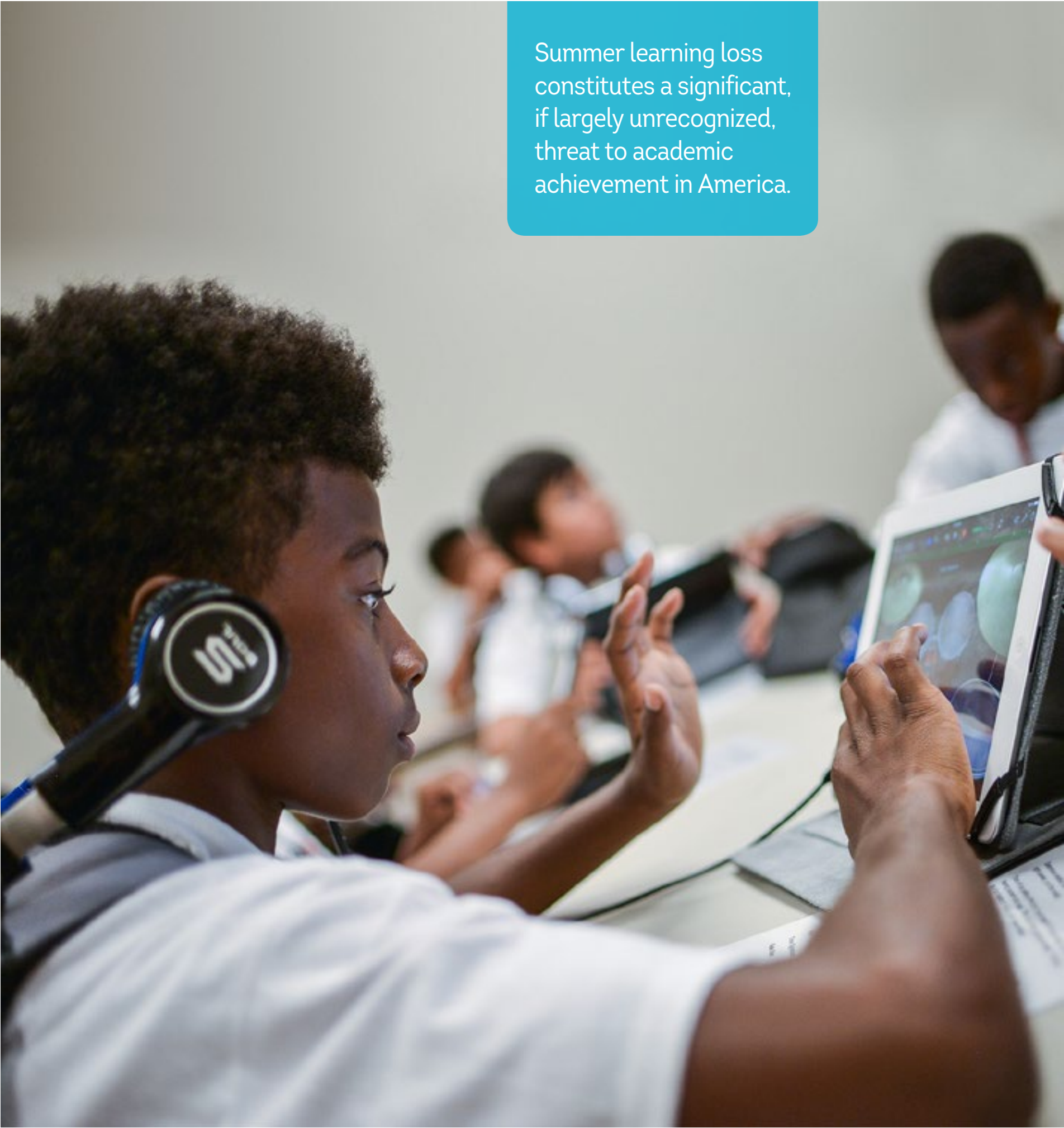




**smarter summers.
brighter futures.**

A PLAYBOOK FOR STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES





Summer learning loss constitutes a significant, if largely unrecognized, threat to academic achievement in America.

smarter summers. brighter futures.

