



# NEWSLETTER

## A New Vision of Summer Learning

**T**HE 1.2 MILLION AMERICAN TEENAGERS WHO FAIL TO COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL EACH YEAR START ON A PATH TO FAILURE LONG BEFORE GRADUATION DAY. FOR MOST, RISK FACTORS LIKE LOW ACHIEVEMENT AND POOR ATTENDANCE ARE EVIDENT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL. AND RESEARCH SHOWS THAT STUDENTS WHO START THEIR FRESHMAN YEAR BEHIND IN MATH AND READING ARE AT A HIGH RISK OF DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL. WHAT IS NOT GENERALLY RECOGNIZED, HOWEVER, IS THE STRONG LINK BETWEEN THE SUMMER LEARNING LOSS THAT MANY STUDENTS EXPERIENCE THROUGHOUT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND THE ACADEMIC STRUGGLES THAT INFLUENCE DROPOUT DECISIONS YEARS LATER.



Summer Learning

**I**n a widely reported study, Karl Alexander and colleagues from Johns Hopkins University documented the relationship between lost learning time in the early grades and low achievement in the first year of high school. That study made a compelling case for high-quality summer programming designed to stem summer learning loss and raise achievement for struggling students. And such findings have led to a growing consensus among educators and policymakers that summer programs with engaging academic lessons and enrichment opportunities could be an effective strategy for education reform efforts.

This issue of the newsletter takes a closer look at the potential role of summer learning opportunities in reducing the number of high school dropouts.

The ongoing economic crisis has been cruel to school district budgets, and summer school programs have suffered severe cuts in many parts of the country. A number of forward-thinking districts, however, are bucking the trend and instead investing in an expanded, innovative summer school model.

“This is not punitive; it’s not remedial,” says Eddie Willson, a summer program manager for the Pittsburgh Public Schools. “We designed the curriculum so that it not only meets a student’s specific academic needs, but also is interesting and engaging and

offers a big opportunity for advancement and enrichment.” With more than 40% of the district’s middle school youth enrolled thus far, it appears kids agree.

Pittsburgh Public Schools’ innovative approach to summer learning is profiled in this issue, along with the multiyear bridge program at Furman University in South Carolina for struggling, high-need 9th–12th graders.

Also in this issue, you’ll read about a new project of the National Summer Learning Association—described in the piece by Brenda McLaughlin and Hillary Hardt on page 2—to identify effective practices for summer transition programs that bridge middle school to high school. This summer, the Association will issue planning grants to three district-community organization partnerships to support the expansion and enhancement of existing programs.

Gene Bottoms, a senior vice president at the Southern Regional Education Board, answers questions about the elements of effective summer transition programs. In the Q and A on page 7, Bottoms, who directs the Board’s High Schools That Work initiative, describes summer as an ideal venue for helping students develop good study habits and learn select topics more deeply through hands-on experiences. Summer transition programs, he says, should also

include visits to college campuses and local businesses to motivate students to develop long-term academic and career goals.

The research review on page 6 provides more details on Alexander’s pivotal study on summer learning loss, and suggests other related resources.

In the commentary, Ron Fairchild, the CEO for the National Summer Learning Association, makes the case for policies and programs that support a “new vision of summer school.” Fairchild proposes a model that retires the timeworn remedial approach and replaces it with a dynamic vision, one that motivates more students to participate fully in meaningful summer activities that promote academic and personal growth.

“Only recently have educators, politicians, and advocates begun to realize summer’s great potential for closing the achievement gap and keeping kids on track to graduate through innovative programming,” Fairchild writes. “This notion moves away from traditional, remedial summer school and instead embraces both core academic learning and hands-on enrichment activities.”

We hope you will find these articles and other references informing, and your view of summer learning expanded.

—Brenda McLaughlin, Guest Editor  
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# Using Summers More Strategically to Bridge the 8th–9th Grade Transition

by Brenda McLaughlin and Hillary Hardt

In late 2009, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the National Summer Learning Association launched a one-year initiative to study and report on quality summer learning programs that help students in high-poverty communities accelerate learning and successfully transition to high school. At the local level, this initiative will directly support three school districts and their community partners in planning to enhance and expand innovative programs aligned to larger school reform efforts. At the national level, the initiative seeks to increase awareness about innovative models and effective practices in summer learning 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> grade transition programs.

