

# School-Age Success Story: Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance Summer Learning Model



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



National Center on Child Care Professional  
Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives (PDW Center)  
Jointly funded by ACF's Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start

## Rhode Island Expands Summer Learning Partnership Between Community and School-Based Educators

The Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance (RIASPA) summer learning model, *Moving from Summer School to Summer Learning*, is a public-private partnership designed to reduce summer learning loss by engaging school-age children in fun and meaningful summer learning activities. The model brings together public school teachers and afterschool program staff to provide hands-on activities that enrich and extend the school year curriculum for participating school-age children. The project began in 2011 with 2 programs serving 160 children. By summer of 2013, the project included 16 programs and served 1,450 children across Rhode Island. The program runs for 6 weeks during the summer months.

The core of the project is an implementation team of community-based educators and school-day educators who co-create and co-deliver an experiential summer curriculum infused with academics and service learning opportunities. Service learning is when students apply lessons learned in the classroom to solve real-life problems. Educators from both settings find that they now apply the approach in their school year practices. One fifth grade teacher commented, "In summer, I really liked to teach hands-on. You don't get much opportunity in the school year, but now I can see the benefits and I will definitely do much more during the school year."

A number of the curricula have a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) focus that works well in summer programs. Some programs in the project focused on environmental education and stewardship. One topic in this focus area that provides a direct application of STEM is urban gardening. The programs were able to address environmental education and stewardship through partnerships with organizations like the [National Audubon Society](#).

Service learning is another key element of the summer learning model. Children help determine the context of their own learning by identifying issues and concerns of interest and creating their own solutions. A result of the service learning experience has been that the children become engaged in community improvement and civic responsibilities. When comparing area playgrounds, one middle school group noticed that a playground in a low-income neighborhood needed repairs. They did research on playground safety and developed a budget for fixing the playground. The children then made a presentation to the city council and succeeded in getting \$3,000 to make the improvements.

The success of the RIASPA model is also documented in an evaluation of the 2012 program year. Results indicate that 15% of participating students advanced in reading while 45% of students made gains in math. Adam Greenman, Executive Director of RIASPA, is encouraged by these gains because they counter typical summer learning loss: "I applaud these outcomes that are the result of keeping the summer learning faucet on, especially knowing that children are engaged and having a lot of fun while learning."

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You can also visit the [RIASPA Summer Model Webpage](#).