



# Tackling Unfinished Learning and Learning Loss:

Support Expanded Access to High-Quality Afterschool & Summer Programs for Alabama Pre-K-12 Students

*A Proposal by A+ Education Partnership  
January 2021*



**A+ drives improvements in public education for every Alabama student. We set and deliver high expectations by advocating for policies, practices, and investments that advance learning and by partnering with schools to build the capacity of teachers and leaders.**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A+ Education Partnership proposes a new state grant program to expand high-quality summer and afterschool learning opportunities for Pre-K-12 students in Alabama. This grant program aims to accelerate student learning in reading and STEM through a combination of evidence-based academic curricula and engaging enrichment activities aligned to student interests. Similar to Alabama's nationally recognized First Class Pre-K program, this program would be a diverse delivery model that could foster partnerships between public schools, nonprofits, faith-based programs, and other community organizations. Grants would be provided to communities to both leverage existing programs and create new programs in unserved communities. In both cases, the goal is to increase quality and expand access. Priority should be given to communities serving low-income students.

Alabama ranks 49th in the country in 4th grade reading and 52nd in 4th grade math. In 2019, more than half of Alabama's 4th graders (53%) failed to reach proficiency on the state's reading assessment. Compounding the literacy challenge in Alabama, COVID-19 has put both an academic and social-emotional strain on Alabama's students. Research from McKinsey & Company suggests that if progress is not made, students could, on average, lose 5 to 9 months of learning by the end of June 2021. Students of color could be 6 to 12 months behind, compared with 4 to 8 months for white students. Students in poverty could lose up to a year of learning. With 50% of Alabama's public schools at or below the poverty line, Alabama could see a greater amount of learning loss throughout the state. In addition to learning loss, the firm also estimates that an additional 2 to 9 percent of high school students could drop out.

This problem will not be solved solely in the time allotted for instruction during a normal school day or school year. To close the gap, students across Alabama must have the opportunity to attend high-quality afterschool and summer programs that, when implemented effectively, translate to better academic and life outcomes for students. Both Governor Ivey's Alabama Campaign for Grade Level Reading and the Alabama Literacy Act recognize the critical importance of investing in these out-of-school opportunities to improve early literacy success. Out-of-school programs provide a solid return on investment. Research spanning several states shows that every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves at least \$3 for taxpayers by: increasing students' earning potential, improving students' performance in reading and math, and reducing crime and juvenile delinquency. Involvement in high quality out-of-school learning experiences both accelerate learning and help put students on pathways to the workforce, careers, as well as technical and 2-4 year colleges. Expanding these experiences will help the state meet the Alabama Workforce Council's (AWC) goal of 500,000 additional highly skilled workers by 2025.

To combat the COVID slide and accelerate learning for our most vulnerable students, Alabama should make the expansion of high-quality, community-based summer and afterschool learning a priority.

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## PROPOSAL

A+ Education Partnership proposes state funding to provide high-quality summer and afterschool learning opportunities for Pre-K-12 students in Alabama. This grant program aims to accelerate student learning in reading and STEM through a combination of evidence-based academic curricula and engaging enrichment activities aligned to student interests. This program incentivizes community partnerships through a competitive grant process.

Similar to Alabama's nationally regarded First Class Pre-K program, this grant program would be a diverse delivery model that could include partnerships between public schools, nonprofits, youth organizations, child care centers, faith-based programs, chambers of commerce, and other community organizations. Grants would be provided to communities to both leverage existing programs and create new programs in unserved communities. In both cases, the goal is to increase quality and expand access. Priority should be given to communities serving low-income students.

### **Structure of the Program**

A+ proposes a public/private partnership in which community-based afterschool and summer learning is provided by organizations committed to the achievement, development, and success of students in their communities. These programs are designed to be locally led and meet individualized community needs. The programs prioritize academic achievement (in literacy and STEM) while recognizing the importance of supporting the development of the whole child through innovative non-academic activities. A+ proposes that the program replicates Alabama's successful First Class Pre-K model in the following ways:

- State funded voluntary program for Pre-K-12 students who are residents of Alabama
- Diverse delivery model, offered through child care centers; public school systems; faith-based centers; college and university lab schools; private schools; community organizations, etc.
- All grantees required to provide matching funds to ensure local buy-in and improve sustainability
- Provide grants to raise the quality of existing providers and expand access and reach of programs across the state
- Funded by the Education Trust Fund

## **High-Quality Standards and Accountability**

A+ proposes that high-quality afterschool and summer programs follow the four areas of quality recommended by the RAND corporation's (McCombs, et Al., 2011) synthesized evidence from research about summer learning loss and the effectiveness of out-of-school time programs. These four areas are:

- High-quality instruction (hiring effective and motivated instructors and providing professional development).
- Aligned school-year and summer curricula.
- Engaging and rigorous programming.
- Maximized participation and attendance.