A PLAYBOOK FOR STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

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introduction...

State chiefs across the country are working to ensure educational equity for all students. For rural, urban and suburban communities, the strategies, stakeholders and solutions may vary but the end game for education leaders is the same: **each and every student—regardless of background—graduating ready for college, careers and life.** And when we harness the power of summer, our children are better prepared to thrive in the school year ahead and beyond.

➤ At the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), our work is based on the simple idea that summer—a time that is easily overlooked yet critical to educational development—is instrumental in closing the achievement and opportunity gap for our nation's children.

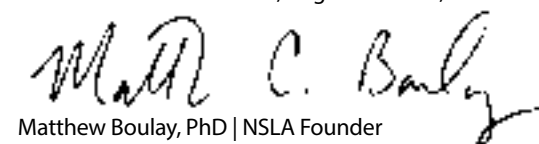
Decades of research clearly demonstrate that summer is the most unequal time in America and that summer learning loss constitutes a significant, if largely unrecognized, threat to academic achievement. It is primarily during the summer months that millions of children slide backward academically, and it is during the summer months that the achievement gap between rich and poor increases most dramatically.

States, however, that invest deeply in keeping all young people learning, safe and healthy during the critical summer months reap measurable rewards in stronger schools, safer neighborhoods and a better-prepared workforce.

The National Summer Learning Association is delighted to partner with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to share this Summer Playbook with the goal of elevating and celebrating the essential role summer learning plays in helping every student succeed.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership!

Here's to smarter summers, brighter futures,


Matthew Boulay, PhD | NSLA Founder

In the United States, we spend an average of \$12,000 per child in public schools during the nine months of the school year only to let our investment go to waste during the summer, allowing the momentum of academic progress to stagnate, if not regress.

Summer learning is instrumental in closing the achievement and opportunity gap for our nation's children.



what the research says...

03

SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS

Students spend 80% of their time outside of school. Research shows that what happens during this time has a significant impact on in-school achievement.

High-quality summer learning programs are proven to maintain and advance students' academic and social growth, keep children safe and healthy during the summer, and send young people back to school ready to learn. Too often, children in low-income communities lack access to enriching activities, safe spaces, and healthy meals that keep them engaged and thriving during the summer months. These youth who experience "summer slide" fall behind their more resourced peers each summer, and never catch up.

THE VALUE OF INVESTING IN SUMMER

Targeted investments maximize the impact of key programs.

States can boost the impact of existing programs by including summer activities. When academics, nutrition, STEM learning, arts, and more are available in the summer, students can access what they individually need to stay engaged, and come back to school in the fall on track and ready to learn.

LANDMARK STUDY SHOWS EFFECTS OF VOLUNTARY SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

New research confirms the impact of voluntary summer programs run by large urban districts for low-income students.

The National Summer Learning Project (NSLP) is the largest effort to date to understand whether and how large-scale, voluntary summer learning programs led by urban public school districts and their partners can help promote success in school. It is a partnership of The Wallace Foundation, the RAND Corporation, Boston Public Schools (with community-based partner Boston After School and Beyond), Dallas Independent School District (with community-based partner Big Thought), Duval County (FL) Public Schools, Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Rochester City School District. These districts have been pioneers in offering full-day voluntary programs for five to six weeks free of charge to large numbers of low-income elementary students, not just to those facing grade retention. The groundbreaking study finds high-quality summer learning programs benefit high-attending students in math and reading.



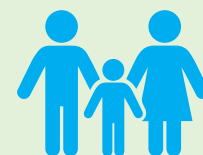
Opportunities for enriching experiences, summer meals, a first job and more open eyes to endless possibilities and open doors to brighter futures for America's young people.



04



SUMMER BY THE NUMBERS



51% OF FAMILIES not participating in a summer program say they would if one was available to them.



Of families who pay for summer programs, the average weekly reported cost is **\$288 PER CHILD** per week.



In July 2017, only **ONE IN SEVEN** children who ate a free or reduced-price school lunch during the 2016-2017 school year were reached by the federally-funded Summer Nutrition Programs, which include the Summer Food Services Program and the National School Lunch Program.

