

To: House Committee on Education
From: Dr. Kimberley Ednie, Consultant, District Summer Learning Network
Date: March 19, 2025
Subject: Neutral for HB 3039/HB 2007

Dear Chair Neron, Vice-Chair McIntire, Vice-Chair Dobson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Kimberley Ednie, and I am a summer learning specialist with the District Summer Learning Network (DSLN), a Wallace Foundation funded program supporting hundreds of school districts across the country to transform summer learning. DSLN provides technical assistance and professional development to help districts ensure that summer learning programs nurture students' social, emotional, and mental health needs while preparing them for academic success.

Summer learning is among the most effective strategies to boost student engagement, learning, and well-being. These programs are critical for historically underserved youth, who benefit most from culturally responsive programming that cultivates a sense of belonging and connection while providing social, emotional, and academic learning. In recent data from Center for Educational Progress and the [Educational Scoreboard](#), researcher [Tom Kane](#) of Harvard named summer learning as one of a very few promising and generalizable indicators of efficacy.

Currently, Oregon has not achieved the full benefits of summer learning due to inconsistent and poorly timed funding, lack of clarity on effective implementation, and administrative barriers to effective school district-community partnerships.

Oregon needs predictable and equitable funding for summer learning, including funding to community and tribal programs serving our most impacted communities. **Importantly, school district-led summer learning as an effective strategy for improving student success is made much more effective when it prioritizes deep partnerships with community based organizations.** Research and practice indicate that high quality summer learning is most successful when designed for a blend of academics and joyful enrichment. I urge you to consider how HB 2007 can provide funding for enrichment activities that center joy -- and not solely focus on enrichment for academic improvement.

For summer learning to serve as a successful strategy to improve academic outcomes, the conventional model of summer school as punitive and remedial must be jettisoned. Successful summer learning programs include academic quality as one part of a comprehensive learning design that is culturally-sustaining, deeply enriching, and socially-emotionally supportive. Research demonstrates that community based organizations are essential partners in this programming, particularly for students who have been historically underserved. Developing these partnerships requires careful planning and ongoing support. HB 2007 would be well served to consider supporting community based organizations that can partner with school districts to create well-balanced and engaging program designs.

National research is clear about the efficacy and need for a balance between enrichment and academics. Learning Policy Institute's Report (2021), [Summer Learning and Beyond: Opportunities for Creating Equity](#), emphasizes learning experiences must attend to more than "academic recovery." They emphasize best practices grounded in learning theory on how people learn best, requiring: "experiences that are intellectually honest and authentic; that provide opportunities for joy, exploration, play, and self direction; and experiences that offer...a chance to study and understand the world." They urge districts to create equity centered learning environments that: "center the range of experiences, needs, and dreams that young people will be bringing with them to learning environments."

[American Institute for Research](#) (2021) emphasizes the importance of social and emotional skills for success in school and beyond, and the ways in which summer and after school learning support youth development:

Decades of research across many fields, including psychology, social science, and brain science, demonstrates how social and emotional competence enables youth to succeed in many aspects of their lives—in school academically and out of school in their personal lives and at work. Moreover, social and emotional learning ...[builds] core competencies and [creates] safe and supportive learning environments that strengthen the relationships, resilience, and empathy that are key to buffering and responding to trauma.

No matter what, we need to recognize and elevate the critical role that afterschool and summer programs play in supporting youth learning, development, and reengagement. Historically, these programs have taken a whole-child approach, putting the science of learning and development into practice to foster social, emotional, and academic learning. These are the practices that programs must employ now, rather than focusing only on short-term gains in assessment scores in reading and mathematics. Afterschool and summer programs work because all people —children, youth, and adults— thrive in safe, supportive environments that are developmentally rich and identity-safe, characterized by positive relationships and relevant opportunities to learn and grow.

Examples in Practice: Two school district-led summer learning programs that are demonstrating improved academic outcomes for students are Seattle, WA and Oakland, CA. I have worked directly with leaders in both districts. Importantly, these leaders emphasize that their academic success is tied deeply to their partnerships with community based organizations - as these enrichment programs are what keep students engaged, attending, and working hard in their academics.

In 2024, **Seattle Public Schools (SPS)** provided summer learning for approximately 2,000 students at 12 elementary school sites. They provided a full day model: in the morning, students received core instruction in SEL, ELA, and Math. In the afternoon, local CBOs provided afternoon STEAM enrichment. Summer learning curriculum is academically rich and culturally-specific in order to foster joyful learning. Seattle is seeing positive results: students furthest from academic justice who participated in summer learning, compared to a group who

did not, demonstrated improvement in growth targets on the local assessment they use to track academic progress. The team has emphasized that the combination of strong strategic partnerships with community based organizations, coupled with strong academic programming, was essential for student engagement and acceleration.

In 2024, **Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)** provided summer learning for ~9,000 students. Programming centered learning experiences that incorporated academic intervention to combat summer learning loss, alongside enrichment integration with sports, STEAM, and other activities that allowed for acceleration of skills, habits and mindsets. Additionally, they focused on culturally relevant youth development in service of promoting and maintaining joyful schools, which builds a culture of affirmation, inclusion and belonging.

Their summer programming was designed in light of these local and national data points:

- Under-resourced children often do not have the same opportunities to learn and participate in enriching activities during summer, which increases the opportunity gap.
- Utilization of summer learning programs leads to lower violence, higher physical and mental health, improved social skills, and a heightened sense of self.
- When school ends, some students and families struggle to get their basic needs met; summer programming provides meals for students and a safe space to thrive.

In the recent data from Center for Educational Progress and the Educational Scoreboard, Oakland has recovered in reading. According to their district's summer learning program leads, the wide range of community based enrichment programs is a deep enhancement to their academic focus.

In conclusion, HB 2007 makes clear that Oregon leaders' are committed to high quality academic summer programming, which is commendable. However, I urge you to ensure that meaningful, joyful, culturally responsive enrichment is also part of the equation. Students will experience enhanced success only when summer learning is a balance of joy and academics, not solely a focus on academic learning.

Thank you for the opportunity to write to you about this important issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kimberley Ednie, Ed.L.D.