

ACHIEVING READING PROFICIENCY BY THE END OF THIRD GRADE

A Resource Guide
To Accompany the 2010 KIDS COUNT Special Report
From the Annie E. Casey Foundation

RECOMMENDATION 4: FIND, DEVELOP AND DEPLOY PRACTICAL AND SCALABLE SOLUTIONS TO TWO OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTORS TO THE UNDER-ACHIEVEMENT OF CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES – CHRONIC ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL AND SUMMER LEARNING LOSS.

REDUCING CHRONIC ABSENCE

Attendance Works: This new national and state-level initiative seeks to build public awareness about the need to address chronic absence and helps organizations and coalitions launch campaigns to promote individual student attendance tracking and investments in programs to reduce absences. Further, it offers information about promising programs, tools, and technical assistance to help communities, schools and school districts monitor and address chronic absence. The initiative's support has come from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and, in California, from the Stuart Foundation, California Endowment., and San Francisco Foundation.

Web site: <http://www.attendanceworks.org>

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Baltimore City Student Attendance Work Group: In Baltimore, a chronic absence analysis showed that one in six elementary school students were missing at least 20 days of class; rates were even higher among middle school and high school students. By drawing attention to these data, the Open Society Institute (OSI) catalyzed the creation of the Baltimore City Student Attendance Work Group, which is co-chaired by representatives of the Mayor, the Baltimore City Public Schools, and OSI. The Work Group brings together a wide array of stakeholders to craft and implement strategies to reduce chronic absence and build public awareness of the problem. One result is that attendance now is tracked daily, and principals receive alerts about students who are or appear at risk of becoming chronically absent; the students can then be referred to a team to address concerns and work with the family to develop an attendance plan.

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Kent School Services Network (KSSN): One way in which Grand Rapids, Michigan is addressing chronic absenteeism is through this community school initiative. KSSN is a broad partnership that brings health and social services into schools to address barriers families are facing and keep students in class. Early results from an independent evaluation show declining absenteeism and fewer discipline problems in most schools, as well as rising standardized test scores and greater satisfaction among teachers. The partnership includes local foundations, service providers, eight schools in two school districts, and the county. Among the funders are: Grand Rapids Community Foundation, Skillman Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Dyer-Ives Foundation, Heart of West Michigan United Way, Frey Foundation, Steelcase Foundation, Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation, Keller Foundation, Institute for Systemic Change, Sebastian Foundation, and Student Achievement Fund.

Web site: <http://www.kentisd.org/kssn>

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“Present and Accounted For: Improving Student Attendance Through Family and Community Involvement” in *Journal of Educational Research*, 2002 (95), pp. 308-318. This article by J.L. Epstein and S.B. Sheldon reports on a longitudinal analysis of attendance data and identifies practices that may be able to increase daily attendance and decrease chronic absenteeism.

Present, Engaged, and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades by Hedy Chang and Mariajose Romero (September 2008). This report, which resulted from an action research project supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, documents the consequences, prevalence, potential causes and possible solutions to children missing extended periods of school in grades K-3. Chronic absence places children at academic risk, but it can be reduced significantly when schools, communities and families join together to monitor and promote attendance and to address factors that prevent young students from attending school every day. The report is available from the National Center on Children in Poverty at http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_837.html.

Socioeconomic Disadvantage, School Attendance, and Early Cognitive Development: The Differential Effects of School Exposure: Over the past several decades, research has documented strong relationships between social class and children’s cognitive abilities. These initial cognitive differences, which are substantial at school entry, increase as children progress through school. Despite the robust findings associated with this research, authors have generally neglected the extent to which school absenteeism exacerbates social class differences in academic development among young children. Using growth-curve analyses within a three-level hierarchical linear modeling framework, this study employs data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K) to examine the links between children’s social class, school absences, and academic growth during kindergarten and first grade. Results suggest that the effects of schooling on cognitive development are stronger for lower socioeconomic status (SES) children and that the findings associated with theories of summer learning loss are applicable to literacy development during early elementary school. Indeed, although they continue to achieve at lower absolute levels, socioeconomically disadvantaged children who have good attendance rates gain more literacy skills than their higher SES peers during kindergarten and first grade.

Strengthening Schools by Strengthening Families: Community Strategies to Reverse Chronic Absenteeism in the Early Grades and Improve Supports for Children and Families: This October 2008 paper by the New School’s Center for New York City Affairs discusses the findings from research to determine the extent and causes of chronic absenteeism among New York City primary school children. Based on individual school data that showed at least one in every five students in grades K-5 was chronically absent, a number of changes were adopted, including assistance from the New York City Department of Education for the schools with the highest rates, more outreach to parents, and new reports to monitor chronic absenteeism. Support for the paper was provided by: Child Welfare Fund, Ira W. DeCamp Foundation, Sirius Fund, and the United Way of New York City. The paper is available at: <http://www.newschool.edu/milano/nycaffairs/documents/StrengtheningSchoolsReport.pdf>
For more information, contact: Kim Nauer NauerK@newschool.edu

ADDRESSING SUMMER LEARNING LOSS AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

Advancing Literacy Through the Arts: United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) is the membership organization of New York City settlement houses and community centers. Rooted in the history and

values of the settlement house movement, UNH promotes and strengthens the neighborhood-based, multi-service approach to improving the lives of New Yorkers in need and the communities in which they live. UNH's membership comprises one of the largest human service systems in New York City, with 38 agencies working at more than 400 sites to provide high quality services and activities to a half million New Yorkers each year. UNH supports its members through policy development, advocacy and capacity-building activities. In 2007, with the generous support of the E.H.A. Foundation, UNH was able to award seven sites with \$5,000 to undertake an arts-related after school program that developed literacy skills among k-8 students. In an effort to highlight the various program and share both challenges and best practices, in December 2009, UNH released ADVANCING L ITERACY THROUGH THE ARTS: Lessons from Settlement House After School Program. This report begins with brief profiles of the seven arts/literacy projects and continues by describing in detail the challenges involved in operating such projects and the best practices used to make them as appealing and meaningful as possible to children and youth.

