

High Quality Child Care Promotes Healthy Development, School Readiness, and School Success Summer Learning is Particularly Important for Low Income School-age Children

Decades of research has documented what is referred to as the “summer slide” – the impact of summer vacation’s learning loss on the educational achievement of children, particularly low income children. The achievement gap is not really a result of “summer slide” alone but the cumulative effect that begins with school readiness.

In 1982, Johns Hopkins University followed Baltimore Public School students from 1st grade to age 22. By 9th grade, on a scale of 547.6 points, there was a 73.2 point spread in achievement test scores between low and higher income students.¹

- About one-third of the gap was related to disparities when children started first grade.
- The remainder of the difference was largely due to the cumulative effect of summer learning differences.

Summer Slide Research Summary

- Research since the 1970’s has found that children from low income

families progress at similar rates during the school year but lose ground over the summer months.

- Low income students lose 2-3 months in reading achievement while their higher income friends continue to make progress.
- Most students lose about two months in math skills, but low income students lose more.
- About two-thirds of the 9th grade academic achievement gap can be explained by the summer slide during the elementary school years.²

High Quality Child Care and School Readiness Link

Access to high quality child care and early learning settings is important for all children, but particularly for low income children. We know from the science about early brain development that brain development is cumulative. The earliest years lay the foundation for future cognitive and social and emotional growth.

¹ Alexander, Karl, Entwisle, Doris, and Olson, Linda, “[Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap](#),” Johns Hopkins University (2007).

² Ibid.

- During a child's earliest years, 700 new neural connections are formed every second.
- Both genes and experience play a role in brain development. "Serve and return" relationships, where parents and caregivers promote positive interaction, help to promote social and emotional development as well as critical thinking skills.
- Studies show low income children have a 30 million word gap by age 3.
- A child's vocabulary by age 3 can predict third grade reading achievement.



The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 Emphasizes High Quality Care

One of the chief goals of the CCDBG Act of 2014 is to increase the number and

percentage of low income children in high quality care. For the first time,

- CCDBG now requires minimum training that is age-appropriate related to the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children.
- Training must be conducted annually, be progressive (intentional and sequential) and be linked to a state's Early Learning Guidelines.
- Children are eligible for assistance for at least 12 months, and
- Assistance must take into consideration the developmental needs of the child, not merely reflect a parent's work hours.

These changes reflect bipartisan recognition that the early years are important, that high quality care can make a difference in a child's development, and that CCDBG supports children on the whole continuum – from supporting school readiness to helping school-age children succeed through access to after-school and summer learning programs.

The Most Recent CCDBG Data (FY2014)³

- About 1.4 million children each month receive child care assistance.
- 51% were below the federal poverty level (about \$19,790 for a family of 3), 27% were between 100 and 150% of

³ FY2014 CCDBG Preliminary Data.
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/fy-2014-ccdf-data-tables-preliminary>

the federal poverty level, and 11% had income above the federal poverty level.

- About 56% of the children were under age 5.

Quality of Settings for CCDBG Children

Not much is known about the quality of care that children receiving CCDBG are in – although states report that 86% of children are in regulated care of some type. Given the importance of high quality care to healthy child development and the requirement in CCDBG to increase access to high quality care, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has proposed new state data reporting requirements so that more is known about the quality of care paid for through CCDBG and progress can be measured in expanding access to high quality care.

School-Age Summer Slide

Among children who received CCDBG assistance in FY2014, about 11% were age 5 (kindergarten) and nearly half a million were school-age. Improving school readiness will help improve grade level performance. However, given the studies that document the slide among low-income students during school summers, more

effort is needed so that hard earned progress is not lost.

About two-thirds of school-age children (66%) who receive assistance through CCDBG are in center-based settings with the remainder in home-based settings.

Research shows that after-school and summer learning programs demonstrate improvement in student academic achievement, positive social and emotional development, greater student and family engagement, positive work and study habits, as well as improved workforce development and a reduction in problem behaviors.⁴

Access to high quality settings is important year-round.

The National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (NCASE)

In 2015, the Administration for Children and Families reorganized its training and technical assistance centers to more effectively offer TA to improve the quality of care across all settings. The new National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (NCASE) will help states, territories, and tribes improve the quality of care for school-age children throughout the year.

⁴ Durlak, J. Loyola University of Chicago. Weissberg, R., University of Chicago. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). [“The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills,”](#) 2007.



High quality out of school time programs – during the school year as well as the summer, are particularly important for low income children.

Esperanza Elementary Summer Youth Program

Esperanza Elementary School, supported by a grant from the Utah Department of Workforce Services Office of Child Care offers a summer youth program for six weeks during the summer. The program provides reading intervention, math instruction, hands-on science exploration,

along with recreation and enrichment activities.

In 2015, 99% of children in Esperanza Elementary School's summer youth program maintained or increased reading proficiency levels and 82% maintained or improved math skills.

Expanding access to high quality early learning settings and after-school and summer learning initiatives for school-age children will help ensure that children start school ready to learn and perform at grade level or above.

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