In addition to these four areas of quality, A+ recommends measuring and communicating the impact of afterschool and summer programs. This includes rigorous pre- and post program assessments with required reporting to ensure quality is maintained. Failure to document improvement could result in loss of subsequent grant funding.

A+ also encourages grantees to leverage partnerships with experienced organizations working in the space (such as the Alabama Afterschool Community Network, Montgomery Education Foundation, and Summer Adventures in Learning). These organizations can serve in a technical assistance role during the grant making process and foster partnerships and policies to develop, support, and sustain high-quality programs for children and youth.

Across the nation, afterschool and summer programs equip millions of children to succeed in school, connect with their communities, and prepare them for productive futures. The networks serve as a driving force, bringing stakeholders together and sharing best practices to ensure affordable, sustainable afterschool and summer learning programs are available.

## **Engaging Student Activities**

Central to the success of afterschool and summer programs is that they are engaging and capture student interest. While a core academic component is critical, the programs should look and feel differently than the traditional school day and year. As such, each program should include both academic and non-academic elements.

## WHY NOW?

High-quality afterschool and summer programs are a critical avenue to improve literacy rates in the state of Alabama. Literacy is one of the greatest challenges facing the future success of our state. Alabama currently ranks 49th in the country in 4th grade reading proficiency. In 2019, more than half of Alabama’s fourth graders (53%) failed to reach proficiency on the state’s reading assessment.<sup>1</sup> The state has also embarked on one of its largest and most significant workforce initiatives, to add 500,000 highly skilled workers by 2025. To tackle these challenges, the Governor’s office and the State Legislature embarked on a bold course of action to improve educational outcomes for Alabama’s students.

### **Alabama Campaign for Grade Level Reading (ACGLR)**

Governor Kay Ivey announced the formation of the Alabama Campaign for Grade Level Reading (ACGLR) in February 2018. This comprehensive effort, composed of educational experts, sought to create guidelines local communities across Alabama could use to address the improvement of literacy rates. Among the primary recommendations of this campaign was to focus on a strategic effort to increase summer and afterschool learning opportunities in an effort to stave off summer learning loss. This recommendation was reinforced by the “Action Plan for Literacy 2020” developed by the Committee for Grade Level Reading, which was created by the Alabama Literacy Act.

### **Alabama Literacy Act**

In 2019, the Alabama Legislature approved, with broad bipartisan support, the Alabama Literacy Act (ALA) to give schools more resources to help third graders enter fourth grade as proficient readers on grade level.<sup>2</sup> The ALA renews the state’s focus on pre-K to third grade reading, targeted funding and resources to improve reading instruction, encourages stronger teacher preparation in college to ensure new teachers are prepared for science-based reading instruction, and includes support for early identification and additional support for students with dyslexia and other specific needs. The ALA also includes funding for summer learning. For students in public elementary schools that are among the lowest performing five percent of elementary schools, the Alabama Summer Achievement Program (ASAP), designed to support struggling readers, must be made available. Also, the ALA states that all K-3 students with an identified reading deficiency must have access to a summer reading camp. The Alabama State

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<sup>1</sup> Alabama's Grade-Level Reading Campaign. (2019). Alabama Campaign for Grade-level Reading: Recommendations to Governor Kay Ivey, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Alabama's Grade-Level Reading. (2019). Alabama Campaign for Grade-level Reading: Recommendations to Governor Kay Ivey, p. 4.