Both programs served **3 MILLION** children across the country during July 2017 with summer breakfast reaching a little over half 1.6 million of those children participating in summer lunch.



Without summer counseling and support, **ONE-THIRD** of first-generation college attenders fall victim to the "summer melt" and fail to enroll in the fall, even after being accepted.



ONE-THIRD OF HOUSEHOLDS say that at least one child participates in a summer program.



Minority children gain weight up to **TWICE AS FAST** during the unstable months of the summer as during the school year.



Over the past 12 years, there has been a nearly **40% DECLINE** in summer youth employment opportunities.



Waiting lists for summer youth jobs are in the **THOUSANDS** in most major cities, despite promising findings around reduced crime and mortality rates for participants.

Note. From "Summer by the Numbers," by Civic Nation, National Summer Learning Association, United States Department of Education and White House, 2016, Summer Opportunities: Expanding Access to Summer Learning, Jobs, and Meals for America's Young People, p. 5. http://c.y.mcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/resmgr/White_House_Summer_Opps/Funding_Roadmap_2016_%281%29.pdf. Reprinted with permission.

WHAT PARENTS THINK ABOUT SUMMER AND SUMMER LEARNING

The Wallace Foundation, in partnership with Crosby Marketing Communications, recently conducted focus groups with parents of third and fourth graders enrolled in public school in large urban areas to determine what they think about summer and summer learning.¹ Eleven focus groups were conducted in three cities with approximately 100 parents spanning five school districts with the goal of learning how to best craft messages that motivate parents.

Definition of summer learning utilized in focus groups:

“A summer learning program is run by the public schools. It is free. It is a nice mix of school subjects, like reading and math, fun activities and field trips. The program helps children keep learning during the summer so they don’t forget what they learned during the school year, and it helps them get ready to do better in the new school year.”

Parents revealed that they were not readily familiar with the term “summer learning.” However, once a description was shared with them, the reaction was very positive. They liked that it emphasized a mix of fun and academics and thought it clearly marked a difference between traditional summer school and summer camp.

Parents are very protective of their children’s summers—they want their children to have fun during the summer and a break from what they perceive to be the hard work of the school year.

“Summer school” elicits a negative reaction.

The idea of helping their child get ready to succeed in the next grade is very motivating to parents.

Parents believe that summer learning loss is real but they don’t see the urgency of addressing it. Only when parents were told that their child might fall behind over time, did parents recognize the need to take action.

While parents may be motivated to register their children in a summer learning program, it is the details that will drive the decision: How long does the program run? What are the hours each day? What is the cost? Is there convenient transportation? Who is supervising and teaching their children?

Parents specifically mentioned these potential barriers to having their children take part: transportation, hours of operation, cost, location and proximity to home, and the perceived safety of the site.

The word “free” was not popular among parents. It seemed to suggest a lack of quality in the summer learning program. “No cost” seemed to be a better term. The term “apply” was also unpopular. It seemed to suggest that somebody was judging them and their child. “Register” or “sign up” were terms that parents found more emotionally neutral.

What was learned from these focus groups informed the approaches and messaging that the participating school districts employ when reaching out to parents about their summer learning programs.

The Wallace Foundation parent focus groups also reveal that parents often associate “summer learning” with punitive and high-pressure summer school-stressful experiences from which they would rather protect their children.

PARENTS 2018: GOING BEYOND GOOD GRADES

Parents have high aspirations for their children. Eight in 10 parents think it’s important for their child to earn a college degree, with African-American and Hispanic parents more likely to think it’s absolutely essential or very important. Nearly 9 in 10 parents, regardless of race, income, geography, and education levels, believe their child is achieving at or above grade level. Yet national data indicates only about one-third of students actually perform at that level.

Parents 2018: Going Beyond Good Grades, a research report commissioned by Learning Heroes, includes a deep segmentation of the parent population, informed by behavioral science, to help think about how to reach different subsets of parents.