To kick off our investigation, the Association lured a group of 50 experts to a meeting in Tampa, Florida, to dig into what we can learn from existing research, policy, and practice. Several themes emerged during this rich discussion, and we've highlighted a few below. They identify important program design features, gaps in the research, and needs of the field.

**Research.** Extensive research spanning over a century has raised national awareness about summer learning loss and its link to later life success. But the field lacks equally compelling evidence about proven methods for accelerating learning. Program evaluations with strong research methodologies are critically needed.

**Content.** We do know, however, that motivating and equipping youth to succeed cannot be done with narrowly focused remediation summer school. Rather, youth more readily engage in programs that seek out their input on content and approach, are relevant to their lives, utilize “adult like situations” and hands-on approaches, provide enriching and new experiences, and help them develop 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills.

**Dosage.** With respect to time, more is better when it comes to supporting transitions. Programs at least 4–6 weeks in length, with no less than 150 contact hours, are recommended in order to have an impact. And for that impact to be sustained, multiple year cohort models stand out as the shining stars.

**Technology Integration.** Summer transition programs that are tech savvy in delivery and assessment can be very attractive to youth while giving them practical skills and driving down operational costs. This is a no-brainer for digital natives.

**Ownership and Connections.** A great challenge for transition programs is specifying ownership and gaining needed buy in. Is supporting successful transitions the middle school's issue? The high school's?

Community partners'? Parents'? All of the above? Our experts told us loud and clear that both middle school and high school staff must “own” the issue of transition, and that districts need to find better ways of engaging parents and community partners so that resources can be shared and deployed across agencies. Summer must be connected to school-year efforts and viewed as an essential component of a year-round approach to supporting vulnerable youth.

**Policy and Funding.** Lastly, funding for programs continues to be a principal challenge, particularly sustainable sources of funding that allow programs to reach scale. While the reauthorization of ESEA and the funds available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provide unique windows of opportunity, dedicated, sustainable sources of funds are sorely needed for summer programs in general.

In addition to this meeting, the Association also gained substantial knowledge about effective practices in summer transition programs from a survey to our national network of providers. The majority of responding programs operate between 20-25 hours per week over 5-6 weeks during the summer, and nearly half of the programs bridge into the school year. Programs typically focus on developing academic skills and accelerating learning while orienting youth to high school and college and increasing efficacy and motivation to succeed.

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National  
Dropout Prevention  
Center/Network

## NEWSLETTER

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# Network Notes

## Meet Our Guest Editor

■ Brenda McLaughlin, Vice President for Community Initiatives, leads the National Summer Learning Association's community initiatives, ensuring alignment



between the organization's overall goals and on-the-ground strategies. Her background includes serving as director for research and evaluation at the National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University. She is a recognized expert in the field of summer learning, regularly speaking to out-of-school-time professionals and the media.

## The National Summer Learning Association



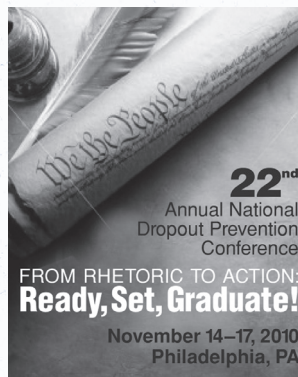
■ We are delighted to be partnering with the National Summer Learning Association for this newsletter. One of the NDPC/N's 15 Effective Strategies for Dropout Prevention is *Out of School Learning*, and a strong research base shows that the summer months offer an extraordinary opportunity to close the achievement gap. The Association, which also has membership options, can provide assistance with schools and communities to maximize this time and to learn how to integrate it more fully with the entire school year. [www.summerlearning.org/join](http://www.summerlearning.org/join)

## Solutions Over the Summer

### Solutions to the Dropout Crisis

■ Although *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* is taking the summer off, it doesn't mean that you cannot access the outstanding professional development offered by this monthly radio webcast. All of the 25 previously recorded programs are available on the webcast site, in the Archives. Catch up on such programs as the June program, *Successful Summers: The Role of High Quality Summer Learning in High School Completion*. And are you thinking of starting a mentoring program? The best guidance is found in our June 2009 program. And learn the guidelines for professional development by reviewing the February 2010 program, *Promoting Powerful Professional Learning to Advance Student Achievement*. [www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast](http://www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast)