Department of Education developed a ten-section implementation guide that details the components of the Act which can be found on the ALSDE website at alsde.edu

### **Summer Slide**

Children regress when they do not practice academic skills over the summer months. Children from low-income families can lose two to three months of grade equivalency in both math and reading every summer. This loss is cumulative. On average, students participating in high-quality, collaborative, community-based summer learning programs in Alabama gained 1.7 months in reading every year over the last three years.<sup>3</sup>

### **COVID-Slide**

The “COVID Slide” in student achievement compounds existing trends in a widening achievement gap. Most students spent at least some time in a remote learning environment last spring and many continue in a remote environment this fall. Research from McKinsey & Company this past summer estimated that the average student in a full-time remote environment could fall 7 months behind academically, while Black students and Hispanic students experience a 10 and 9 month loss respectively. Poor students can experience a loss of over a year. These losses could widen the achievement gap by 15-20%.<sup>4</sup> The most recent research from McKinsey & Company suggests that if progress is not made this spring, then students could, on average, lose 5 to 9 months of learning by the end of June 2021. Students of color could be 6 to 12 months behind, compared with 4 to 8 months for White students<sup>5</sup>.

In addition to learning loss, McKinsey & Company also found a negative impact on graduation rate due to COVID-19 school closures. The firm estimates that an additional 2 to 9 percent of high school students could drop out - up to 1.1 million students in a worst-case scenario.

The pandemic demonstrates the tremendous need for child and youth supervision so that parents can work, look for a job, or go back to school to upgrade their skills for a changing economy. The impact of not being able to be employed and/or work enough hours to make a living not only directly impacts a family’s living conditions in the short term, but also often in

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<sup>3</sup> Alabama's Grade-Level Reading. (2019). Alabama Campaign for grade-level Reading: Recommendations to Governor Kay Ivey, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2020, June 01). COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime>

<sup>5</sup> Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2020, December 08). COVID-19 and learning loss--disparities grow and students need help. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-learning-loss-disparities-grow-and-students-need-help>



the long-term by adversely impacting their children's learning. Well-designed afterschool and summer programs can not only accelerate student learning but also help parents stay or become employed by providing school-age child care and youth supervision. Survey data specific to the needs of Alabama's parents are included in the Alabama research section of this report.

Similarly, these summer and afterschool programs can add another benefit to family and community well-being by providing food security to children and youth participating in the programs.

### **High-Quality Afterschool and Summer Programs Help Close the Gap**

Clearly, decisive action to stop both summer and COVID slides is critical. Attention to equity is paramount. This problem will not be solved solely in the time allotted for instruction during a normal school day and year. To close the gap, students across Alabama must have the opportunity to attend high-quality afterschool and summer programs that, when implemented effectively, translate to better academic and life outcomes for students.

## NATIONAL RESEARCH & PROGRAM GUIDANCE

### Rand Corporation/Wallace Foundation Study Details Benefits of Out-of-School Programs:

Acceleration of student learning requires more time than is available during the traditional school day. Afterschool and summer programs offer an opportunity for public and private stakeholders to close gaps in learning outcomes and to holistically support all students. A large-scale RAND Corporation/Wallace Foundation study found several benefits of summer learning:

- Students who attended summer programs for 20 or more days saw educationally beneficial outcomes in math and reading.
- Frequent attenders for two summers outperformed students not assigned to a program in both ELA and Math - the difference in performance translated to 20 to 25 percent of the typical annual gain in math and 20 to 23 percent of the typical annual gain in ELA.
- Frequent attenders received higher scores on Social-Emotional assessments<sup>6</sup>

### Key Program Components:

#### *Plan early and well*

- Commit in the fall to a summer program and start active planning by January with a program director who has at least half of his or her work time devoted to the job.
- Plan for both enrichment activities and academics.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Recruit and hire the district's most highly effective teachers and train them*

- Select teachers for content knowledge and experience teaching the relevant grade levels of students.
- Prior to the start of the summer program, professional development for summer teachers should include specific guidance on use of the summer curricula, minimizing loss of instructional minutes, and on checking for student understanding. It also should stress the point that academics contribute to, rather than detract from, summer fun.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018). Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success, 2nd Ed. p. 8 **\*\*these 'sections' are from the same page**

<sup>7</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018), p. 10

<sup>8</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018), p. 20

*Schedule the program to include at least 25 hours of math and 34 hours of language arts*

- Operate the program for five to six weeks with three to four hours of academics per day.
- Provide time for transitions in the master schedule to avoid loss of instructional minutes.
- Provide teachers with concrete strategies for maximizing instructional time.<sup>9</sup>

*Adopt student recruitment and attendance policies that aim for high attendance rates*

- Develop timely recruitment materials that accurately describe the summer program.
- Establish a firm enrollment deadline and clear attendance policy.
- Track rates of students who sign up but do not attend; also track daily attendance once the program starts.<sup>10</sup>

