



RE: HB 3191

Date: April 5, 2017

From: Sue Bloom, Executive Director  
Boys & Girls Club of Salem, Marion & Polk Counties

For 47 years, the Boys & Girls Club of Salem, Marion & Polk Counties has been at the forefront of youth development. We serve over 12,000 youth per year in our community and are dedicated to ensuring the youth who need us most are provided the programs and services needed to thrive and the tools to build a bright future for themselves. .

One type of program that is desperately needed in our community is summer programming with a strong academic component. Numerous studies show that most youth lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low income youth also lose more than two months in reading achievement.<sup>i</sup> As a matter of fact, two-thirds of the ninth grade reading achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years<sup>ii</sup>.

To address this need, Boys and Girls Clubs of America has developed and tested a new program called Summer Brain Gain. Summer Brain Gain adds engaging, educational activities to the typical summer camp experience and is for youth ages 6 to 18. While the average low-income U.S. student lost at least two months of learning last summer, the average Summer Brain Gain participant did not experience learning loss. Moreover, some Club members actually experienced gains in learning – especially in vital 21st century skills, like collaboration and critical thinking. This is very encouraging, given that most youth experience significant summer learning loss.

An example of summer brain gain programming at a local level is our Club’s “Food Truck Challenge”. Teams of middle schoolers were given the challenge of building a food truck business plan with \$50,000 seed money from the Club. They were provided the framework and resources to build their business plan and visited local food trucks to see them in action.

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**GREAT FUTURES START HERE.**

When presenting to the judges the teams had to articulate:


- Start-up & ongoing costs/repayment timeline
- Food, including menu and price points
- Revenue expectations
- Why their truck is special

Asking the kids what they valued most about this project brought responses such as:

- We created something all on our own as a team
- We got to be creative and build on each other's ideas and skills
- I am a better problem solver
- I am better at thinking on my feet to answer questions
- We built something from a big idea to a real business
- We made new friends from other Clubs/schools

Math and communication were key learning components as well as the project provided our youth the opportunity to collaborate and become better critical thinkers as they researched, calculated, developed and articulated their plan. The youth were fully engaged and took true ownership of the project with this hands-on, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning opportunity.

Funding in support of summer brain gain is critical for our youth; they are our future, our promise of tomorrow, our future leaders, the engine and innovators of our economy & communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jill', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander, K.L., Entwisle, D.R. & Olson, L.S. (2007). Lasting consequences of the summer learning gap. *American Sociological Review* 72, 167-180.

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