## Philadelphia to Host National Conference

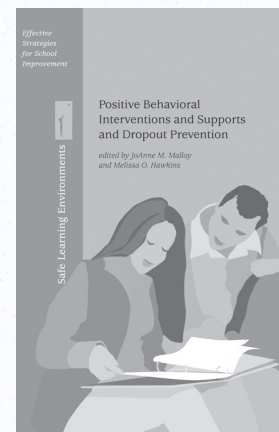


■ Put November 14-17, 2010, in Philadelphia on your professional development calendar today, and then go online to our Web site to register! The 22nd Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference is designed to enhance the leadership skills of all adults who are seeking to strengthen interventions among

schools, communities, and families, especially those in at-risk situations. The Conference program will include middle/high school transition, parental involvement, urban education, best practices in multiple pathways to graduation, extended learning opportunities, legislative affairs, research/early warning indicators, career and technical education, and literacy strategies.

## PBIS—A Framework for Dropout Prevention

■ In this quarterly packet is our newest monograph in the *Effective Strategies for School Improvement Series*. Edited by JoAnne M. Malloy and Melissa O. Hawkins, the publication, *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and Dropout Prevention*, brings to our Network an excellent presentation of PBIS and in particular, looks at the experience of implementation in 10 New Hampshire high schools as part of the APEX II project (Achievement Dropout Prevention and Excellence). All the schools that participated in the project reduced their dropout rates an average of 60%. Ms. Malloy is the coordinator of APEX II and is the Project Coordinator of the Institute on Disability at the University of New Hampshire. Ms. Hawkins is a Research Associate at the NDPC.





# Program Profile

## Providing Students With “Bridges to a Brighter Future”

by Kathleen Manzo

In August 1990, a magazine article caught the attention of a woman in Greenville, SC. The article described a program that bridged the gap between dreams and reality for disadvantaged high school students. The idea of helping students whose academic potential surpassed their circumstances struck a chord with the woman who then provided an endowment to start a similar program—Bridges to a Brighter Future—at Furman University, Greenville, SC, in 1997.

The goal of this comprehensive program is to equip low-income students with the tools and support they need to overcome the barriers facing them, graduate from high school, and enroll in college. Since it started, all of Bridges’ graduates have completed high school, and 93% of its students have enrolled in college.

Studies show most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in math computation skills over the summer months, and low-income kids lose more than two months in reading achievement while their middle-income peers make slight gains. About two-thirds of the 9th grade achievement gap between lower and higher income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning experiences during their elementary school years, research has found.

In 2009, Bridges was named one of the nation’s best summer learning programs, one that the National Summer Learning Association identifies as a model in closing the summer achievement gap and keeping kids in school and on track academically.

“Bridges is a holistic program,” says Director Tobi Swartz. “Our foundational core is academic enrichment, but we do a lot outside the classroom to address personal and emotional development. Many of our students do not have stable home environments;

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*For the ones who deserve a second chance, Bridges is your shot. Bridges is your door.*

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coming to a place with structure, three meals a day, and people who care about them is life-changing.”

Students spend three summers at Bridges, starting as rising sophomores and staying until they are seniors. The program takes in about 25 to 30 Greenville County public school students each year and currently serves a racially diverse group of about 75. All are from families earning less than \$35,000 a year, and two-thirds are from single-parent households.

Describing her experience in the Bridges program, Cierra recalls going from being a freshman “nobody” to president of her high school’s senior class. “Coming from a line of generations of mothers and grandmothers who didn’t have the opportunity to go to college, you have this dream and this ambition to want to go, but you don’t really have the support because they didn’t have that experience,” Cierra says in a video on the Bridges Web site. “Bridges came into my life. It was freshman year. I mean I was doing well academically but, as far as college, I was totally clueless.”

“I was introduced to the Bridges program and the first thing that caught [my attention] was the opportunities,” she says.

Those include the chance to live at Furman University for four weeks during the summer and take classes four days a week in math; English; social studies; science; college planning; and electives like music and video production, pottery, mock trial, and improvisational theatre. On

Wednesdays, first-year students take field trips to area locations to learn about the cultural, business, and civic aspects of Greenville. Rising juniors and seniors tour five to seven colleges every summer. Weekends are a mix of community service and activities like bowling or roller-skating. Parents visit on Sundays, and students enjoy pool parties on Sunday afternoons. And the program doesn’t end when school begins again in the fall. Support continues throughout the academic year with Saturday College, where students return to Furman once a month for tutoring, college planning workshops, and activities. Students must maintain a B average to stay in the program for all three years.

Rodrick, another Bridges student, says that the program has had a big impact on his life.

