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U.S. Department of Education Launches National Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative to Help Students Most Impacted by the Pandemic

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NOTE: Press interested in covering the launch of the Collaborative may [register here](#) to receive updated meeting information and links to join National Convening on April 26 and 27.

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) launched the Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative today, providing support to 46 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Bureau of Indian Education, and three territories working together to use American Rescue Plan and other federal pandemic relief funding to support as many students as possible through enriching and educational summer programming. Summer programs are key in the nation's efforts to address lost instructional and extracurricular time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Collaborative—a partnership between ED, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Governors Association, and other national partners—follows President Joe Biden's call to action at ED's [National Safe School Reopening Summit](#) to, “work together to ensure that all children have access to high quality summer learning and enrichment opportunities this summer and beyond.” Biden added that, “This is essential for all students, particularly those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, students of color, English learners, students with disabilities, homeless students, and all those who went without in-person instruction this year.”

The Collaborative brings together state and local leaders working alongside key stakeholders to design evidence-based summer programs that address the lost instructional, social, and extracurricular time students have experienced as a result of the pandemic, especially underserved students and those disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

“Too many students have experienced interruptions in learning and negative effects on their social and emotional wellbeing due to time apart from friends and community,” said Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. “Summer presents a key opportunity for school districts and community partners to accelerate learning and provide new avenues for students to safely engage with each other in fun activities. Let’s use this moment to reimagine what fun, engaging summer programming can look like, make it accessible for all students, and work together to make sure our communities recover and rebuild stronger than they were before the pandemic.”

The American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) Fund provides nearly \$122 billion to states and school districts and requires that states invest at least \$1.2 billion on evidence-based summer enrichment programs. Under the ARP ESSER Fund, school districts are also required to use at least \$21 billion for evidence-based initiatives to address the impact of lost instructional time, including summer programs. ED recently released the ARP ESSER state plan [application template](#), which invites states to describe their plans for how they will engage their communities to distribute and utilize ARP ESSER funds.

Over the next two days, ED will convene states for virtual learning sessions to kick off the Collaborative. The Collaborative aims to both take a national approach to understanding best practice and rapidly setting up fun, innovative, and engaging summer opportunities for students, while also facilitating regional and local level partnerships to ensure speedy and robust implementation of state- and district-level plans.

The convening will include sessions on forming state-level coalitions; using evidence to inform summer programs; and using federal funds to promote equity through summer enrichment opportunities that support social, emotional, and academic development. Speakers include: Secretary Miguel Cardona, Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, Illinois State Superintendent of Education Dr. Carmen Ayala, Arkansas Secretary of Education Johnny Key, Education Trust Interim CEO Denise Forte, National Summer Learning Association CEO Aaron Dworkin, and Founder of the Harlem Children’s Zone Geoffrey Canada. Participants will discuss how to design summer programming in ways that create safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments that reengage students socially, emotionally, and academically as they recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Summer activities can include opportunities to accelerate learning, along with a broad array of enrichment activities ranging from physical fitness and health education; arts programs; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) activities; and career and technical education (CTE) programs; to youth development. For older students, these opportunities can include a work-based learning or community service component.

The Collaborative also emphasizes the importance of offering the necessary supports to ensure all students have access to summer learning and enrichment programs—including students with disabilities, English learners, students from low-income backgrounds, and students experiencing homelessness. In addition to the launch of the Collaborative, ED recently released [Volume 2](#) of the COVID-19 Handbook, which outlines strategies to meet the needs of underserved students, including summer learning opportunities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently released [guidance](#) for operating youth and summer camps during COVID-19. The guidance is intended to help camp administrators operate camps while preventing the spread of COVID-19 and protecting campers, their families, staff, and communities. The Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative will prioritize and maintain a clear and ongoing emphasis on health and safety in all summer offerings.

Organizations participating in The Collaborative’s convening include:

- AASA, The School Superintendents Association
- American Camp Association
- American Federation of Teachers
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Council of Chief State School Officers
- Council of the Great City Schools
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Education Association
- National Governors Association
- National League of Cities
- National Rural Education Association
- National Summer Learning Association
- National Youth Employment Coalition
- Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
- RAND Corporation

StriveTogether
The Afterschool Alliance
The Education Trust
The National Comprehensive Center
Wallace Foundation

Additional information about the Collaborative is available [here](#). Planning meetings as well as regional and theme based convenings will take place in May through July, and the Department will provide additional technical assistance to states and districts upon request. At the end of the summer, the Department will hold a second national convening to discuss implementation success and challenges.

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