*Teachers should have high-quality curriculum materials and small class sizes*

- Engage experts to anchor the program in written curricula that align with school-year standards and student needs.
- Encourage leaders to observe instruction of the curriculum and provide feedback.
- Select a model for providing enrichment activities.
- Ensure that enrichment instructors have strong content knowledge and train them in behavior management strategies.<sup>11</sup>

*Adopt intentional policies related to site climate, which drives student enjoyment and is correlated with attendance*

- Train all staff on the importance of positive adult engagement with students throughout the day — not only in classes.
- Develop a clear, positive message about the summer site culture and ask staff to convey it consistently to students.
- Ensure that site leaders observe instructional and non-instructional periods.<sup>12</sup>

*To sustain summer programs over time, consider cost-saving measures*

- Hire staff to achieve desired ratios based on projected daily attendance, not the initial number of enrollees.
- Consider cost-efficiencies in the design of the program but weigh them against potential impacts on program quality.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018), p. 11

<sup>10</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018), p. 11

<sup>11</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018), p. 13-14

<sup>12</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018), p. 15

<sup>13</sup> Schwartz, H. L., McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., & Leschitz, J. T. (2018), p. 16

## **Afterschool Programs help close the Achievement gap**

Similar benefits have been documented related to high quality afterschool programs. Dr. Deborah Lowe Vandell, Founding Dean of the School of Education at the University of California, Irvine, discovered the following in the course of her recently released research:

- More time spent in afterschool activities during the elementary school years was linked to narrowing the gap in math achievement at grade 5. Income gaps between poor and wealthy households were almost entirely eliminated.
- Organized afterschool activities in K-5 led to better educational performance in the secondary grades as well as higher education and occupational attainment in adulthood
- Participation in afterschool activities in K-5 was associated with less adult arrests and criminal activity.

(Source: Vandell, D. L., Simpkins, S. D., & Liu, Y. (in press). From Early Care and Education to Adult Problem Behaviors: A Prevention Pathway through Afterschool Organized Activities. *Development and Psychopathology*)

Durlak and Weissburg (2010) conducted an important meta-analysis of 68 afterschool studies. They were able to identify four evidenced-based practices linked to successful afterschool programs. The researchers used the acronym SAFE to identify the four practices,<sup>14</sup> defined as:

- S - Program staff used a step-by-step training approach
- A - Active approach to learning new skills
- F - Focused time of skill development
- E - Explicit in the skills they were trying to promote

SAFE programs were associated with significant improvements in self-perception, school bonding and positive social behaviors; significant reduction in conduct problems and drug use; and significant increases in achievement test scores, grades, and school attendance. On average, youth gained 8 percentiles in standardized assessments if participating in a SAFE categorized afterschool program.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2010). Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success, p. 3

<sup>15</sup> Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2010). Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success, p. 5

## 21st Century Community Learning Centers

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative (21st CCLC) is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to out-of-school time programs. These grant funds are administered by state education agencies and funds are based on the Title I funding formula model. The program helps students meet state academic standards in core subjects like reading and math. In addition, the program offers students a multitude of enrichment activities that support the whole child. The program also offers literacy and additional educational services to the families of participating children<sup>16</sup>. The program prioritizes funding for the most vulnerable students. Nationally, 70% participate in the federal Free or Reduced Lunch program and 14% have limited English proficiency<sup>17</sup>. Among community learning centers, 4 out of 5 are operated by school districts and 1 in 5 are community-based organizations, charter schools, colleges or universities, or faith-based organizations<sup>18</sup>.

21st Century Learning programs have several positive outcomes, including:

- Supporting Academic Success
  - Students who regularly participated in Community Learning Centers improved their school attendance, school engagement, health-related behaviors, and math and reading achievement.<sup>19</sup>
- Supporting Workforce Development Initiatives
  - Jobs in science, technology, engineering, and math are driving global economic growth. Seven million students are getting opportunities to develop an interest and explore STEM in afterschool.<sup>20</sup>
  - Businesses want to hire problem-solving collaborators. Students learn by doing in afterschool programs and develop the soft skills they need for tomorrow's workforce.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2019). 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) analytic support for evaluation and program monitoring: An overview of the 21st CCLC performance data: 2017-2018 (14th report).