“I had a hard life. I did some things that a young teenager shouldn’t have done,” he says in a video on the Bridges Web site. “But I also had another chance because life is what you make it. . . . For the ones who deserve a second chance, Bridges is your shot. Bridges is your door.”

For more information, contact Tobi Swartz at [tobi.swartz@furman.edu](mailto:tobi.swartz@furman.edu).





## Summer Academy Makes Dreams Come True

by Kathleen Manzo

Summer for Pittsburgh's middle school students will be filled with outdoor recreation and trips to the zoo, studio sessions producing stories for a youth radio corps, and rehearsals for a local theater production. Combined with a dynamic academic program, Pittsburgh Public Schools' Summer Dreamers Academy will offer high-interest activities for the district's rising sixth, seventh, and eighth graders to prepare them for high school and set them on a path toward long-term academic success. In the summer before they enter high school, Pittsburgh students get additional attention—through a fun and rigorous orientation called Grade Nation—to help them get prepared for the academic challenges ahead and motivated to graduate.

While many districts are responding to state budget shortfalls by cutting summer programs, Pittsburgh is investing more than \$10 million in federal stimulus dollars over two years to improve academic achievement, student engagement—and graduation rates.

The National Summer Learning Association, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is working to identify best practices in summer high school transition programs to prepare students for the critical 9<sup>th</sup> grade year. Pittsburgh's innovative approach to using summer as a way to further engage youth in learning while supporting their transition into high school reflects an emerging, positive trend in high school reform.

The Academy's academic focus is packaged in a summer camp atmosphere that allows students to experience a range of activities that might nurture broader interests beyond school. The program replaces the traditional, skills-focused summer school that emphasized remediation for low-achieving students and was often

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*The new summer program is being designed and marketed not as something students have to do, but that they want to do.*

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considered punitive. The new summer program is being designed and marketed not as something students *have to do*, but that they *want to do*.

"The learning loss that takes place over summer for kids who don't have access to quality programs is to blame for a substantial proportion of the disparity in achievement," says Deputy Superintendent Linda Lane, who became convinced of the value of the academy approach after attending the National Summer Learning Association's annual conference, where she became steeped in the research on summer learning loss. "Stretching out the time kids are learning and practicing is very important."

Pittsburgh's initiative reflects the model for summer learning that the Association and experts in the field have been calling for as a way of addressing the achievement gaps that are often exacerbated by summer learning loss among disadvantaged students.

"Through a summer learning experience that is unlike traditional school, we believe these students will enter 9<sup>th</sup> grade at or above grade level in reading and math," says Eddie Willson, a summer program director for the Pittsburgh Public Schools. "And they also gain new passion for learning that continues beyond summer, and the skills and knowledge that will allow them to thrive in and beyond high school."

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan says such an approach is an innovative use of stimulus funds. "There's a huge opportunity to use this money to buy more time" for learning, Duncan says in a 2009 video produced by the U.S. Department of Education. "It's one of the best investments we can make."

Organizers in Pittsburgh heeded his advice by extending academic offerings through the summer months. But they are not shortchanging the fun and leisure that tend to motivate youth and are essential to their overall well-being.

Far from the stereotype of summer school as a bastion for boredom for low-performing students, participants in the academy can choose the books they like and then explore their readings further through science- and arts-related activities and multimedia projects. In the afternoon, they will participate in some of the 27 activities—such as kayaking, martial arts, music and dance, and technology—provided by community organizations.

Guest speakers, camp skits, college awareness, and team-building activities are part of the program at the city's high school and middle school campuses.

Some 800 students, or a third of incoming freshmen, are enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Nation, which combines team building, study skills, and fun educational activities to provide a positive and supportive start to the high school years.

"We want to get across the idea that learning does not have to mean sitting with a worksheet," Lane says. "You can have fun and learn at the same time."

For more information, contact Eddie Willson at [Awilson1@pghboe.net](mailto:Awilson1@pghboe.net).



# Research Review

*Summer Learning and Its Implications: Insights from the Beginning School Study.* K. L. Alexander; D. R. Entwistle; & L. S. Olson. (Summer, 2007). *New Directions for Youth Development*, Number 114.

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/114286257/issue>

The literature on summer learning loss spans some 40 studies over more than a century, consistently showing the same result: that all kids tend to lose math skills during the break from school; but low-income youth are particularly susceptible to a slide in reading skills that accumulates over time and contributes to the achievement gap.

