The Case for Summer Learning
Research and Advocacy in Recent Years

By Sarah Pitcock (Reprinted from AFT)

In 2009, the National Summer Learning Association began convening school districts as part of the New Vision for Summer School (NVSS) Network, a group of districts committed to transcending the remedial, punitive model of summer school. Spurred by stimulus funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, member districts were ready to use the summer months to serve more students in more innovative ways and test out teacher professional development and new curriculum and instructional strategies. New strategies included testing project-based learning* approaches in the summer, partnering with community-based organizations to co-deliver programs, and pairing new teachers with veteran teachers for mentorship and training.

In 2011, five urban school districts, some of them members of the NVSS Network, joined with the Rand Corporation and the Wallace Foundation to answer two important questions: Can voluntary summer learning programs combining academics and enrichment help students succeed in school? And if so, how?

By reviewing existing research and interviewing providers, Rand found several aspects critical to successful summer programming. These included offering small class sizes and individualized instruction, engaging students in fun enrichment activities, providing transportation to and from the program, offering full-day program options, and notifying parents early before they make other plans for the summer. Rand also found that partnerships between school districts and community-based organizations were mutually beneficial and cost less than separate programs. (For more from Rand’s researchers on summer learning, see “Effective Summer Programming” (https://www.aft.org/ae/spring2018/mceachin_augustine_mccombs) in this issue.)

In 2013, Rand began conducting a randomized controlled trial in five school districts—in Boston; Dallas; Duval County, Florida; Pittsburgh; and Rochester, New York—to evaluate summer learning outcomes. There were 5,600 third-graders who applied to summer programs and were randomly assigned to one of two groups—those selected to take part in the programs for two summers (the treatment group) and those not selected (the control group). The study analyzed outcomes for 3,192 students who were offered access to the programs.

The programs combined academic instruction from certified teachers with a variety of enrichment offerings from community partners, including dance, theater, martial arts, swimming, woodworking, cooking, and kayaking. Program leaders received substantial support from the Rand team through formative feedback that enabled them to strengthen and enhance their programs each summer.

Researchers found that students who attended a five- to six-week summer program for 20 or more days in 2013 (deemed “high attenders”) performed better on state math tests than similar students in the control group. This advantage was statistically significant and lasted through the following school year. The results were even more striking for “high attenders” in 2014: they outperformed control-group students in both math and English language arts (ELA) on standardized tests in the fall and spring. The advantage after the second summer was equivalent to 20 to 25 percent of a year’s learning in math and ELA. Regardless of attendance rate, students who received at least 25 hours of math or 34 hours of ELA instruction during the summer did better than control-group students on tests in fall 2013 and fall 2014.

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Important Dates for 2017-2018

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Memorial Day
Memorial Day, as a formal holiday, is an American holiday. It is celebrated to remember military service members who have died in the line of duty. Memorial Day was originally called Decoration Day, as the holiday was centered on decorating the graves of those who had fallen in the Civil War.

National Donut Day
Celebrated on the first Friday of every June – National Donut Day is a day to celebrate humble donut and the men and women who served soldiers donuts during the First World War. It is a day that is mainly celebrated in the United States, but other donut shops around the world have been known to participate as well. Traditionally, a free donut is given out to customers of donut shops on this day.

Juneteenth
Juneteenth is an annual observance on June 19 to remember when Union soldiers enforced the Emancipation Proclamation and freed all remaining slaves in Texas on June 19, 1865. This day is an opportunity for people to celebrate freedom and equal rights in the United States.

Capital Region BOCES Faculty Association Leadership

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www.crbfa.org
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Rand’s work has contributed tremendously to the research base on summer learning. The findings qualify as promising evidence, also known as “Tier 3” under the Every Student Succeeds Act. The Every Student Succeeds Act offers many funding streams that are only available to districts if used to support activities that are evidence-based, which the law defines in four tiers based on the rigor of the research. The availability of qualifying research on which to base program design should make it easier for states to use federal funding for this kind of summer learning. Additional research shows us that summer learning loss involves more than math and reading. When students do not attend engaging and enriching summer programs, the summer months can result in losses in health and well-being, college and career opportunity, and the support needed to break cycles of intergenerational poverty and move young people and their families forward.