<sup>18</sup> <http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/21stCCLC-Overview.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Neild, R.C., Wilson, S.J., & McClanahan, W. (2019). Afterschool programs: A review of evidence under the Every Student Succeeds Act

<sup>20</sup> Afterschool Alliance. (2015). Full STEM Ahead: Afterschool Programs Step Up as Key Partners in STEM Education.

## ALABAMA RESEARCH

In the recommendations to Governor Kay Ivey by the Alabama Campaign for Grade Level Reading, the following research was shared:

Families and communities benefit greatly by having quality before and after school programs. Parents miss less time from work, communities are safer, and children have better grades and attendance in school. Since two-thirds of Alabama children under the age of six have both parents participating in the workforce, there is a considerable need for safe and engaging places for children to spend their out-of-school time.

There are five specific components that should be present in before and after school programs:

1. Fostering positive relationships between students and staff
2. Blending academic and skill activities
3. Promoting high levels of engagement
4. Striving for student mastery of knowledge and skills
5. Providing some structure and opportunities for choice

The Campaign for Grade Level Reading went on to define the research-based markers of quality. They identified five essential markers of quality from a review of Alabama summer learning programs:

1. Utilize a research-based curriculum that is specifically designed for summer learning, relevant to student interests, supports the healthy development of the whole child, and aligns with Alabama's academic standards.
2. Administer a nationally normed and formative pre- and post-assessment of students.
3. Work with certified teachers and use a 1:12 or better ratio of staff to students.
4. Incorporate 72 or more hours of academic instruction.
5. Engage in a peer-system of continuous quality improvement, collaborative problem solving, and pooling of resources

### **Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL)**

One case study of success within the state of Alabama is Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL), a partnership that focuses on summer programs in which students can explore new interests and skills while gaining the support they need to minimize summer loss. SAIL programs provide professional development for its teachers which strengthens traditional schools when they return to classrooms in the fall. Additionally, SAIL offers a flexible platform that can be tailored

to policy objectives, i.e., programs can be modified to emphasize literacy, math, workforce development, etc.

SAIL programs average gains of at least two months in reading and math during a 5–6-week program. Funders commit to a joint application process for non-profit organizations seeking grant support to add or enhance consistent academic components to summer youth programs. SAIL does not prescribe a specific curriculum or program format. Instead, it organizes communities and encourages them to innovate. SAIL does require a rigorous quality assurance framework that defines effectiveness and helps all programs succeed.

Key elements of SAIL programs are:

- Utilizing research-based curriculum that is specifically designed for summer learning, relevant to student interests, supports the healthy development of the whole child, and aligns with Alabama’s academic standards;
- Administering a nationally normed and formative pre- and post-assessment of students;
- Working with certified teachers and use a 1:12 or better ratio of staff to students;
- Incorporating 72 or more hours of academic instruction; and,
- Engaging in a peer-system of continuous quality improvement, collaborative problem solving, and pooling of resources.

In 2019, 43 summer learning programs in 14 counties participated in the SAIL network. LEAs already engaged in the SAIL network include Birmingham City Schools, Huntsville City Schools, Madison City Schools, Madison County Schools, Blount County Schools, Tarrant City Schools, Homewood City Schools, and Roanoke City Schools.

### **Alabama Afterschool Alliance Data**

Following national trends, there is unmet demand for afterschool programs in Alabama. According to survey data from the Afterschool Alliance, for every child currently enrolled in an afterschool program, three more would participate if a program was available. 21st century Community Learning Center grants are currently the only dedicated federal funding source that support local communities’ summer and afterschool programs. Demand for programs is so great in Alabama that 5 out of every 8 applications cannot be funded.

Afterschool provides a solid return on investment. Research spanning several states shows that every \$1 invested in afterschool programs saves the taxpayer at least \$3 by:

- Increasing students’ earning potential
- Improving students’ performance at school
- Reducing crime and juvenile delinquency

Parents in Alabama strongly support high quality afterschool programs. On average, parents lose 8 days of work, and businesses lose up to \$300 billion a year due to parental concerns about after school care. In Alabama:

- 77% of parents say afterschool programs give them piece of mind.
- 80% of parents say afterschool programs help them keep their jobs.

A recently released parent survey that was undertaken during the pandemic saw similar interest in afterschool programs from Alabama's parents. Four different aspects of well-organized afterschool programs were rated as "very important" or "important" by more than two-thirds of parents:

- Afterschool programs in or near schools to help provide extra learning supports
- Supervised enrichment opportunities after and before school
- Schools working with community, faith-based and employer groups to supervised children so that parents can keep their jobs or look for work
- Afterschool programs in or near schools to provide meals for children

In addition, almost 60% of parents saw afterschool programs an important support for remote learning.