Parents are motivated to keep their children learning in the summer when they better understand the positive impact such enrichment has on school-year success.

opportunities for summer learning in the ‘every student succeeds act’...

- State plans for implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) reveal many strategies for schools to combine federal and state investments and help drive student success with targeted summer activities.

These include places where summer is explicitly named as a programmatic strategy or allowable use of funds, as well as provisions within ESSA that are a natural fit for summer opportunities.

Reach out to NSLA for detailed information about your state ESSA plan and summer opportunities.

- Within the Every Student Succeeds Act, many opportunities exist to support summer learning through existing and new programs. State plans can capitalize on these opportunities in three key ways:

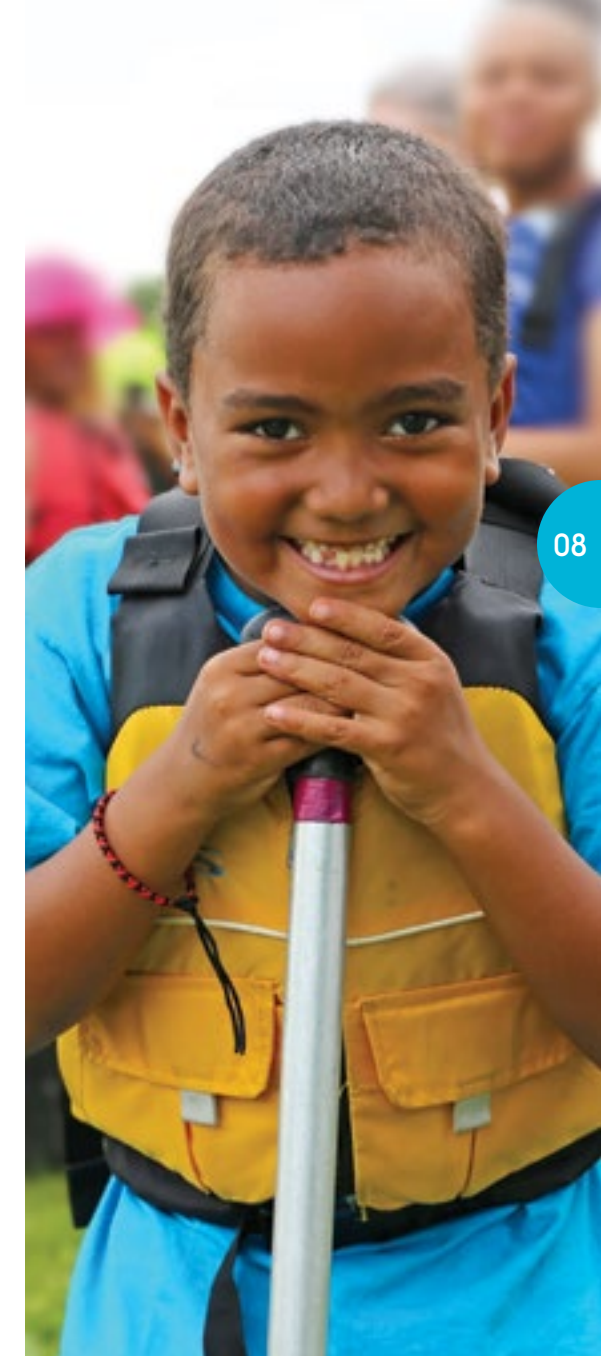
- Promoting flexibility of funding and allowance of program delivery during the summer months
- Fostering collaboration and coordination among partners, programs, and schools to ensure maximum impact of these efforts and seamless year-round integration of services
- Engaging a wide range of stakeholders who support students with education services during the summer months, including schools, teachers, libraries, community-based and faith-based program providers, public housing partners, and others

- What summer programs have states been developing in their ESSA plans? States have used the flexibility of ESSA to ensure summer activities support larger strategies, and explicitly named summer as a time for key programming.

