CCNETWORK
Comprehensive Center Network

REGION 5
Kentucky
Tennessee
Virginia
West Virginia

Topical Brief: State Approaches to Summer and Afterschool Sustainability

Summer and Afterschool Sustainability Series

High-quality afterschool and summer learning programs are effective ways to support children and teens and accelerate their academic growth. In fact, the American Rescue Plan prioritized a significant amount of funding for out-of-school time programs because of the evidence of their effectiveness.[1] Over the past few years, state educational agencies (SEAs) made key decisions about their summer and afterschool policies and grantmaking strategies, guidance and technical assistance provided to local educational agencies (LEAs), and how to monitor and measure progress. This brief explores the steps that states in Region 5 have taken to strengthen their systems as well as their stories of impact and vision for the future of summer and afterschool. While aspects of each state's story are unique to their context, the themes and approaches they surface can help inform policy and strategy across the region and beyond, now and in the future.

> **Quality summer and afterschool programs are intentionally designed and delivered to meet the learning and developmental needs of children and teens. Within local educational agency settings, effective programming requires a commitment to routine, yearlong, and cross departmental planning, with an eye toward alignment to broader goals and priorities. Broader engagement of educators, families, businesses, and community members are also critical. By prioritizing their needs, interests, and feedback, programs can adapt to changing needs and priorities, maintaining their relevance and effectiveness over time.**

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[1] The Wallace Foundation. (2023, September). *Learning from summer: Effects of voluntary summer learning programs.* https://wallacefoundation.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Learning-from-Summer-Effects-of-Voluntary-Summer-Learning-Programs.pdf

Kremer, K. P., Maynard, B. R., Polanin, J. R., Vaughn, M. G., & Sarteschi, C. M. (2015). Effects of after-school programs with at-risk youth on attendance and externalizing behaviors: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 44*(3), 616-636. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0226-4

With the largest influx of federal funding for in-school and out-of-school learning behind us, **what steps are SEAs taking to sustain and enhance summer and afterschool programs, along with the systems they have built?** This brief explores sustainability through the lens of SEA systems strategies.

The Learning Recovery and Sustainability Challenge

Leading education researchers, including Thomas Kane of Harvard University, have warned that the impact of pandemic-related learning loss will span an entire generation of children and young adults.[2] They project that students may not return to pre-pandemic performance levels until the mid-2030s or later.[3] The impact is also disproportionate, contributing to a widening achievement gap, with data showing that students from lower-income and minority groups face the greatest pandemic-related educational setbacks.[4]

To address these challenges, Region 5 states are forming cross-sector partnerships and forming strategies to sustain progress and address the next decade of heightened student need.

Region 5 State Strategies

SEA leaders play a pivotal role in promoting the sustainability of summer and afterschool programs through their various levers of influence.[5] SEAs can leverage federal funding streams to maximize state-coordinated capacity building activities, and encourage LEAs to partner with local organizations to offer summer and afterschool programs. Federal funding opportunities include:

» Title IV Part B | 21st Century Community Learning Centers

» Title I | funds for LEAs serving a high percentage of students from low-income families

» Title IV, Part A | Student Support and Academic Enrichment

» Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act grants | Career and Technical Education

By shaping policy, SEAs can establish frameworks to support long-term program stability, such as creating dedicated funding streams or embedding summer and afterschool programs into state education plans. Leaders can also advocate for policies that encourage LEAs and communities to prioritize and invest in programs, ensuring they remain integral components of the education system. Grantmaking is another powerful tool SEAs can use to promote sustainability. By designing

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[2] Kane, T. J. (2022). *How Much Learning Have Students Lost Due to COVID?* Brookings Institution. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-much-learning-may-be-lost-in-the-long-run-from-covid-19-and-how-can-mitigation-strategies-help/

[3] McKinsey & Company. (2023, August 16). *COVID-19 Learning Delay and Recovery: Where Do US States Stand?* McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-learning-delay-and-recovery-where-do-us-states-stand

[4] Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. (2023, June 26). *Digging Deeper into Pandemic Learning Loss.* Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. https://siepr.stanford.edu/news/digging-deeper-pandemic-learning-loss

[5] National Comprehensive Center. (2024.). *Strategic planning for continued recovery*. Comprehensive Center Network. https://compcenternetwork.org/ccnetwork-highlights/topic/8274/strategic-planning-continued-recovery

grant opportunities that incentivize long-term planning, collaboration, and the use of data-driven practices, SEAs can encourage programs to focus on immediate needs and long-term impact. Additionally, SEAs can use monitoring and technical assistance to guide programs toward continuous improvement, helping them address gaps and strengthen their infrastructure for sustainability.

Lastly, SEAs play a crucial role in fostering an environment for partnership at the state and local level. At the local level, states can encourage LEAs to foster partnerships across sectors—such as with community organizations, businesses, and local governments—to ensure programs that are supported by a diverse and robust network, further securing their long-term durability. At the state level, SEAs can work with partners like statewide afterschool networks to help build the capacity of LEA and community-based partners to achieve and sustain quality programs. Through additional communications support, SEAs can amplify the importance of programs by helping LEAs share their stories of impact, and build public awareness and political will across the state.