Web sites: United Neighborhood Houses <http://www.unhny.org/>

Literacy Through the Arts in Afterschool: <http://www.unhny.org/beta/promoting/arts.cfm>

To view report: <http://www.unhny.org/Advancing%20Literacy%20through%20the%20Arts.pdf>

Afterschool Alliance: The Alliance, established in 2000, seeks to raise awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocates for more investment in afterschool so that all children will have access to affordable, quality opportunities. The organization grew from a partnership between the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education which was created to expand afterschool programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative. Today, in addition to the Mott Foundation, supporting partners include: Atlantic Philanthropies, Wallace Foundation, JCPenney Afterschool Fund, William T. Grant Foundation, Open Society Institute/The After-School Corporation, MetLife Foundation, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, Robert Browne Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Noyce Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, Longview Foundation, U.S. Tennis Association, Marriott International, Torani, Bright House Networks, NAMM, and Quaker Chewy. The web site provides policy-related information, issue briefs and reports on afterschool programming, and on-line resources to help programs and parents seeking afterschool opportunities for their children.

Web site: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>

For more information, contact: (202) 347-2030

Afterschool.org: This web site, which is maintained by the Center for Youth Development at the Academy for Educational Development, includes a searchable database of promising practices in afterschool programming. The site also offers a listserv through which practitioners can share resources and ideas, access to webcasts and webinars, and information on funding and professional development opportunities.

Web site: <http://www.afterschool.org>

For more information: (202) 884-8267

Beacon Program (New York City): Beacons are school-based community centers serving children age 6 and over, youth and adults. The program began in 1991 and expanded quickly. There currently are 80 Beacons located throughout New York City, with at least one in each of the 32 local school districts and several in the city's poorest neighborhoods. They operate in the afternoons and evenings, on weekends, during school holidays and vacation periods, and during the summer. Among the typical activities, which are free and open to anyone, are: tutoring; literacy and math enrichment; recreation; GED; English for Speakers of Other Languages; and parenting skills training. Beacons, which are

operated by community-based organizations in collaboration with the host school and other groups, are funded by city, state, and federal dollars.

Web site: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/afterschool/beacon_program.shtml

For more information, contact: (212) 788-6754

Building Educational Leaders for Life (BELL): Founded in 1992 by a group of Black and Latino Harvard Law School students, BELL is a non-profit organization that today provides educational summer and after-school programs for 12,000 elementary students in low-income communities in New York city, Boston, Baltimore, Detroit and Springfield, MA. The six-week summer program includes literacy activities, math instruction, physical education, and arts enrichment activities. Trained college and graduate students serve as mentors to the participants. Shown through evaluation to be effective in improving reading skills and encouraging parents to read to children, BELL was recently cited by the White House as an example of the type of successful program to be supported by the new Social Innovation Fund.

Web site: <http://bellnational.org>

For more information, contact: (800) 305-0671

National Center on Time and Learning (NCTL): NCTL is dedicated to expanding learning time for academic and enrichment opportunities in order to eliminate the achievement gap and assure a well-rounded education for all children. The organization conducts research, addresses public policy at the federal, state, and local levels, and provides technical assistance to states, districts and schools. The web site offers access to research reports and other resources about expanded learning time and a searchable database of public schools that operate with more time per day and/or more days per year than surrounding public schools.

Web site: <http://www.timeandlearning.org>

Media inquiries: (617) 378-3926 media@timeandlearning.org

For more information, contact: (617) 378-3940

National Summer Learning Association: The Association serves as a network hub for thousands of summer learning program providers and stakeholders, offering tools, resources, and expertise to improve program quality, generate support, and increase youth access and participation. In addition, it seeks to increase the number of and funding for high-quality summer learning programs, particularly for low-income youth, and to build support for summer learning as a public policy priority. The web site provides access to Research Briefs and other publications about summer learning. Among the Association's funders are: Atlantic Philanthropies, Morton K. and Jane Blaustein Foundation, Robert R. and Gay C. Cull Family Foundation, Doug and Marie DeVos Foundation, Elev8 Baltimore, Kentfields Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Goldsmith Family Foundation, Lilly Endowment, Longview Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, New York Life Foundation Nuveen Investments, Open Society Institute-Baltimore, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Prudential Foundation, Bernard and Irene Schwartz Foundation, T. Rowe Price Foundation, Victoria Foundation, Wallace Foundation, and Walmart Foundation.

Web site: <http://www.summerlearning.org>

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Partnerships for Learning: Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program

Supports: This 2010 report by the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) describes the benefits of OST-school partnerships, identifies five research-derived principles, and profiles "on-the-ground" partnership efforts. Available at HFRP's web site: <http://www.hfrp.org>.

What Works for Summer Learning Programs for Low-Income Children and Youth: Preliminary Lessons from Experimental Evaluations (2009).

Web site: http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2009_09_01_FS_WWSummerLearning.pdf

Additional resources available online at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/readingmatters.aspx>