- Boosting supports for targeted youth and special populations such as student who are off-track for hitting third-grade reading goals, migratory youth, English-language learners, and homeless and foster youth
- Explicitly allowing or prioritizing summer programming in the 21st Century Community Learning Center grant program
- Effectively supporting youth and families through key school transitions, such as into kindergarten, into middle and high school, and into college
- Providing targeted professional development for teachers in ESSA-era issues like supporting ELL youth, career/technical education, STEM learning, and leadership development

- One of the most important themes in ESSA is collaboration. States are being thoughtful about integrating school-based summer programming with the federal Summer Nutrition Programs, state offices of early learning and child care, career and technical education, and other related educational, health, and human services agencies that touch the lives of children and families throughout the year. We also see states tapping community stakeholders with expertise about what kids need outside of school to select and implement the most effective strategies.

It is important to note that the language around “summer” differs across programs within ESSA and may be described as “summer recess,” “out-of-school time,” “periods when school is not in session,” or “non-school hours.”



strategies for summer success...

making summers matter

STRATEGY 01:

ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE COMMITMENT TO SUMMER

A shared vision for summer learning leads to a multi-year, community-wide summer learning action plan with defined goals and strategies, aligned with broader educational and community priorities.

States can increase the availability and scope of summer programs through a multi-year, statewide summer action plan that includes defined goals and strategies for increasing access, coordination, and quality. By setting a table that brings together key agencies and stakeholders, states can leverage diverse resources and create a cross-sector approach.

Creating a state-wide commitment to summer opens the door to collaboration, reduced duplication of efforts, efficient management of the community's resources, shared standards of quality and greater return on the investments in summer opportunities.

Steps for successful system-building include:

- Bring together a wide variety of summer stakeholders including school and community providers, intermediaries, funders, and families.
- Connect summer efforts to existing initiatives such as literacy, STEM, or workforce development.
- Ensure the summer action plan has concrete goals, targets, and measurable objectives.



No Kid Hungry

Promote summer meals! A key part of connecting more children to summer meals is raising awareness about programs.

Summer System-Building: A Key to Sustainability

A systems approach to summer learning promotes equity by coordinating service areas, targeting groups of students most in need of particular kinds of resources and interventions, and reducing barriers to program access. This strategy helps direct programs and resources to particular areas of need, and ensures that changes are strategic, not ad hoc. This approach also maximizes and grows available resources, whereby facilities and other shared resources are used efficiently, and multiple streams of funding are pooled together for similar categories of youth.



STRATEGY 02:

ASSESS THE SUMMER LANDSCAPE

Do you know how many summer learning seats are available throughout the districts you serve and how they are funded? Do you know the geographic spread and concentration of programs by grade level? Landscape Assessment protocols can empower districts with data to level the playing field and expand access and quality experiences for students.

Community leaders from across the country are working to expand summer opportunities by replicating successful, evidence-based practices through cross-sector collective impact approaches.