In fact, 84 percent of young people who qualify for free and reduced-price meals do not access them in the summer. Reasons may include lack of availability, stigma associated with going to meal sites, or lack of awareness. In addition to hunger, food insecurity has other consequences. For example, some young people gain weight twice as fast during the summer. A recent analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010–11, shows a stark difference between school year and summer weight gain. The prevalence of both obese and overweight children increased significantly between the start of kindergarten and the end of second grade, with all of the increase occurring during the summers.

For many youth ages 14 and up, particularly those from low-income homes, earning an income in the summer is a necessity. Subsidized summer jobs were once an accessible reality for many, but the primary federal funding stream for such programs was eliminated in 2008, leaving cities to take up much of the responsibility. This loss of funding has contributed to a nearly 40 percent decline in youth employment in the last 12 years and a deficit of 3.6 million teen summer jobs. The decline has most affected low-income and minority youth. In 2013, white male teens from high-income families were five times more likely to be employed than African American male teens from low-income families.

In addition to the loss of funding for summer jobs, other factors have made summer as much about family economic success as academic success. On July 6, 2009, then-President Barack Obama declared the first National Summer Learning Day. His declaration reads in part: “Families and community members play the most important role in the lives of their children. Demands at work and home mean that many parents have less time to spend with their children, but this time, care, and instruction is critical to children’s academic success.”

Indeed, the composition and well-being of families and our workforce have changed dramatically, with major implications for summer learning, health, and safety. Today, more children are living with single parents. The share of children born outside of marriage now stands at 41 percent, up from just 5 percent in 1960. Since 1996, most recipients of public assistance must work in order to qualify for benefits, taking them out of the home year-round. Minimum wage has not kept pace with inflation, so parents are working longer hours for less pay. In short, there is no one home to care for kids in the summer and less money to pay for care inside or outside the home.

Former Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville has been a vocal advocate for a radical reimagining of public education to catch up to the changing family and economic circumstances. Citing the growing achievement and opportunity gaps, Reville writes:

I believe we need a national campaign for a new concept: making summer learning, in effect, a third education semester each year.

This concept is not about prescribing more formal schooling, but rather about providing enrichment, stimulation, and learning opportunities that are often, though not always, aligned with academic goals. ... Such an entitlement would ... guarantee that every child, irrespective of financial means, would have access to at least 6 weeks of high-quality summer learning and enrichment.

We can no longer treat summer learning as incidental, an accident of birth; rather, we must see it as an essential ingredient in achieving student success at scale.

Why Summer Learning Is Not a Priority

The Hatcher Group, a public affairs and communications firm, has been tracking coverage of summer learning loss in the media for a decade.

What started as 1,000 stories on the issue in 2007 grew to more than 30,000 stories in 2015, a more than tenfold increase in just eight years. The term “summer slide” is increasingly well understood and used to describe the phenomenon. Perhaps as a result of steady media coverage, educators and parents seem to recognize the importance of the issue.

The Afterschool Alliance, a policy and advocacy organization, conducts its America After 3PM national survey every five years to document participation in and perceptions of afterschool and summer programs among a representative sample of households. In the most recent survey, from 2014, 85 percent of families said they support public funding for summer learning. The figure is no surprise, given that the average reported cost of a summer program nationally...
was $288 per week—putting fee-based programs out of reach of many low- and middle-income families.

Where does that leave us? Research tells us that summer learning loss is a problem and a considerable factor in the achievement gap. Yet despite growing understanding of the issue and support for summer learning, it is still not a priority.

Why? One (unsurprising) answer is funding. It’s no secret that school districts have struggled to fully fund their schools since the Great Recession. From 2007 to 2009, state funding fell sharply, and local funding didn’t make up the difference. Most states provide less support per student for elementary and secondary schools than they did prior to 2007. Even today, some states continue to make cuts.

Regardless of state and district budgets, the lack of dedicated federal funding for summer learning makes the issue easy to ignore. Most offices within a school district and agencies within a city or state are directly tied to a public funding stream. As the saying goes, what gets measured gets done.

