

Beth Unverzagt, Director  
OregonASK - Expanded Learning Partnership  
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Thank you co-chairs Senator Rod Monroe and Representative Smith Warner and members of the committee for inviting me to discuss the possibilities of summer learning.

“Virtually all of the advantage that wealthy students have over poor students is the result of differences in the way privileged kids learn when they are not in school...America doesn't have a school problem. It has a summer vacation problem...”

During the school year, resources are turned **ON** for all students because of equal access to public education.

- Books
- Teachers/mentors
- Meals
- Enrichment and academic support activities
- Health services

During the summer, the faucet is turned **OFF** for low-income youth.

A limited flow of resources in the summer has major implications for summer program quality

National summer by the numbers

- **27%** of families in Oregon report having at least one child in a summer learning program, but **45%** reported wanting their child enrolled in a summer program.
- **80%** of Oregon parents agree that Summer activities helped their children maintain academic skills and learn new things
- The average Oregon parent spends **\$242 per week** on summer learning programs for their child.
- **83%** of Oregon parents support public funding for summer learning programs.

We believe, Oregon leaders should make every effort to achieve the following priorities:

- Preserve the gains students are making in the classroom each year so that student progress continues unabated;
- Promote equity so that students of color and those from low-income families can advance in school and life, enhancing the prosperity of our state over time; and
- Engage communities in creating high-impact learning and skills building experiences for kids -- because there is a real limit to how much more schools alone can do for less.

Summer learning can accomplish all of them.

Further, summer learning strategies can be designed to meet the specific needs of kids and communities who could benefit most from them. Summer learning (especially before 3rd grade) is a powerful equity investment. Since poor children and children of color feel the summer slide most severely, summer investments have the potential to bring the most bang for the buck to level outcomes.

We see three critical challenges/priorities around which unique, high-impact programs could be launched or scaled, based on proven models:

**Too few students reading by third grade** -- which can inhibit learning in subsequent years. Programs focused on reading could center around schools and libraries and emphasize enrichment activities that require reading -- from theatre arts to STEM/STEAM.

**High demand for remedial instruction, especially during transition years** (e.g., from middle school to high school). Programs focused on reducing “summer slide” could be designed around the application of academic skills gained during the school year, and employ social activities so that students gain essential and social and emotional skills at the same time.

**Low high school graduations rates.** Engagement, through work experience, internships, labs, or summer jobs can help young people stay on track in school and work toward gainful employment or postsecondary education, avoiding the “summer melt.” The shift from vocational education to career and technical education (CTE and career pathways) in recent years, together with new federal education and workforce legislation, has catalyzed new program models, partners, and resources for summer programming involving older youth.

At the initiative level, there are important design considerations that can impede or amplify the impact of summer learning.

**First**, the benefits of summer learning accrue over time. That’s why large-scale (statewide) initiatives should offer at least two years of programming support.

**Second**, many communities most in need of summer learning and enrichment opportunities lack the capacity to assemble highly polished grant applications. That’s why the process for allocation and accessing summer learning should be simple, supported (e.g., include technical assistance), and based on levels of need established by existing data.

**Third**, schools are essential partners in summer learning -- but they are not the only partners. One of the biggest takeaways from our workgroup was the role that local cultural, environmental, and commercial partners and stakeholders play in making summer learning programs special, and uniquely suited to the needs of their students, families, and communities. That’s why creative partnerships are encouraged and what makes summer learning and enrichment most distinguishable from school

**Fourth**, since we know that adequate nutrition plays a significant role in participation levels and quality of summer learning, meals are an essential component of summer programming. As community organizations and districts work together more effectively, including access to summer meals will help encourage participation and provide much needed nutrition for many youth.

Finally, over time, the goal of every state summer learning effort is to shift from makeshift, “hodgepodge” program models, each with distinct reporting systems, performance measures, eligibility requirements, and funding sources, to a system comprising high-impact programs supported by braided funding that is brought to specific schools, students, or communities based on need. Modeling this approach -- at the scale Oregon can offer today -- can establish a solid foundation for continued program growth and improvement over time.

2018 state legislative sessions are well underway across the country and nationally we are already tracking over 150 bills with opportunities for summer learning, including funding, literacy, higher education, youth employment, summer meals, and more.

Oregon cannot afford its students losing 30% of their annual learning gains in two and a half months during the summer -- year after year. Now is the right time to make smart, strategic investments in summer programming that boost Oregon’s students’ performance, lay the foundation for excellence in post-secondary education and training and into the workforce, and ensure that existing investments in education throughout the year result in real and retained skill development.