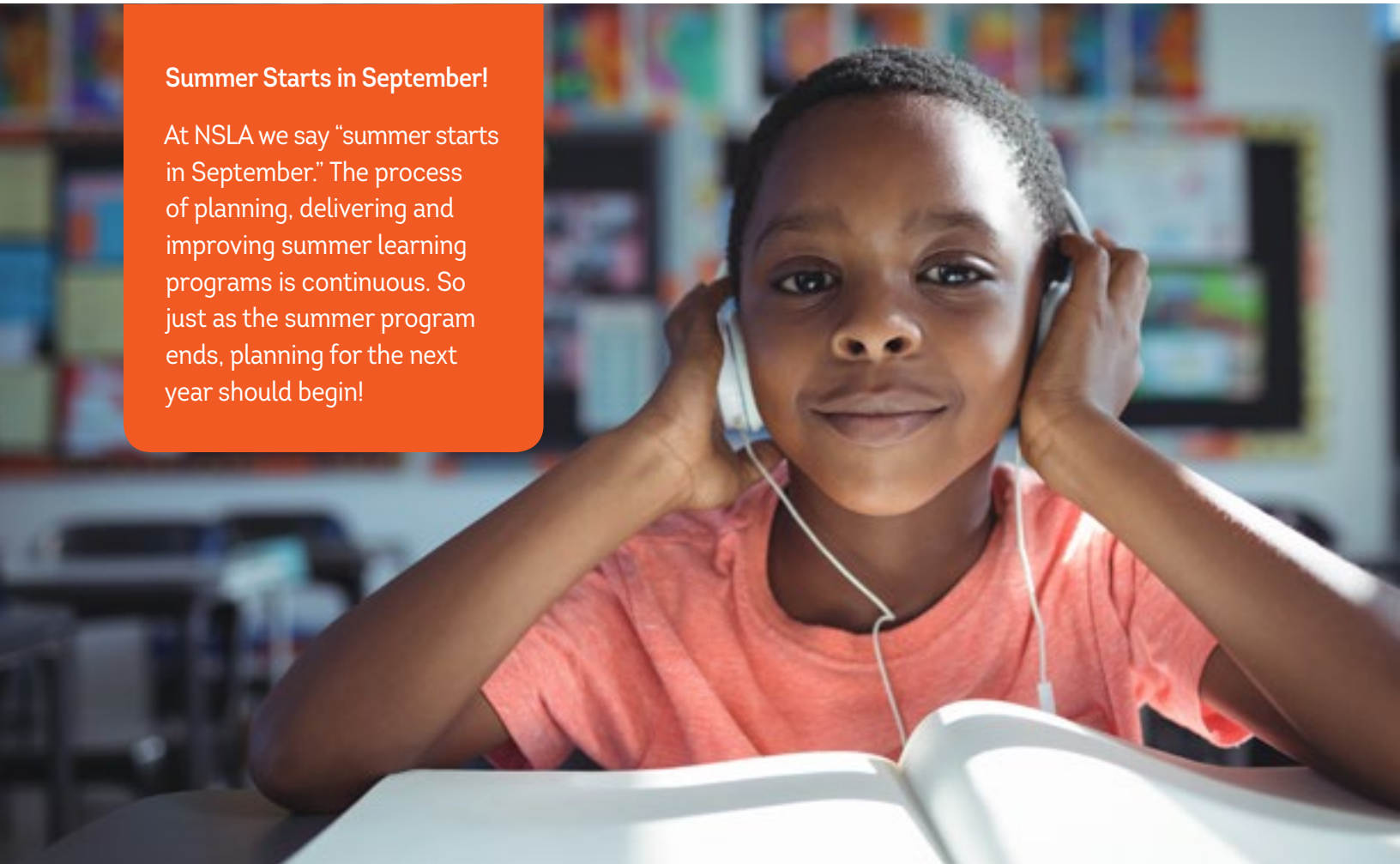
Such practices include:

- Creating a statewide summer steering committee
- Assessing gaps in services and developing an action plan
- Focusing resources on research-based interventions
- Leveraging funding and capacity community-wide for marketing, data management and quality assurance
- Finding creative and sustainable ways to fund summer opportunities long term



Summer Starts in September!

At NSLA we say “summer starts in September.” The process of planning, delivering and improving summer learning programs is continuous. So just as the summer program ends, planning for the next year should begin!



STRATEGY 03:

LEVERAGE RESOURCES

Summer programs often suffer from leftover syndrome—they are planned at the last minute based on funds that are left over from the school year. This habit limits the reach, quality and impact of programs and prevents young people from building strong habits of participation.

While there are various sources of public funding that can be used in the summer, in most cases, there are very few requirements to use them in that way. Therefore, statewide systems can make a big impact by clarifying how funds can be used and directing funds toward summer opportunities.

WHERE TO START:

- Develop a resource map to understand your summer funding sources: private foundations, business donations and sponsorships, public funding, national foundations, state funding and federal funding.
- Consider a state funding collaborative, combining administration of multiple funding sources and centralizing resource distribution, financial reporting and compliance across the system.
- Consider long-term solutions such as dedicated state funding.

We know from research and from many examples what high-quality programs look like and the outcomes they are able to achieve. Still, the challenges of providing summer opportunities at scale are many.

In fact, most communities are only offering summer learning opportunities to 25 to 33 percent of their school-age students, and waiting lists for summer jobs programs are often in the thousands.