A variety of federal funding streams allow—but don’t require—money to be targeted to summer learning, so such spending is rarely prioritized or tracked. One step in the right direction: nearly half of states now require or prioritize summer learning for their federal 21st Century Community Learning Center programs, which are partnerships between schools and community-based organizations to offer academic enrichment programming before and after the school day and during the summer. Still, little local infrastructure exists for summer learning.

For instance, in many districts, summer programs are often run by teachers on special assignment with little time for preparation or coordination across departments or agencies. Although summer learning is really everyone’s problem, in practice, it’s no one’s responsibility.

Another common challenge for expanding access to summer learning involves physical infrastructure. Today, many schools still lack air conditioning, making them too hot for use in the summer. Moreover, summer is the favored time for improvements, repairs, and upgrades to be made to facilities, also taking many schools out of consideration for summer programming.

In his 2010 article for Time, writer David Von Drehle points to yet another common barrier to expanding summer learning programs: “Leaders in a number of states have tried to add days or even weeks to the academic calendar, but they quickly run into barriers of cost and culture. ... Entire industries depend on the rhythms of summer—think travel, camping, sports and theme parks. They use their influence to keep summers as long as possible.”

Indeed, a simple Google search for “tourism lobby and school calendars” yields news stories from multiple states covering the struggle between school systems and powerful tourism interest groups for more local control over school calendars. North Carolina has had a particularly hard-fought battle since the state passed a school calendar law in 2004. The law requires schools to start on the Monday nearest August 26 and end on the Friday closest to June 11. In that time, districts must fit 185 school days, nine teacher work days, several weeks of holidays, and makeup days for weather.

The superintendent of the Vance County Schools in North Carolina, Anthony Jackson, has criticized the calendar law, pointing out that an earlier start date would reduce summer learning loss and enable the district to align the calendar to the local community college, which, in turn, would help high school students enroll in classes there. And he is not alone. In Virginia, a school calendar law was signed in 1986, and school administrators have been trying to overturn it ever since. A 2005 law requires Michigan schools to start after Labor Day, and a 2016 Maryland executive order that went into effect in 2017 requires the same.

While these laws exemplify the cultural value and perceived economic value of summer, they are ultimately shortsighted. The achievement gap, to which summer learning loss makes a significant contribution, suppresses high school graduation and college completion rates. It also results in long-term economic and social costs to society that far outweigh the benefits of one or two additional weeks of summer break.

With a swing toward more local control of federal education funding and meaningful evidence to support summer learning, perhaps more districts will take a serious look at the potential of these overlooked months. After all, young people who are behind need more time for learning, and more time during the school year alone will never solve the complex inequities of summer or close the achievement gap.

School districts should look to the wide-open space of the summer months to test their new approaches and partnerships, and they should have help along the way. Fortunately, parents overwhelmingly support summer learning, and community-based organizations stand ready to support districts in this cause. With more than 100 years of research on the academic setbacks related to students’ unequal summers, and newer research on the employment and health implications of this disparity, it’s clear that the summer slide is everyone’s problem. Still, we’ll only make progress against this outdated cultural and institutional norm when school districts, parents, employers, and state and local leaders agree that the summer slide is also everyone’s responsibility.

[Sarah Pitcock is the former chief executive officer of the National Summer Learning Association and coeditor and coauthor of The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss.]
Dear Constituents,

We are quickly coming into the home stretch toward the end of the school year. The days seem to be flying by so rapidly for me. I keep prioritizing my priorities due to so many changes and staying vigilant to making sure our contract is abided by others. At least the weather is starting to look and feel like spring. People’s demeanor changes when the sun comes out and the air is fresh with the scent of grass and flowers. I am telling everyone to just breathe and try to relax. There is too much wrong information being disseminated and causing undue stress and confusion. We are doing our best to make sure there is clarity in the information being given to the staff, it is an arduous and heavy lift at times.

As of today, the Association has asked for the TA/Aide pool to be put on hold until the information being sent out is accurate and done properly. The pool process can be very confusing and stressful for those who are displaced. The last thing each person needs is more angst from this process. Hopefully, we will through collaboration, have a clearer message and more up to date information for those displaced. Most likely by the time you read this article, we will have straightened out the confusion. Remember, the deadline for notice of assignment for all Teaching Assistants/Aides is June 15th.

