways that are intentional and strategic;
  - School districts and county offices of education that operate summer learning programs find that these programs are cost effective in terms of their cost relative to student outcomes; and
  - Districts and county offices of education can partner with the community to generate a range of funding sources.
- **Slide 14:** Summarize research on powerful summer programs, including that effective summer programs:
  - Broaden youth horizons by exposing them to new adventures, skills, and ideas such as a nature walk, new computer program, museum visit, or live performance;
  - Include a wide variety of activities such as reading, writing, math, science, arts, and public service projects conducted in ways that are fun and engaging;
  - Help youth build mastery by doing something they enjoy and care about such as creating a neighborhood garden, writing a healthy snacks cookbook, or operating a robot;
  - Foster cooperative learning as students work with their peers on team projects and group activities such as a neighborhood clean-up; and
  - Promote healthy habits by providing nutritious food, physical recreation, and outdoor activities.

Research also shows that these programs need to last at least one month, giving youth enough time to benefit from their experiences.

- **Slide 15:** Use points on the slide and the [\*Case Studies: What Powerful Programs in California Look Like\*](#) document to describe examples of how programs can meet locally driven objectives. To meet the particular needs of the students in their communities, summer learning programs differ in their focus, objectives, and the ages of the students they serve. Examples include:
  - Academic-focused programs that improve students' skills and achievement in areas like math, reading, and science, and promote high school completion and college preparation;
  - Enrichment and recreation programs that emphasize new experiences, positive relationships with instructional staff and peers, and a sense of belonging (often focusing on fostering personal, social, emotional, physical, and career-related abilities);
  - Programs that emphasize community connections often include community service projects that support project-based learning, collaboration, and civic engagement; and
  - Career development programs (often for older youth) that promote career decision-making, interview skills, and other job-related abilities that develop employability and economic self-sufficiency. Internship opportunities with a school-based learning component are another example.

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Many of the most effective programs combine aspects of all of the above

- **Slide 16:** Use points on the slide to summarize the elements found in powerful programs. For example, they:
  - Take place on school sites;
  - Combine efforts and knowledge of teachers and other staff;
  - Employ staff who have strong relationships with students;
  - Provide engaging learning experiences; and
  - Are aligned with district goals.
- **Slide 17:** Gather responses from the discussion questions and write them down on chart paper:
  - What academic areas are students in your district lagging in? Which grades and student groups?
  - Does the district need to enrich its curriculum and in which subjects?
  - Are there approaches (such as project-based or service learning) that can be introduced in summer learning?

Make connections between responses to district goals and the needs of student groups within your district. Possible connections can include LCAP goals, issues at specific schools, and plans for professional development or areas where need to improve staff practice has already been identified.

### Summer Learning as a Priority and Next Steps (15 minutes)

- **Slide 18:** Distribute *Should Summer be a Priority in Your District?* survey and allow about five minutes for attendees to fill it out individually.
- **Slide 19:** Gather responses (could do show of hands, etc.) and agree on what the results indicate. Could ask whether it's a thumbs up or thumbs down for pursuing summer learning further. Ask for additional questions that might need to be answered to decide.
- **Slide 20:** Use points on the slide to provide perspective on what comes next. This is an opportunity to preview the content of Lessons 2 and 3, including the *District Needs Assessment for Summer Programs*.

Also emphasize the role of the board in creating an expectation that summer programs are part of a district's overall educational effort. To achieve this goal, school districts and their governing boards should treat summer learning equally with traditional school year programs and make them part of year-round planning (beginning in March).

- **Slide 21:** Review resources for board members to learn more and explore the issue further. CSBA has published multiple resources related to the development of summer learning programs in California. You can visit the CSBA summer learning page to find lesson plans and materials for this study session and two other board study sessions related to summer learning. CSBA also has materials to help board members plan for and implement summer programs, including a Planning Guide and a Guide to Regional Partners.

**OPTION:** A two-hour study session to provide time to review the *District Needs Assessment for Summer Programs* included in *Learning in Summer Study Session#1: Assessing the Needs in Your District*.