While there is no silver bullet to the challenges of how to fund summer learning, funding is available to those who know where to find it and how to effectively demonstrate their eligibility. Streams of federal, state and local support can be effectively combined to help implement programs that will improve learning outcomes for children.

SPREAD THE WORD!

Instead of going it alone, leverage the marketing muscle (and budgets) of all of your key stakeholders by joining forces to create shared tools and resources for families and young people to find out about summer learning and enrichment sites and programs.

WHERE TO START:

- Build a statewide marketing campaign, and brand your effort in a fun and inclusive way.
- Create a centralized “program locator” for young people and families that includes summer learning, meals and job opportunities, whether it be a printed catalog, web database or 211 call center.
- Hold a statewide summer kickoff to share community resources and offer program sign-ups.
- Get creative about sharing the summer message; engage barber shops, doctor’s offices, grocery stores and other trusted and frequented community hubs to share information with families.
- Conduct robo calls, door knocking and home visits to connect families with summer learning and meal resources.

Most communities are only offering summer learning opportunities to 25 to 33 percent of their school-age students, and waiting lists for summer jobs programs are often in the thousands.



Summer systems bring together resources from a wide range of sources, and coordinate these in a way that maximizes impact.



STRATEGY 04:

CONNECT, COLLABORATE, COMMUNICATE

Connect and Collaborate Across Districts...

The New Vision for Summer School Network (NVSS Network) is an affinity group of school district members and national partners committed to a broad vision for summer learning—one that engages more children and youth, boosts academic achievement, and influences teaching and learning throughout the year.

As a network, NSLA envisions a future where school districts and schools include summer learning and enrichment as part of a 12-month plan for learning. Together with their community partners, districts will close this critical opportunity gap and ensure that all young people have access to high-quality summer learning experiences that help them succeed in college, career and life.

Connect and Communicate with Families...Summer Stride

Summertime means sun and fun, making it the perfect time for learning to come alive! But parents know it isn't always easy to keep children engaged during the break.

Here are five simple ideas from Learning Heroes to help their children stride forward this summer:



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national summer learning week...

17

July 8–13 is National Summer Learning Week—aimed at elevating the importance of keeping all kids learning, safe and healthy during the summer.

Led by the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA), National Summer Learning Week sends a powerful message across the nation that summers matter and offers an opportunity to showcase how quality summer enrichment opportunities can open doors and change lives of our young people. During the week, the country unites in efforts and celebrations hosted by hundreds of partner organizations, from libraries to parks and recreation centers to museums and civic and nonprofit groups—all to lift our voices that summers matter.

State leaders can use National Summer Learning Week to elevate and celebrate the summer learning and enrichment activities and programs happening across the state. This is also a great time to share resources with parents and families to help them keep the learning going at home.

NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING WEEK COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCES

These resources are designed to help advocates create awareness about summer learning loss and the benefits of high-quality summer learning programs;

- Proclaim Summer Learning Week in your community and register your event(s) on NSLA's event calendar.
- Use social media to spread the word about National Summer Learning Week. #summerlearningweek



18



supporting summer statewide...