Kentucky

Kentucky's strategy for expanding access to summer and afterschool programs is driven by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), in partnership with the Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance (KYOSA). The state's priorities are to address learning loss and support students' social, emotional, and mental health needs, particularly for those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The state leveraged learning recovery-focused stimulus funds and school-age child care funding to provide summer learning grants to LEAs and community-based organizations[6] KDE issued guidance that emphasized the evidence base and encouraged LEAs to partner with local organizations to enhance the quality of enrichment, which often is the biggest draw to get kids to participate. In addition, KDE invested in technical assistance, offering professional development for teachers and program providers. Looking ahead toward sustaining services, the state is advocating for continued funding through federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and state-level appropriations, with a priority for expanding access to underserved rural areas and low-income communities.[7]

Tennessee

In January 2021, Tennessee's governor and state legislature passed the Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act, allocating state and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for summer programs. The act mandated that all LEAs provide voluntary summer learning camps for priority schools and students in grades 1–8, expanding services to Kindergarten-9 in 2023. The SEA works with their Centers of Regional Excellence consultants (or "CORE," the education service association and regional offices in Tennessee) to provide technical

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[6] Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance. (n.d.). American Rescue Plan. Kentucky Out-of-School Alliance.
https://kyoutofschoolalliance.org/research-policy/american-rescue-plan/

[7] Afterschool Alliance. (n.d.). Afterschool in Kentucky. Afterschool Alliance.
https://afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state=KY

assistance to LEAs and schools across the state. Tennessee's partnership with CORE has served as a model for other SEAs looking to sustain capacity building investments for LEAs and community partners.

Virginia

In 2024, Virginia secured state funding for summer and afterschool programs after a decade-long advocacy effort led by the Virginia Partnership of Out-of-School Time (VPOST). This achievement, part of a broader national movement, came after VPOST collaborated with the Virginia Department of Education to secure $4 million in American Rescue Plan funds for pilot programs. Despite initial setbacks, persistent efforts, including data collection, storytelling, and bipartisan legislative support, culminated in the successful inclusion of out-of-school time funding in the state budget. This funding will continue to support and expand critical programs across the Commonwealth. To learn more, visit Virginia's Journey to State Funding for Summer and Afterschool.

West Virginia

West Virginia has established a collaborative partnership among the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and the West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network through West Virginia University Extension (WVSAN). Partners are working to promote the sustainability of out-of-school-time programs through coordinated policy and technical assistance efforts, including workforce support, professional development, and continuous quality improvement for programs. Recent successes include the launch of the West Virginia Afterschool Program Quality Standards and the first-ever statewide quality conference, both of which reflect joint efforts to promote sustainability and strengthen programs. Moving forward, the partnership aims to address gaps in access and funding, develop credentialing systems for providers, and align quality improvement systems across sectors. These initiatives are essential for ensuring that West Virginia's children have safe, high-quality learning environments while supporting working families and community development. To learn more, visit Fireside Chat: West Virginia's Statewide Partnership for Summer and Afterschool Quality and Sustainability.

Defining Sustainability

Sustainability planning for summer and afterschool programs is an adaptive leadership challenge that requires both strategic and programmatic work. Drawing on the Wallace Foundation's National Summer Learning Project and resources from the Summer Learning Toolkit, sustainability planning requires leaders to continuously navigate change and uncertainty that stem from funding shifts, policy adjustments, or leadership transitions. To do so effectively, leaders must be equipped with clear priorities, strategic messaging, and collaborative partnerships. By building a strong base of support, they ensure that programs are responsive and resilient to an-ever evolving policy and funding landscape. Sustainability planning focuses on engaging key constituents to identify critical program components, communicate about the program's effectiveness, evaluate current funding and explore new funding opportunities, and align efforts with cross-sector partners for greater efficiency and impact.

Equally important is the programmatic side of sustainability, which focuses on strengthening the durability of programs. Sustainability programs are built on strong planning, robust partnerships, quality service delivery, and active community engagement. To achieve this, leaders must establish a clear vision, foster strong partnerships, and secure buy-in and commitment from staff and leaders. By emphasizing effective planning and data-driven decisionmaking, program leaders can drive high attendance, positive outcomes, and cost efficiencies. With these accomplishments in place, programs are more likely to be in demand, and have predictable and steady funding in place.

Additional Resources

Sustainability Planning

» Wallace Foundation Summer Learning Toolkit | Sustainability Planning Tools

» National Comprehensive Center | Strategic Planning for Continued Recovery | State Education Agency Sustainability Planning Template

» Learning Policy Institute | Top 7 Actions States Can Take to Support Summer Learning

Funding

» Children's Funding Project | Federal Funding Streams for Children and Youth Services

» Afterschool Alliance | Sustainability & Federal Pandemic Funding: Federal funding for COVID relief provides significant opportunities for afterschool and summer programs

Building Support for Programs

» [National Comprehensive Center | Gathering and Sharing Stories of Impact: Afterschool and Summer Program Visits](#)

» [Engage Every Student | TIP SHEET: Sharing Your Story through Stakeholder Visits](#)