New survey data released in December 2020 by the Alabama Afterschool Alliance found that 91% of parents were satisfied with their child's afterschool program. Additionally, 87% of parents were in favor of funding for programs the provide afterschool opportunities. As high levels of parents reported barriers to participation, afterschool program participation in Alabama saw a decrease compared to the last America After 3PM survey in 2014.



## PROGRAM EXAMPLES

### **American Baseball Foundation: Reading, Math, and Sports for Success**

The American Baseball Foundation's BASIC summer program uses sports as the driving force to engage and motivate students in Grades 1-8. Students participate in a five-week program that combines academics, sports, and social-emotional skills such as perseverance, cooperation, and determination. More specifically, the curriculum integrates grade level appropriate and standards aligned lessons in reading, math, sports, and STEM concepts. Over the course of six years, students have averaged 2.7 months gains in reading and 3.1 months in math.

### **Montgomery Education Foundation Brainforest Summer Learning Academy**

Launched by MEF in 2013, this 5-week academic summer enrichment program is designed to improve student math and reading scores while preventing summer learning loss. The full day program serves rising 4th grade, 5th grade, and 6th grade students enrolled in Montgomery Public Schools and is provided at no cost to participating families. Students engage in hands-on academic learning in the morning and engaging enrichment activities in the afternoon including swimming, horseback riding, kayaking, and field trips to sites around the city of Montgomery.

### **Children's Fresh Air Farm**

Started in 2010, this program provides six weeks of reading, writing, and mathematics in the morning as well as afternoons filled with art, music, drama, science, and swimming. 2018 graduates of the summer program gained an average of two months in reading and more than five months in math.

### **Sylacauga BRIDGES Community Afterschool Program**

Sylacauga's community-wide BRIDGES afterschool program, which is a collaborative effort between Sylacauga City Schools and community organizations, provides youth development activities for grades 4-8. BRIDGES participants receive academic coaching from certified teachers, instruction in computer literacy, volunteer service opportunities, and enriching cultural experiences. In recent years, the program has expanded to both church and school sites, including Saturday school and summer school.

### **Skyland Elementary SPARK Afterschool & Summer Program During COVID-19**

Skyland Elementary SPARK Afterschool Program collaborated with the Tuscaloosa City Schools' (TCS) Child Nutrition Program (CNP) to begin providing food service daily in March due to the pandemic, serving around 400 meals each day. As more information was released, they shifted to serving meals all 5 school days (breakfast and lunch) picking up only once per week, ensuring students had access to healthy meals while being away from school. Additionally, books were

distributed to students at the "meal pickups" by their librarians. As a school, they distributed Chromebooks and hotspots to families for virtual learning. SPARK shared learning resources on social media platforms that the students could do while away from the building. Again, collaborating with TCS, SPARK provided a virtual summer program targeting at-risk students in kindergarten through third grade.

## PROGRAM COST OVERVIEW

### Estimated Alabama Summer & Afterschool Cost Comparison

	Weeks	Days	Hours Per Day	Total Hours Per Year	Total Cost Per Student / Slot	Cost Per Hour
Summer Program	6	30	7	210	\$1,000.00	\$4.76
Afterschool Program	34	170	3	510	\$2,856.00	\$5.60

Estimates based on 2019 SAIL program data and the 2020 Alabama After School Alliance’s After 3pm Fact Sheet (<http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2020/AL-AA3PM-2020-Fact-Sheet.pdf>)

For comparison, a 2016/2017 21st Century Community Learning Center Program Evaluation revealed that the estimated expenditure for a regular attendee in Alabama was \$2,004.66<sup>21</sup>.

### Program Cost Examples

#### Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) Program Examples

Summer Adventures in Learning (SAIL) is an Alabama partnership of summer providers and private donors that develops programs in which students can explore new interests and skills while gaining the support they need to prevent summer learning loss.

Average per student cost is approximately **\$1000** (~\$800 core academic costs, \$200 facilities, activities, transportation, and food costs). SAIL grants cover anywhere from half to all of the program costs, depending on need. The remaining costs are covered through donations or subsidized fees.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/performance.html>

## SAIL Program Examples

### **American Baseball Foundation BASIC Program (Birmingham and Huntsville)**

Sports programming, hosted at schools. Students alternate between on-field instruction in a sport and classroom exercises in reading and math. The program has expanded from baseball to half a dozen sports. Lessons are based on the sport so the students show high interest. Especially popular with ESL students.