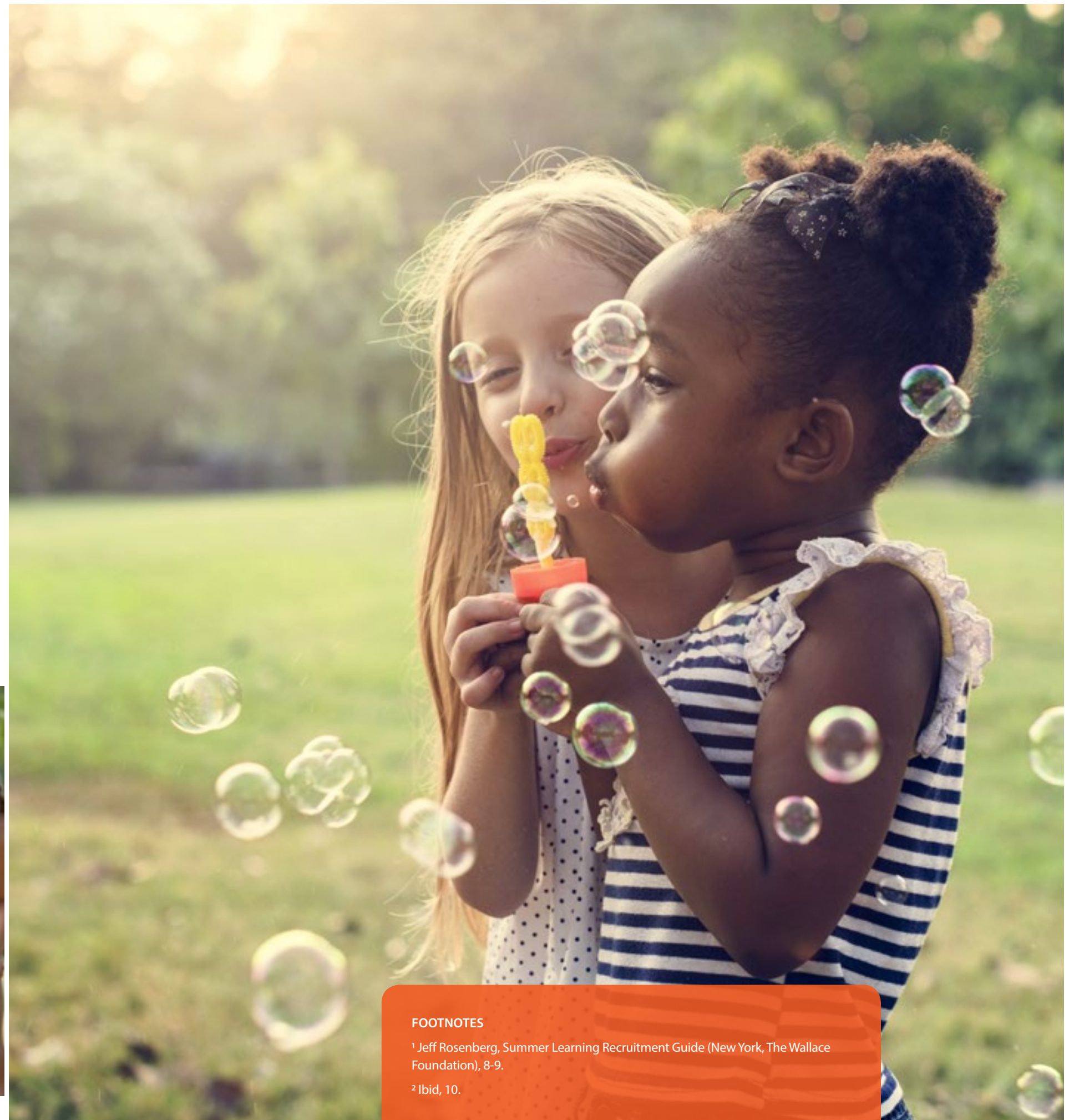
STATES AS LEADERS

State leaders have a wide-angle view of how summer can play a role in supporting student achievement and success. Some communities may be focused on third grade literacy, while others have a wealth of STEM related resources. Some families may not know how access to free meals during the summer months, others may be looking for specialized enrichment programs to foster students' individual interests.

States also have a variety of resources in their portfolio to leverage in favor of summer opportunities. They can bring the right voices to the table. They can work with communities and programs to understand where the gaps exist, and where summer will play a critical role in supporting student achievement. And they can direct learning, nutrition, and other funds meant to serve key populations toward summer initiatives.

Several states and communities are already demonstrating the power of summer opportunities to affect youth outcomes. The National Summer Learning Association is your resource for learning what works and designing a summer system for your state. Join us in creating new opportunities for enriching summer experiences, healthy meals, a first job, and more, open endless possibilities and doors to brighter futures for America's young people.

High-quality summer learning programs are proven to maintain and advance students' academic and social growth, keep children safe and healthy during the summer, and send young people back to school ready to learn.



FOOTNOTES

¹ Jeff Rosenberg, Summer Learning Recruitment Guide (New York, The Wallace Foundation), 8-9.

² Ibid, 10.

