



## MAKING SUMMER LEARNING A PRIORITY FOR YOUR DISTRICT

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Over 100 years of research has demonstrated that children lose reading, writing and math skills over the summer, particularly if they don't have access to learning opportunities. The cumulative effects of "summer learning loss" contribute directly to a widening of the achievement gap between low-income and middle-income students. Parents can and should work with their districts to make sure summer learning is a top priority.

### What districts should do

Districts should invest in summer learning programs to ensure:

- ★ Students have the opportunity to learn year-round.
- ★ School year investments don't lose ground.
- ★ Schools meet their student learning goals by using their limited resources effectively.

The new state system for allocating funding, known as *Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)*, provides an exciting opportunity to address summer learning loss. As part of the LCFF, districts are required to gather parent input about what to include in their program and funding plan (known as the *Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)*).

Districts must also align with eight state priorities, five of which align well with summer learning. These include:

- ★ Boosting **student achievement**;
- ★ Supporting students, teachers and staff in the rollout of the **Common Core State Standards**;
- ★ Building **student engagement** in their own learning and their school and community;
- ★ Improving **school climate** with year-round relationships and new teaching approaches; and
- ★ Offering a **broad course of study** including arts and physical education among other subjects.

By referencing these priorities, parents can build a strong case for why and how summer learning can be included in their districts' LCAP. For more information and specific data points on these five priorities, please see [LCFF Guide: Leveraging Summer for Student Success](#).

## What parents can do

As a parent, it can be hard to figure out how to get involved in district planning. Here are a few key steps – along with perseverance – that can help you and your peers find a seat at the table.

- 1. Know Your Key Message** – Think in advance about what you are asking the district to do and why it is important to you personally, to the school and to your community.
- 2. Know Your Audiences** – Stakeholders who directly inform the LCAP are superintendents, school board members, school staff and parents. Most likely, parent input will be gathered through existing family advisory groups (e.g. School Site Council, English Learners Advisory Committee, etc.). You can help these groups understand the importance of summer learning and craft their message for school leaders and staff.
- 3. Gather Information** – The efficacy of your messaging and advocacy will be as strong as the information you have. It's important that you demonstrate how summer learning fits with the needs, priorities, existing resources, and opportunities in the community and in the district.
- 4. Share Your Information** – Given the LCFF mandate around parent input, your district will be looking to existing parent/family advisory groups. You'll need to ask your district which of these groups is involved in the LCAP process, figure out what allies you already have on the group and/or how you can get involved. If it's not possible to join the group, you can ask for an opportunity to present your information on summer learning or work through an ally in the group.
- 5. Build and Leverage Relationships** – Continually look for opportunities to solidify relationships and establish new ones – with school leaders and staff, organizations interested in summer learning and other parents. Regular and thoughtful communication helps develop relationships and builds greater awareness about summer learning.
- 6. Sustain Advocacy Efforts** – Preparing the LCAP is a complicated task including many stakeholders. To ensure that summer learning remains a top priority, you will need to stay involved and be prepared to re-insert your voice should there be shifts in the plan. Having multiple partners in support of summer learning will make this on-going advocacy easier to sustain.

For more information on these strategies, see the [Community Advocacy Toolkit](#).

### About Summer Matters

The Summer Matters vision is that all young people in California have access to high quality summer learning opportunities that support their year-round learning and well-being. Evidence shows that high quality summer learning programs, providing intentional, engaging, and relevant activities, can prevent summer learning loss and support healthy behaviors during summertime. High quality programs include experiences that broaden children's horizons, include a wide variety of activities, help children build skills, foster cooperative learning – through team projects and group activities, promote healthy habits and last at least one month. For more information, visit [www.summermatters2you.net](http://www.summermatters2you.net).