- **Total Cost of Program (2019): \$41,322.00**
  - Core academic costs: \$35,123.70
  - Total Enrollment: 120 students
  - Cost per student: \$344.35

### **BAMA Kids Summer Enrichment Program (Camden)**

Based at the Wilcox County Family Resource Center, a typical day includes five hours of academic instruction and two hours of enrichment. In addition to the local staff, UAB provides STEM programming using AmeriCorps associates.

- **Total Cost of Program (2019): \$19,250.00**
  - Core academic costs: \$16,362.50
  - Total Enrollment: 57 students
  - Cost per student: \$337.71

### **Blount County Education Foundation Dreamcatchers Program (Rural Blount County)**

Based at Susan Moore Elementary, Dreamcatchers is a particularly good example of collaboration between the school system and community partners. The model has been adopted for Blount County's Summer Reading Camps required by the Alabama Literacy Act.

- **Total Cost of Program (2019): \$90,838.00**
  - Core academic costs: \$49,052.52
  - Total Enrollment: 99 students
  - Cost per student: \$917.55

### **YMCA of Greater Birmingham Summer Learning Program (Birmingham)**

Campers from several Y branches attend classes in reading and math at Inglenook K-8 in the morning, and return to their Y branch for traditional camp activities in the afternoon. The Y contracts with Better Basics to conduct the classes.

- **Total Cost of Program (2019): \$62,900.00**
  - Core academic costs: \$30,192.00
  - Total Enrollment: 56 students
  - Cost per student: \$1,123.21

## **Wallace Foundation Study on The Cost of Quality Out-of-School Time Programs**

Based on a detailed examination of 111 high-quality afterschool and summer programs in six cities, this report estimates the costs of strong programming and finds widespread cost differences. The cost variables stem from program factors including program hours, youth-staff ratios, age groups served, and types of facilities—each of which represents significant choices made by program leaders.

In addition, the report finds that programs typically rely on a range of funding sources, including in-kind contributions. Moreover, per-child costs in larger programs are not necessarily less expensive than those in smaller programs.

**In 2015 dollars, the daily per-slot cost of high-quality afterschool programming for elementary and middle-school children in U.S. urban settings ranged from \$14 to \$31.**

## CONCLUSION

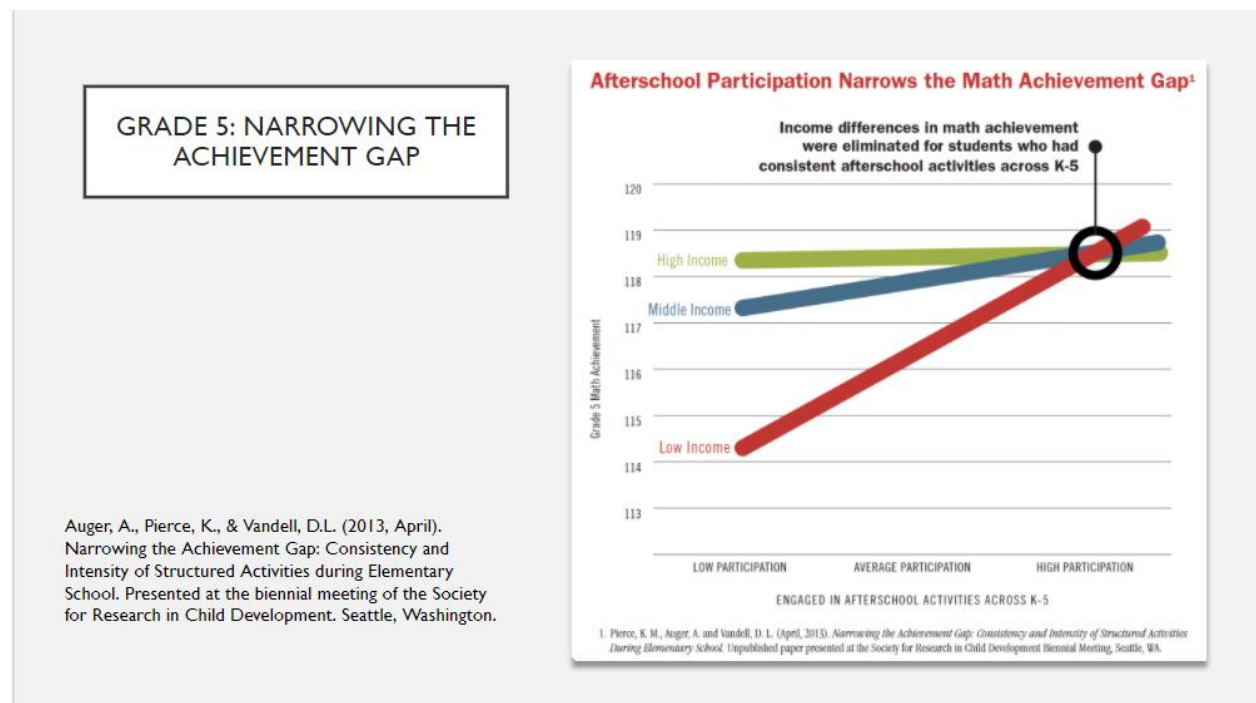
The most recent NAEP results paint a distressing state of literacy and math in Alabama. These concerns are amplified by the learning loss experienced by students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge will not be solved wholesale in the time allotted for instruction during a normal school day or school year. To close the gap, students across Alabama must have the opportunity to attend high-quality afterschool and summer programs that, when implemented effectively, translate to better academic, career, and life outcomes for students.