One of the most notable studies on summer learning loss was conducted by Karl Alexander, Doris Entwistle, and Linda Olson at Johns Hopkins University. It followed 800 Baltimore City Schools children over the course of more than 20 years, beginning in first grade and continuing through high school graduation and college. Their work, published in 2007, shows that low-income youth suffer significantly from a loss of academic skills over the summertime. As the losses mount, they contribute to an achievement gap that can make the difference between whether students set out on a path for college or decide to drop out of high school.

The study found that about two-thirds of the 9th-grade achievement gap in reading between disadvantaged youngsters and their more advantaged peers can be explained by what happens over the summer during the elementary school years. The higher performing group isn't necessarily high income, but simply better off. In Baltimore, that typically meant solidly middle class, with parents who are likely to have gone to college versus dropping out.

The study found that statistically, lower income children begin school with lower achievement scores, but during the school year they progress at about the same rate as their peers. Over the summer, it's a dramatically different story. During the summer months, disadvantaged children tread water at best or even fall behind, while better off children build their skills.

Alexander launched his study in 1982, recruiting almost 800 children in Baltimore City and monitoring their academic progress from first grade well into adulthood. Researchers analyzed patterns over time from achievement tests given in the spring and fall. They also interviewed children and parents.

The researchers found that 40% of the children they started studying as first graders left high school without diplomas, which Alexander terms "a problem of monumental proportions . . . These early patterns of out-of-school learning have profoundly important repercussions that echo throughout the years."

—Brenda McLaughlin  
[bmclaughlin@summerlearning.org](mailto:bmclaughlin@summerlearning.org)

## Also Recommended

*Summer Learning: Research, Policies, and Programs.* (2004). Geoffrey D. Borman and Matthew Boulay, Editors. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers. This book brings together up-to-date, research-based evidence concerning summer learning and provides descriptions and analyses of a range of summer school programs. The chapters present theory and data that explain both the phenomenon of summer learning loss and the potential for effective summer programs to mitigate loss and increase student achievement.

*School Calendars and Academic Achievement*, Harris Cooper, Duke University, Geoffrey Borman, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Ron Fairchild, Johns

Hopkins University. In *Handbook of Research on Schools, Schooling and Human Development*. Edited by Judith L. Meece and Jacquelynne S. Eccles. Routledge, (2010).

## Resources

### National Summer Learning Association

The National Summer Learning Association serves as a network hub for thousands of summer learning program providers and stakeholders across the country, providing tools, resources, and expertise to improve program quality, generate support, and increase youth access and participation. The Association offers professional development; quality assessment and evaluation; best practices dissemination and collaboration; and strategic consulting to states, school districts, community organizations, and funders.

[www.summerlearning.org](http://www.summerlearning.org)

### Afterschool Alliance

The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children have access to affordable, quality afterschool programs. Afterschool programs are critical to children and families today, yet the need for programs is far from being met.

[www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)

## Events

October 4-7, 2010 Orlando, FL  
Dropout Prevention Institute/School Attendance Symposium—*Be There to Get There: Engaging the Promise in Every Graduate*

[www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org)

Nov. 8-10, 2010 Indianapolis, IN  
Summer Changes Everything™ National Conference

[www.summerlearning.org/conference](http://www.summerlearning.org/conference)

Nov. 14-17, 2010 Philadelphia, PA  
22nd Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference—*From Rhetoric to Action: Ready, Set, Graduate!*

[www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org)



# An Interview With Gene Bottoms

**G**ene Bottoms has been studying what works, as well as what doesn't, in the nation's high schools for more than 20 years. As director of the High Schools That Work initiative at the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), Bottoms has been involved in efforts at more than 1,000 secondary schools in 30 states to improve programs for college and career-bound students. The highly-regarded SREB initiative is guided by the notion that most students can master rigorous academic and career/technical studies if school leaders and teachers create an environment that motivates students to make the effort to succeed.

Bottoms talked recently with the National Summer Learning Association about what he has learned about effective summer programs for middle and high school students, particularly those who show risk factors for dropping out.

**NSLA:** What opportunities are there for schools to tap into summertime to better support students as they transition to high school?

**Bottoms:** So many students exhibit risk factors for dropping out as early as middle school. If you can do something in the summer before those students get to high school to head off the academic challenges they are likely to face in 9th grade, it could give them a great jump start toward graduation. If you decide that you are going to

use the summer to teach them to grade level standards and pick five or six critical things you want them to master, and teach those not just from a basic level but to in-depth understanding, you will be more successful than if you just use it for remediation. For these kids to master something deeply and really get it, that builds confidence. If they have confidence that with effort they can achieve something, that's empowerment for them to push forward.

