

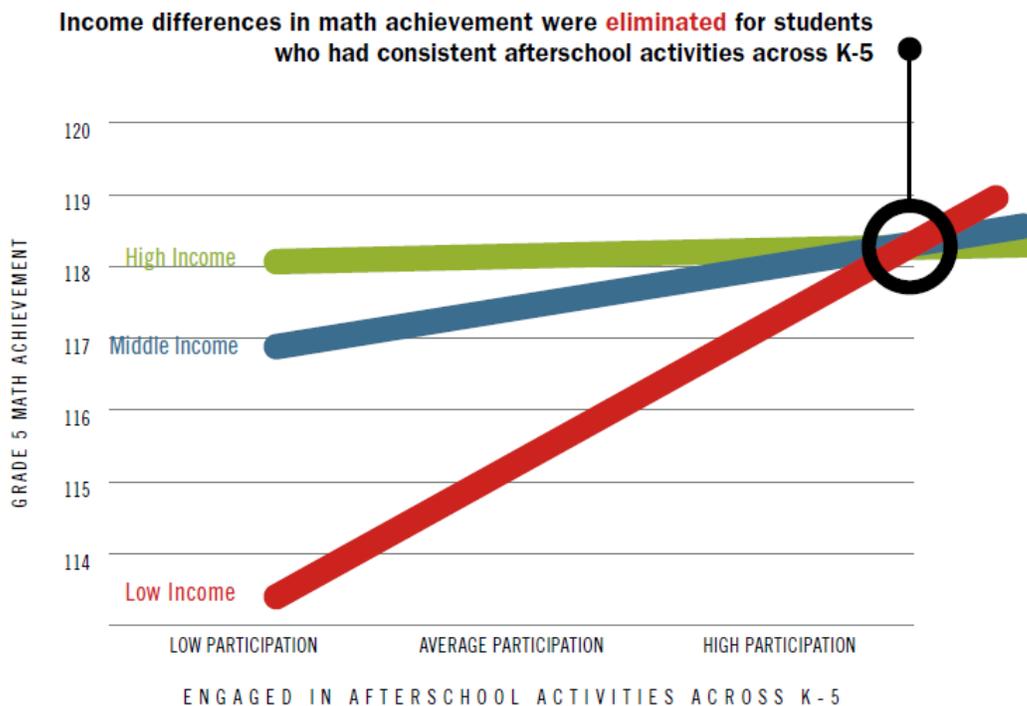
March 17, 2014

Submitted by Michelle Doucette Cunningham
Executive Director, Connecticut After School Network

Good afternoon, Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Michelle Doucette Cunningham, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut After School Network, a statewide alliance representing the thousands of children, parents and staff who participate in after school and summer programs all across the state.

I am here today to urge you to add language to Senate Bill 476, An Act Concerning the Academic Achievement Gap that would create new **Summer Learning Grant** program in the Department of Education budget.

After school and summer programs are one of the best tools in the state’s arsenal for combatting the persistent achievement gap between high-income and low-income students. The latest national research by Deborah Vandell and her colleagues at University of California clearly shows that income differences in math achievement were eliminated for students who had consistent after-school activities across grades K-5 (see graph next page).

