



## **New funding could fuel summer school rebound; Whittier schools an example for new program**

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WHITTIER >> After years of recession-triggered cuts that virtually eliminated summer school programs, some education experts see a return of summer school programs under the state's new local control funding formula for public schools.

But the old summer school programs that dominated the summer school scene in the past may be headed for the education scrap heap, to be replaced by a sort of summer camp-style program — such as the one developed by the Whittier City School District.

“Whittier City School District has done an incredible job of adopting this strategy around summer learning,” said Katie Brackenridge, senior director of Expanded Learning Initiatives, a part of the nonprofit Partnership for Children and Youth. The group oversees a campaign called Summer Matters, which encourages school districts statewide to pursue summer learning programs like Whittier City's.

“(Whittier City) started with a much more remedial and traditional approach to summer school, and they really transformed it into a learning environment that feels to the kids like a summer camp that also includes a lot of learning that they're excited about,” Brackenridge said.

Earlier this month, Summer Matters released three reports that demonstrate how summer learning programs are essential to the district's ability to implement the new common core curriculum adopted by California and over 40 other states. Summer programs also enhance students' social-emotional growth and teacher and staff development, according to the report.

Summer Matters campaign staff members have been “barnstorming” the state, delivering the new reports to the approximately 1,000 state school districts and urging district leaders to use the local control funding formula funds to invest in summer learning.

Local control funding, which takes effect for the 2013-14 school year, will result in more summer school programs, Brackenridge said.

“As districts look at the kind of programming they can do with that money, they’re going to start getting more creative as they look at examples like what’s happening at Whittier City,” she said.

The old remedial programs were a failure for the most part, she said. Kids who have a hard time learning don’t want more of it, especially in the summer.

“When you give kids the same thing they failed at ... it doesn’t necessarily make them better at it,” she said.

But when schools give students something that’s interesting and engaging, something they want to learn, they become more focused and see the value of learning.

Ron Carruth, superintendent of Whittier City School District, said representatives from about a dozen Los Angeles County school districts have visited Whittier City to get a look at its summer school program.

“We’ve had summer schools in place traditionally for years,” he said.

Carruth said Whittier City’s summer school program now is “in a sense, summer camp.”

This year, the district’s Jump Start Summer Program ran from June 24 to July 25 at six school sites with a total of 720 students and a waiting list to get into the program.

During the recession, Carruth said, summer schools around the state were dramatically reduced if not eliminated. With the local control funding formula, school funding will be gradually built up over a seven-year implementation period to put the schools back at the same funding levels they had in 2007-08.

Dorka Duron, co-superintendent of the East Whittier City School District, said East Whittier no longer offers summer school due to recession-related cuts. She said the district would like to offer summer school programs, but it’s too early to tell how the local control funding formula will roll out in East Whittier. Schools with more at-risk and poor students will get more funding.

“We’re still waiting for guidelines,” Duron said.

But in the Whittier City district, the message is growth for the summer program.

“As we rebuild our budgets from this terrible recession,” Carruth said, “one of our priorities is trying to expand summer learning opportunities for students.” “(Summer school) will come back as fast as the economy and the state government provide the resources for schools,” said Carruth.

But it won’t be overnight.

“We’re still on the first steps of a new journey back to where we once were for public school funding,” he said. “We just might take a different path with summer learning, for the better.”