



Issues in Funding Summer School Programs

By

Michael Griffith & Kyle Zinth

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Introduction

A recent study by the Education Commission of the States (ECS) found that 35 states and the District of Columbia have policies that either promote or mandate summer learning programs.¹ States have adopted these policies in part because of the growing amount of evidence that shows greater learning losses for low-income students relative to their higher-income counterparts during the summer months.²

Policymakers also have seen a need for summer learning programs for general education students who are identified as struggling, and even for those students in gifted and talented programs who could benefit from summer opportunities such as accelerated residential programs. Such programs cannot be duplicated easily during the regular school term.

Summer School and State Education Funding Formulas

To better understand how, or if, states fund summer school programs ECS reviewed the education funding formulas of 11 states with policies supporting summer school. Of the 11 states in the study, only one (Rhode Island) did not provide any state funding stream for summer school programs.

ECS found that the remaining 10 states provided funding in two distinct ways:

- Through a state's primary funding formula
- Through categorical funding.

These two models function in different ways and it is important to understand how each system works.

Funding Through the Primary Funding Formula

Most states' primary funding formulas function by providing a foundation or base amount and then multiplying that amount by a weight given to each student. For example, if a state has a base funding amount of \$4,000 and provides a weight of 1.0 for general education students with an additional weight of .25 for at-risk students and 1.0 for special education students, then districts would receive the following amounts per student:

General Education Students:	1.0 X \$4,000 = \$4,000
At-Risk Students:	1.25 X \$4,000 = \$5,000
Special Education Students:	2.0 X \$4,000 = \$8,000

In some states the primary funding formula mandates that funds *must* be used to provide summer school programs, typically for students identified as in need of academic remediation. In other states the formula affirms that funds *may*, but are not required to, be used to provide summer school. Many states' primary funding formulas make no mention of allocations for summer school programs.

Funding Through Categorical Funding Programs

Seven states choose to fund summer learning through a separate categorical funding program. All seven of these states offer multiple funding programs for summer school. These different categorical programs are each designed to target different groups of students. The following are the states with multiple funding programs along with the targeted student populations:

Table 1: Categorical Funding Summary

	Total Programs	Targeted Student Populations			
		At Risk	Gifted/Talented	General	Migrant
Arkansas	3	2	1		
California	5	5			
Illinois	2	2			
Kentucky	2	1	1		
Louisiana	3	2		1	
New Mexico	2	2			
Pennsylvania	3	1	1		1

The Difference Between “Must” and “May”

While some state categorical programs require that the funds “must” be expended only on summer school programs, other state programs say that the funds “may” be expended on summer school as one of several options such as after-school or reading programs. One example of this is the fact that the state of California has five different categorical programs, funded at a total of \$492.5 million, that each allows funds to be expended on summer school programs. However, because there is no requirement that these funds be used on summer learning programs, the funds could be used for other purposes. Thus, summer learning programs in the state of California may receive \$492.5 million of these funds or they may receive zero dollars.

If It’s Not In the Formula, Can Students Go To Summer School?

In no state did this study find that a state prohibited the use of state or local funds on summer learning programs. If a state does not prohibit the use of funds on summer learning programs, then it would be possible to use state and local funding for these programs. However, those funds would need to come from a district’s current operational funds. In other words, no additional support would be provided.

Federal Funding

Federal funds targeted towards support of students with disabilities, special education students, English Language Learners (ELL), migrant students and certain groups of at-risk students can be used to support, in part or in full, summer learning. There are various sources of federal funds in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that could be used for other students groups, including Title III funds for ELL students, Title I funds for At-risk students and Migrant Education funds (Title I, Part C) for migrant student populations.

The recent passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides additional funding sources for summer learning, including new Title I funds which many districts use to fund summer school programs. Funds from the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) can be used to provide summer learning programs to special education students. In fact, under IDEA, if a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP) requires him or her to attend a summer school, then a district *must* allow the student to attend a summer school program using IDEA funds. If the IDEA funds for this program are insufficient to cover the cost, then the district must provide it through a combination of state and district funds.

How Much Do States Really Spend on Summer School Programs?

One of the goals of this study was to determine exactly how much funding, both in total and per student, is being expended by states on summer school programs. What this research found is that in most states it is not possible to determine exactly how much states are spending on summer schools.