# APPENDIX

## Appendix A: Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment (SLPQA)

The Summer Learning Program Quality Assessment (SLPQA) is an instrument designed jointly by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, a division of the Forum for Youth Investment, and the National Summer Learning Association. The instrument represents a unique PQA for summer programs that combines elements of the validated Youth PQA with NSLA’s Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP). Given the nature of summer programming, the instrument and process were designed to meet the unique needs of these programs, with the tool capturing specific aspects of program culture and the process fitting into a tight summer timeline. The SLPQA uses both observational evidence and interviews with site leads/site managers to collect data that can be used by summer programs to measure the quality of youth experiences. It can help staff and managers build summer programs for youth that intentionally address academic summer learning loss as well as meeting the developmental needs of youth participants.

## Appendix B: Positive Effects of Afterschool Program Participation (Early Elementary through Age 26)



## AGE 15: IMPROVED TEST SCORES

Studies of early childhood education and afterschool activities usually exist in different worlds.

In looking at both, we see that the effects of early childhood education and afterschool activities on reading achievement scores are the same.

Vandell, Lee, Whitaker, & Pierce (2020). Cumulative and Differential Effects of Early Child Care and Middle Childhood Out-of-School Time on Adolescent Functioning. *Child Development*, 91:1, 129-144.

Achievement Test Scores Associated with ECE Quality and Afterschool Activities



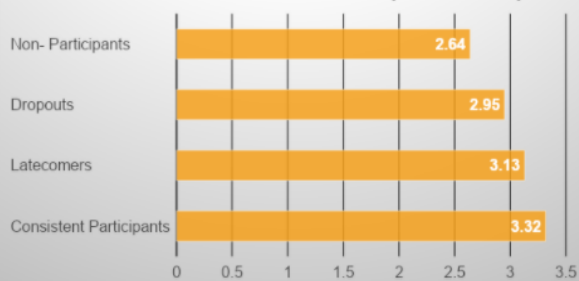
## GRADE 9: HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION

Conclusions: Consistent participation in afterschool activities during elementary school was linked to higher grades in 9<sup>th</sup> grade (the high school transition), even after controlling for child and family factors.

Economically disadvantaged youth especially benefited from consistent participation in activities during elementary school, even after controlling for child and family factors.

Robert Crosnoe, Chelsea Smith, & Tama Leventhal (2015). Family Background, School-Age Trajectories of Activity Participation, and Academic Achievement at the Start of High School. *Applied Developmental Science*, 19:3, 139-152.

GPA in 9th Grade (4.0 scale)





AGE 26: FEWER PROBLEM BEHAVIORS IN ADULTHOOD

At age 26, participants report less impulsivity, less risk-taking and less police contact



Afterschool Activities in Elementary Grades



Early Childhood Education

Vandell, D.L., Simpkins, S.D., & Liu, Y. (in press). From Early Care and Education to Adulthood Problem Behaviors: A Prevention Pathway through Organized Activities. *Development and Psychopathology*