

# Mitigating Summer Learning Loss

## How Afterschool Programs Ensure Learning Throughout Summer

Most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains.<sup>1</sup>

Marshalltown Mid-Iowa Community Action runs a full-day, six-week program at Roger's Elementary School. Students spend mornings working on academics, specifically math and reading in groups of no more than five with a licensed teacher in each group. After just four weeks in the program, students were maintaining their end-of-school levels or making vast improvements. Afternoons are spent doing enrichment activities, with schedules switching every two weeks.

More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college.<sup>2</sup>

Through partnerships with the City of Davenport Parks and Recreation, Iowa State University, and the YMCA, Davenport Community Schools is able to offer several different summer programming opportunities. Through the YMCA partnership, all students receive a Kids Pass which allows them to use public transportation for free and gets them free or reduced prices to museums, pools, baseball games and other events throughout the summer that they may not normally have access to.

In the United States today, only 25 percent of school-age children (an estimated 14.3 million children) participate in summer learning programs.<sup>3</sup>

Each summer, participants in the Whyld Girls program in Des Moines participate in an intensive two-week, six-hour per day literacy program. Throughout the two weeks, the youth read fiction books, nonfiction articles, and engage with women's interests on a global level, further defining their individual voices. They utilize analytical tools such as background knowledge, annotation, connection, perspective, and language. Youth also write about their experience and share them in their independently published journal, "Whyld Thoughts." The seventh and eighth grade girls of the Whyld Girls Summer Literacy event acted out a series of performances they wrote themselves on topics ranging from Sub-Saharan African countries and the way they live, HIV/AIDS around the globe, child prostitution, and a powerful trip to the Heifer International Camp. Whyld Girls is funded in part and supported by the Chrysalis Foundation.



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<sup>1</sup> *The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Analytic Review*, Cooper, 1996

<sup>2</sup> *Lasting Consequences of the Summer Learning Gap*, Alexander et al, 2007

<sup>3</sup> *America After 3PM Special Report on Summer*, Afterschool Alliance