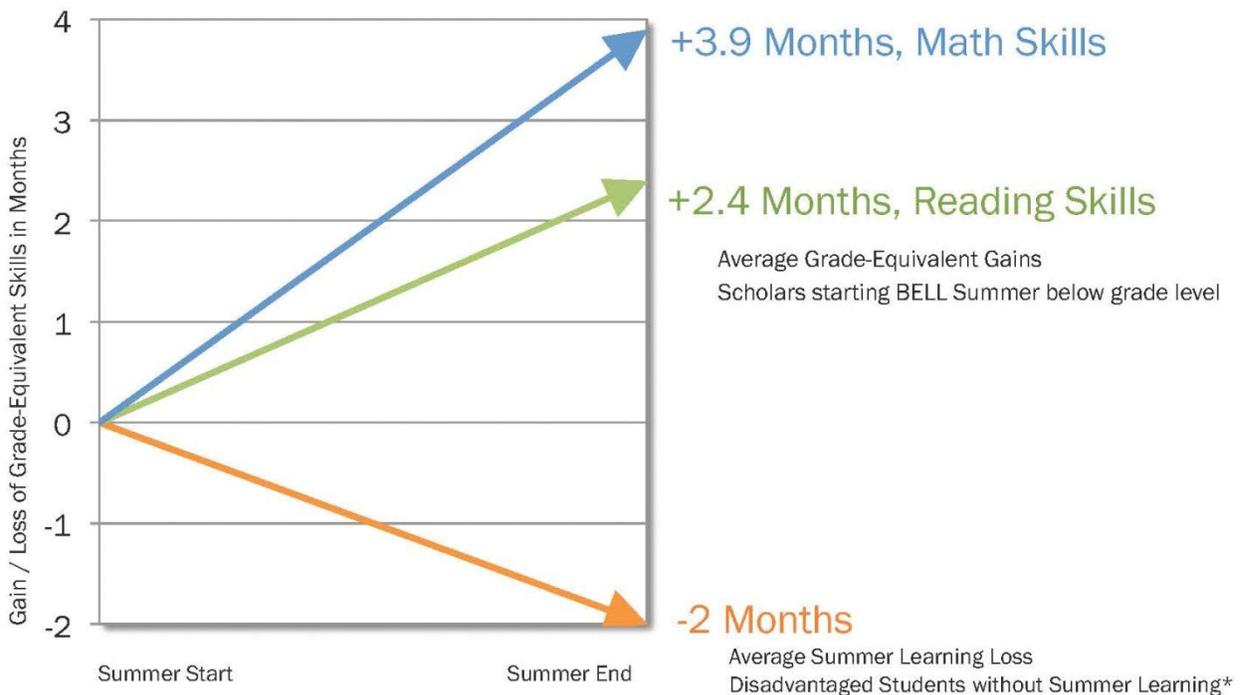


Pierce, K. M., Auger, A. and Vandell, D. L. (April, 2013). Narrowing the Achievement Gap: Consistency and Intensity of Structured Activities During Elementary School. Unpublished paper presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, Seattle, WA

Summer learning loss is a major contributor to the state’s achievement gap, and I urge you to expand summer programs by creating a new competitive grant program that would allow Connecticut programs to replicate the successful BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life)

model, which started outside of Boston and has shown significant improvements in students reading and math levels. Specifically the types of programs we are hoping SDE will fund with these grants would blend rigorous small-group academic instruction in reading and math with hands-on enrichment courses in science, technology, creative arts, and fitness and health. Based upon the successful After School Grant program, the programs would require collaborative community partnerships and would provide a minimum of 240 hours of programming.

AVERAGE SUMMER LEARNING GAINS OF UNDERPERFORMING SCHOLARS VS SUMMER LEARNING LOSS



* Sources: McCombs, et al. (2011). Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning. Rand Education & The Wallace Foundation; and Cooper, Harris (2003). Summer Learning Loss: The Problem & Some Solutions. ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

The BELL Summer program helps scholars gain academic skills. Most students - and disadvantaged students, in particular - lack access to structured summer learning opportunities and as a result experience "summer learning loss."

Because these Summer Learning Programs are community-based, they are significantly more cost effective than other possible solutions to address the achievement gap. The average cost for this type of summer program is between \$800 and \$1500 per student, \$3.33 - \$6.25 per hour), depending upon the level of in-kind services that are provided.

A typical day at a Summer Learning Program starts with a healthy breakfast and community-building events. Scholars then transition into classrooms, where certified teachers and trained teaching assistants lead small-group instruction in literacy and math. Staff use research-based curricula and apply data from computer adaptive assessments to differentiate instruction according to scholars' unique learning needs. After lunch, scholars rotate through a series of enrichment courses and activities focused on topics such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), creative arts, and health & exercise. Examples of courses include

robotics, digital music production, creative writing, drama, tennis, character development, and financial literacy.

Summer learning programs supported by these grants keep young people safe, help working families, and help students succeed in school and in life. The benefits are clear and well-documented — please expand the state’s investment in these programs so that we can address the achievement gap in a way that is truly cost effective.

Suggested Bill Language to implement a Summer Learning Program Grant

Summer learning program grant. (a) The Department of Education, in consultation with the after school committee established pursuant to section 10-16v, may, within available appropriations, administer a grant program to provide grants to local and regional boards of education, municipalities and not-for-profit organizations that are exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, or any subsequent corresponding internal revenue code of the United States, as from time to time amended, for summer learning programs that provide direct services and for entities that provide support to summer learning programs. For purposes of this subsection, “summer learning program” means a program that takes place during the summer school vacation, provides a minimum of 240 hours of, enrichment, recreational, and educational activities including small group instruction in literacy and math for children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, and has a parent involvement component.

(b) (1) Applications for grants pursuant to subsection (a) of this section shall be filed biennially with the Commissioner of Education at such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes. As part of the application, an applicant shall submit a plan for the expenditure of grant funds.

(2) Eligibility for grants pursuant to this section shall be determined for a two-year period and shall be based on the plan for expenditure of grant funds. Prior to the payment of funds to the grant recipient for the second year of the grant, the grant recipient shall report to the Department of Education on performance outcomes of the program and file expenditure reports pursuant to subsection (f) of this section. The report concerning performance outcomes shall include, but not be limited to, measurements of the impact on student achievement including grade-level reading ability, childhood obesity, and behavior of student participants.

(c) The Department of Education and the after school committee established pursuant to section 10-16v shall develop and apply appropriate evaluation procedures to measure the effectiveness of the grant program established pursuant to this section.

(d) For purposes of carrying out the provisions of this section, the Department of Education may accept funds from private sources and from any state agency that is a member of the after school committee.

(e) The Department of Education shall provide grant recipients with technical assistance, evaluation, program monitoring and professional development. The department may retain up to four per cent of the amount appropriated for the grant program for purposes of this subsection.

(f) Grant recipients shall file expenditure reports with the Commissioner of Education in accordance with subdivision (2) of subsection (b) of this section and at such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes. Grant recipients shall refund (1) any unexpended amounts at the close of the program for which the grant was awarded, and (2) any amounts not expended in accordance with the approved grant application. Any funds appropriated pursuant to this section not expended prior to the end of the state fiscal year, are further appropriated to the department in the subsequent fiscal year for the same purposes.

(g) Not later than March 15, 2017, and biennially thereafter, the Department of Education shall report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education on performance outcomes of recipients of grants under this section. The report shall include, but not be limited to, measurements of the impact on student achievement including grade-level reading ability, childhood obesity and the behavior of student participants.