A friendly reminder, if for any reason you are out on leave due to injury or medical leave, you cannot have any restrictions on your return to work release letter from your physician. Due to liability issues, BOCES will not allow you to return unless you are at 100% capacity. I understand this may be frustrating and you may believe you are capable of performing your job, but this is a BOCES policy and it is not a personal issue against you. Make sure any letter from your physician states you have no restrictions or limitations to ensure a smooth return to work transition. It does not feel right having to be told to go home until you are at 100%.

Please remember to contact Marcia Siver to rsvp for the Teaching Assistant/Aide ShowCase on May 24th. Please come out and support your colleagues on this very special day. There will be nine tables set up for you to stroll around gallery style. You will each have an opportunity to appreciate the exemplary work your co-workers are implementing in their respective classrooms.

Information regarding placement for summer school will be coming out this month. I understand there will be disappointment because there are fewer positions than in the past. Unfortunately, there is no contractual language regarding summer school so there is very little recourse the Association can do. We have been working with administration to insure summer school is run smoothly and has adequate staffing for each classroom. Good luck everyone, I hope each of you gets the position you want.

In closing, I want to let you know that although I will be out for the month of May due to surgery, I will be available by phone or email to answer your questions. Sherry Karcher-Hewitt will take my place if there is a meeting that needs to be held. I will be returning on June 4th just in time for Regents exams and end of the year cleanup. Take care everyone and enjoy the beautiful weather!

In Solidarity, Colleen Condolora

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Hello Readers,

THE END IS NEAR, of the world? Not for us to know. Taxes, never. The TRIAD, right, it is for me.

On July 7, 1971, the BOCES ratified the first agreement (contract) with the Schoharie Albany Schenectady Faculty Association, recognizing it as the bargaining agent for their employees. Communicating this victory to constituents was not an easy task. As it is today, classrooms were located throughout three counties and at the time, the telephone or snail mail were the primary means of disseminating information. Our church basements classes had no telephone. Hasn’t communications changed in this past half century as many of the students now have some type of communication device.

The 1970’s was an era of manual typewriters and carbon paper. The “Xerox” machine had not yet been invented. Any information that needed to be distributed had to be duplicated on a “ditto machine”. This required creating a “master”, placing it backward on the drum of the machine, filling the machine with a toxic smelling liquid and hand cranking the required needed copies. The need to refill the drum or a breakdown could ruin the master, leave us with purple hands and having to create a new master.

During those early years, members of the Executive Board and Rep Council spent many evening on the phone or copying and mailing information to keep members informed. Thus the Association newsletter, “Sassy Scoops” came into existence to further inform us. A contest was held to change the name in 1979 with the winner to receive $25. Unfortunately, I could not find the name of the winner in my back editions, but the name TRIAD appeared in a 1980 edition. Without the electronic tools of today, producing a newsletter was a “type, cut and paste” process, very labor intensive and then required a trip to NYSUT to be copied.

Through the years, there have been so many who contributed to the newsletter. The following members were listed in back issues and includes editors as well those who contributed articles or worked at one of the related jobs: Zelda Zeh, Leah Lee, Joanne Robbins, Marilyn Roundy, Joan Erlwein, Sharon Neal, Kathy Vrooman, Mary Korytowski, Karl Voss, Susan O’Brien, Mimi Mounteer, Pat Huba, Vicki Belyna, Joan Hassell, Joan Shane, Connie Brancasi, Barbara Crawford, Susan Stewart, Barbara Bishop, Diane and Paul Bernard (class), Elaine Burrell, Deb Sorvari, EJ Hanley (class), Lois Leonard, John Fitzpatrick, Gretchen McDonough (class), Erica Kane, Pat Gollub, Paula Williams, Pat Gordon, Lanny Barsale, Sherry Karcher-Hewitt, Colleen Condolora, Kevin Rheden, Catherine Jakway, Dan Darpino, Jeanette Christoff and our Editor since 1994, Susan Kusalonis.

Earlier this school year, our editor, announced that she is beginning plans to retire and hoped someone would consider taking over as editor. She has offered to work with him/her to learn the preparation process. With a computer program to format each issue and readily available copy machines, the endeavor is much easier than the old type, cut and paste of the past. There is a stipend attached to this job as there is for the Exec Board, and some Committee Chairs. There is also a stipend for attendance at Rep Council.

