

Legislative

# FactSheet

August 2014

## The Summer Solution to Closing the Gap

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide an overview of the potential impact summer learning programs have on California's schoolchildren. Summer programming has become more achievable for districts due to the flexibility provided by the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

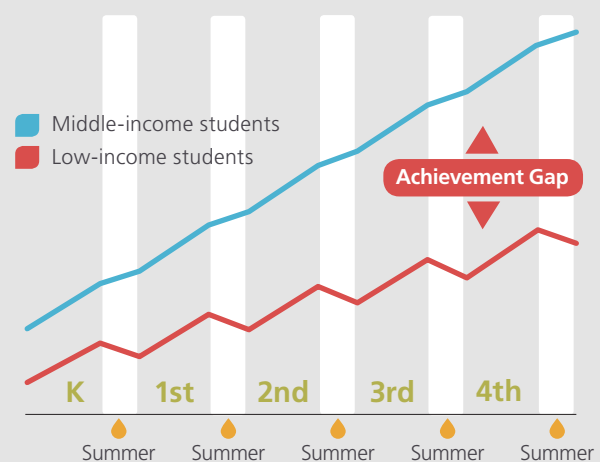
For many middle- and upper-income families, summer break often entails family vacations, camps and local enrichment programs. Although such opportunities are different than what is offered during the traditional school year, they allow children to continue learning during the summer in measurable and positive ways. However, summertime for some low-income students can be a much different story. Summer for such children can be an educational drought, a period when they are not learning anything new and often slipping backward, leaving behind knowledge they gained during the school year. This phenomenon is called summer learning loss.

### Lost learning

Most students experience some level of summer learning loss. However, the loss is much greater for students from low-income families. A 2011 Rand Corp. study estimated an average summer learning loss of as much as two months of instruction for low-income students who were not mentally engaged during summer break. Moreover, the academic slide is cumulative. By the time disadvantaged students enter high school, they are often years behind their peers.

A 2007 study conducted by Johns Hopkins University found that all children learn at about the same rate during the school year, but two-thirds of the ninth-grade achievement gap can be explained by what happens over the summers in the elementary years.

### Summer Learning Loss Increases the Achievement Gap, a Trajectory



### Health impact

For many low-income students, summer break also means a departure from regular and healthy meals. Many of these children depend upon subsidized school meals to supplement substandard diets at home; when summer arrives, that aid frequently goes away. Unfortunately—as a 2013 study by the California Food Policy Advocates has found—only 17% of students who received subsidized lunches during the school year also participated in a similar summer lunch program.

Other ill effects also accompany a summer break. Children who are not engaged during summer months are more likely to suffer from boredom, inactivity, isolation, and poor eating. A 2007 Ohio State University study found that many children gain weight two or three

times faster during summer months compared to the traditional school year. This phenomenon is due to decreased activity and access to unhealthy food choices during those months.

## Moving forward

The answer—according to a rising chorus of educators, academicians and others—is to expand and deepen summer enrichment opportunities for children at the local level, focusing first on students in low-income or disadvantaged families. An increased number of local districts have begun responding to the need for summer programs, thanks in part to LCFF. Districts across the state have greater discretion and authority to use such vital funding to support summer learning programs. Continued state support for LCFF and high-impact summer programs is key to the growth of such efforts and to improve outcomes for our students.

*“While middle-income children retain knowledge or, in many cases, make gains over the summer, low-income children fall behind. This learning loss is cumulative so when it occurs consistently over time, children fall so far behind that it becomes impossible to catch up.” –Jennifer Peck, Executive Director of the Partnership for Children and Youth*

The Partnership for Children and Youth, as a part of the Summer Matters campaign, organized statewide site visits to provide state, regional, and district leaders a chance to view the elements of successful summer programs. The visits also allowed attendees the opportunity to talk with site and district leaders about the important impact LCFF will play in funding these programs in the coming years.

## Call to action

The California School Boards Association and the Partnership for Children and Youth encourage you to explore the current and potential summer learning programs happening within your community in order to draw attention and garner support for such effective summer programming.

Please contact Erika Hoffman, (916) 669-2553, [ehoffman@csba.org](mailto:ehoffman@csba.org), or Peter Wright, (916) 669-3357, [pwright@csba.org](mailto:pwright@csba.org), and visit [www.csba.org/summerlearning](http://www.csba.org/summerlearning) for additional information on the benefits of summer programming for California’s schoolchildren.

This work was made possible by funding from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