**NSLA:** Summer school is often perceived as a remedial program for teaching basic skills. That doesn't seem to align with your suggestion of teaching to grade-level standards and teaching for in-depth understanding.

**Bottoms:** The test prep approach simply does not motivate students. If all you're going to do in summer is four more intensive weeks of test-prep kinds of experiences, you are not going to engage kids deeply or get them excited about school and learning. You need to take an approach that is quite different from what you do in the school year. Use summer school as an opportunity to engage them intellectually; use learning activities that get them emotionally and socially involved and that cause them to use those habits and behaviors that successful students use, like effective time management.

**NSLA:** In your recommendations you say you have to engage students intellectually, emotionally, socially, and behaviorally. How do you do that?

**Bottoms:** If you learn a concept in an hour of really good instruction, and then in the next hour you are in a lab setting where you have to apply that knowledge, that's a high level of learning that

you can apply to another context. It means something to you and you are working with fellow students to complete an academic task. So that kind of lesson hits on the intellectual, emotional, and social aspects. Then you also need to teach students the habits of success, the study skills, time management, and how to organize their work and complete assignments that are high quality. Many students do not come from homes that instill those habits of success as a part of growing up.

**NSLA:** Are teachers and districts prepared to provide this kind of instruction?

**Bottoms:** If you recruit some of the best teachers as lead teachers for summer classes and pair some of the younger teachers with them, then you have an opportunity to demonstrate and share best practices. You can also really use summer school as a laboratory for developing effective teaching methods.

**NSLA:** It seems like many of the elements of effective summer school transition programs that you identify—engaging, challenging and varied instruction, involving parents, professional development, building habits of success, even scheduling visits to colleges and the workplace—could make the high school experience more relevant and rigorous for all students.

**Bottoms:** Yes, these can be ingredients for success for more students if they are part of the regular school year. We've seen that in states that have a single focus on accountability and boosting test scores, the only exciting time in the classroom occurs after kids have taken the test late in the spring. The truth is, the kind of instruction we're talking about here will drive up achievement even more and give more students a better chance at making it to graduation.

For additional information, go to [www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org), Southern Regional Education Board.





## Viewpoint

Summer school—long considered a punishment for poor performance—has never been a popular destination. But by rethinking summer school, we can keep more students from tuning out and dropping out of school. Extensive research confirms the “summer slide” happens to all students. A recent study shows that two-thirds of the achievement gap in reading among 9th graders is directly related to unequal early summer learning opportunities.

Only recently have educators, politicians, and advocates begun to realize summer’s great potential for closing the achievement gap through innovative programming. This notion moves away from traditional, remedial summer school, embracing a new vision for summer school—one that blends core academic learning and hands-on enrichment activities.

It’s encouraging that many districts are already investing in summer programs that are academically rich, yet look and feel different than the regular school year. Some are also paying special attention to students at critical

transition points, particularly the summer prior to entering high school.

Still, much work remains to be done before summer learning becomes a national policy priority. Currently no federal programs exclusively target the summer months as a strategy to close the achievement gap, and many states and districts are cutting their summer programs.

There are a number of steps policymakers and educators can take to make the most out of summer to extend and support learning, particularly for adolescents.

**Create Targeted Programs.** Students showing signs of falling off track in middle school need extra support to ensure success in high school. Summer programs are particularly valuable for at-risk students at those key transitions.

**Provide Incentives.** Motivate students to attend and learn with engaging lessons and enrichment opportunities in summer programs. Recruit top teachers and promising new teachers through innovative training and leadership opportunities.

**Include Summer in Reform.** Expand summer programs and make them central to school improvement efforts through sustainable and stable funding, better planning, infrastructure, data collection, and accountability.

**Align and Collaborate.** Encourage teachers at both the middle and high school levels to work more closely together on aligning transition programs so they adequately address student needs and better prepare them for the next grade.

**Innovate.** Design programs that are significantly different from traditional school, that allow in-depth learning of challenging content, and that build partnerships with community organizations that offer high-interest activities.

These and other recommendations can support more effective models for keeping middle and high school students engaged in school and thus on track to graduate.

—Ron Fairchild, CEO  
*National Summer Learning Association*