To date, no one has notified the Association or Susan of their interest in pursuing this endeavor. At present the TRIAD appears as a hard copy, for those who prefer and also as an electronic copy on the Association website. As an electronically challenged old-timer, I hope I will continue to receive my hard copy, as do many others who have not opted for the electronic. The numbers in my generation continue to dwindle. We gave our time and effort to making our Association strong and we hope we will not be forgotten. Blessings to all.

RETIREE UPDATES

Pat Prisk, retired OTR and husband Joe are enjoying warm, sunny Florida where the weather can be a little taste of heaven. Pat enjoys and appreciates our Retirees Corner.

Woody Herman, retired Teacher, gave a call and spoke of the need to have a plan upon retiring. Woody continues to use his woodworking skills and has a store in Galway (Rt.29).
The 2018 Capital Region Tour de Cure (formerly Saratoga Springs) is coming up on Sunday, June 10 at its new location at the Saratoga County Fairgrounds in Ballston Spa, and we invite you to join us that weekend as a volunteer or as a participant! This is no longer just a cycling event, this year the Tour de Cure also includes a 5K (3.1 mile) run/walk.

We are now the Capital Region Tour de Cure to be more inclusive of the amazing community of participants, volunteers, sponsors and supporters who have made the Tour so successful over the years.

Will you keep the momentum going and volunteer this year?

Jobs include set up, registration, greeting riders, start line, routes/rest stops, photographers, route flaggers, breakfast and lunch servers, festival, medical support and so much more!

Events like the Tour are made possible by the hundreds of individuals and groups who volunteer, and we are so grateful for those who donate their time. All volunteers who sign up will receive a volunteer shirt and enjoy lunch by Mazzone Hospitality, New Belgium Beer and live entertainment by Body & Soul.

Contact Anne Moore or Melissa Cappelli at CapitalRegionTourVolunteer@gmail.com or register now at www.diabetes.org/capitalregionvolunteer.

Brent Pierce, Teacher, Spec. Ed. is the chairman of the volunteer planning committee. He is committed to volunteer to and raise money in this inspirational event. 29 million people in the United States have diabetes, and he wants to do something about it. Won’t you help him start a chain reaction?

This is an opportunity to change the future and make a positive impact in the lives of those who are affected by diabetes. The American Diabetes Association’s Tour de Cure is so much more than just another fundraising event.

Chances are, you know someone who has been affected by diabetes and you already know how important it is to stop this disease. By making a donation in Brent’s behalf, volunteering or by joining his team, you will be helping provide community-based education programs, protect the rights of people with diabetes. Funding critical research for a cure means that there is a future where a parent does not have to hear that their child has diabetes. A future where an adult does not have to face the uncertain times ahead after receiving a diabetes diagnosis. A future where you can have a part in making this possible.

To Make A Donation

To make a monetary donation go to diabetes.org/capitalregion. Click on donate and type in the name of the rider. It will bring you to their page.

Check out the YouTube video. It is amazing! (You may also see Brent!) The video also highlights the “Red Riders” who are participants affected by diabetes.

The purpose of the event is to support everyone who lives with type 1 or type 2 diabetes and showcase the courage it takes to live every day with this difficult disease. It’s time to celebrate those with diabetes who get on their bikes and ride or get out and run! The Tour de Cure recognizes all participants with diabetes as the heroes on the day of the event!

Many Capital Region BOCES employees, family members and friends are proud participants who volunteer and donate each year. Please ride, run/walk, volunteer, or donate. With your support, together we can defeat diabetes!

For more information about the Tour de Cure or to register for the event, please visit www.diabetes.org/capitalregion
The TRIAD is published monthly for the Capital Region BOCES Faculty Association Membership. We appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have.

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**Things you might want to do**

**Celebrate the arts across America:** Search events and venues by genre (classical music, dance, theater, etc.), location, summer programs or other topics. Includes a “More Art, Less $$$” section on obtaining discounts. ArtsAmerica.org.

**Spring-cleaning time:** Checklists for the garage, kitchen and other rooms — plus time-saving strategies for throughout the year. Housewife HowTos.com/ printable-house-cleaning-checklists

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Please let either know if someone needs cheering up, congratulations, get well or condolences.

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