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One reason for this is that when states fund summer school through the primary funding formula they do not require school districts to report back on the total state dollars spent to run summer school programs. Another complication is the use of categorical funding. State categorical programs often give districts the option of spending the funds not only on summer school, but also on other programs such as after-school and/or tutoring. While they might require districts to report on their total expenditures they do not require districts to document precisely where the money was expended.

Table 2: Summary of Summer School Funding Program

(Click [here](#) to access additional details about each state's programs)

	Number of Funding Programs Targeted at Summer Schools	Who Are the Targeted Student Populations? (Number of Programs)	How are the Funds Distributed to Districts?	Total Available State Funding (\$)
Arkansas	3	At Risk (1) General Education (1) Gifted & Talented (1)	State Primary Formula	Unknown
California	5	At Risk (5)	Categorical Funds	492.5 million
Illinois	2	At Risk (2)	Categorical Funds	42.3 million
Kentucky	2	At Risk (1) Gifted & Talented (1)	Categorical Funds	34.4 million
Louisiana	3	At Risk (2) General Education (1)	Categorical Funds	Unknown
Maryland	1	At Risk (1)	Categorical Funds	Unknown
Massachusetts	1	At Risk (1)	State's Primary Formula	Unknown
New Mexico	2	At Risk	State's Primary Formula	Unknown
		At Risk (2)	Categorical	

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Pennsylvania	3	Gifted & Talented (1)	Funds	24.1 million
Wyoming	1	At Risk	State's Primary Funding Formula	Unknown

How Much Do Some Districts Spend on Summer School Programs?

While it has not yet been possible to identify the totality of state funding spent specifically on summer school programs through this study, it may be instructive to examine spending patterns in specific districts that are taking advantage of summer school funding policies in their states.

While preparing this report, researchers at Johns Hopkins examined funding at three large schools districts, two of which are in states covered by this study:

- Los Angeles Unified (LAUSD)
- Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS)
- Baltimore City Schools (BCS).

Table 3: Selected District-Level Summary

	Year	Total Students in District ³	Program	Total Students Served	Population Identified	State Support (million \$)	Other Support (million \$)
LAUSD	2008	727,319	State Hourly Reimbursement	139,000		38.7	
	2008		Afternoon Enrichment*	25,000		1.4	
IPS	2008	38,142	ISTEP Summer School Remediation Program	3,218	Students in need of academic remediation	1.1	1.3 (est., includes local district and federal funds)
BCS	2008	87,643		20,932		--	6 (Includes local funds, Title I and BTAC Grant)

* Most served students attend summer school.

** 3.9 million in state general funds, 1.9 million school improvement categorical funds

Conclusion

As evidenced by even this cursory look at a limited number of states and districts, summer learning is funded by a wide array of sources between — and within — states. The inability to determine actual state funding levels is troubling given the compelling research on the impact of summer learning programs on the achievement gap and recent interest in the issue at the national level from the Obama administration.

States might consider tighter data collection around summer learning programs in addition to dedicated funding streams for summer learning programs. Upcoming reports from ECS will highlight best practices in summer learning policy and recommend potential models for state policymakers to consider for this emerging education reform issue.

This StateNote was a joint project of the Education Commission of the States and the National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University. ECS Senior Finance Analyst Michael Griffith and Policy Analyst Kyle Zinth compiled this report in partnership with Brenda McLaughlin and Jeffrey Smink of Johns Hopkins.

The National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University is the only national organization focused on ensuring children and youth in high-poverty communities have access to quality summer learning programs. The Center engages in research, develops policy, and delivers professional development to increase public awareness and investment in summer learning programs. We currently work with a wide variety of summer learning stakeholders, including state education agencies, school districts, and community-based organizations to create, improve, and expand summer learning programs.

For more information, please visit www.summerlearning.org

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¹ Kyle Zinth, *Summer Remediation Policies*, Education Commission of the States, March 2006, url: <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/63/01/6301.pdf>

² Duncan Chaplin and Jeffrey Capizzano, *Impacts of a Summer Learning Program: A Random Assignment Study of Building Educated Leaders for Life*, The Urban Institute, 2006 url: http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/411350_bell_impacts.pdf

³ Anthony Garofano, Jennifer Sable, Lee Hoffman, *Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the United States: 2005–06*, National Center for Education Statistics, June 2008, url: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2008/2008339.pdf>