SUMMER TOOLKIT

NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING WEEK

JULY 11-15, 2022
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ABOUT NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING WEEK

WHY CELEBRATE IT?

National Summer Learning Week is hosted by the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) annually and aims to bring awareness to providing youth and families across the United States with safe, high-quality, engaging, and healthy summer learning opportunities. In order to host this week-long celebration, the NSLA partners with a variety of stakeholders including state afterschool networks, out-of-school time (OST) providers, educators, policymakers, community-based organizations (CBOs), and both local and national businesses. Together, we work to develop resources and advocacy initiatives for the summer learning field. We also look at this time as an opportunity to spotlight the amazing ways our providers are keeping young people and their communities engaged and learning!

ACT Now acknowledges that we all have been through a lot over the past year. Not only have young people and their families had to navigate challenges related to the pandemic and racial inequity in our communities but also they have missed school time and fun social experiences with their friends. Now, as we emerge from the pandemic, this summer is key in providing the spaces for kids to reconnect with one another, and participate in safe, enriching programs run by caring staff who are trained to help youth build confidence, gain social skills, and try new things. It is also a critical time to supplement STEM, College and Career Readiness Skills, Arts, Literacy, and Wellness, and the Core Subjects taught during the school year. Join ACT Now and NSLA this year, from July 11, 2022, to July 15, 2022, in celebrating National Summer Learning Week! Don’t forget to participate in the creative advocacy efforts and events!

SHARE YOUR EVENT!

If your program is hosting an event, click here to add it to the growing list of National Summer Learning Programs for youth and families to participate in throughout the week! ACT Now and help highlight the wonderful work our summer learning providers are facilitating in the state of Illinois to those across the country!

If you are looking for resources on how to host an event, make sure to access the NSLA’s free and easy-to-navigate toolkits specifically for program providers, and families!
The pandemic has had a significant impact on youth, especially with regard to young people’s mental health and the opportunity to interact with diverse peers and loving mentors. However, research has demonstrated that youth can rely on healthy relationships to help them thrive and address trauma. Thus, spend this summer helping young people forge and foster friendships! These meaningful relationships can lead to learning new skills like decision-making and working in teams, as well as help them create fond memories between youth of all ages!

**Fostering Friendships:** Monday, July 11, 2022

The pandemic has had a significant impact on youth, especially with regard to young people’s mental health and the opportunity to interact with diverse peers and loving mentors. However, research has demonstrated that youth can rely on healthy relationships to help them thrive and address trauma. Thus, spend this summer helping young people forge and foster friendships! These meaningful relationships can lead to learning new skills like decision-making and working in teams, as well as help them create fond memories between youth of all ages!

**Love of Literacy and Learning:** Tuesday, July 12, 2022

Help youth learn something new or immerse themselves in a fun fictional world through reading! Asides from being fun, reading is also critical to children’s success in school and in their daily lives. Help encourage and empower youth to read amazing stories, anywhere and everywhere, this summer.

**Wonders of Wellness:** Wednesday, July 13, 2022

All aspects of health are important in helping children learn happily. These include physical, mental, emotional, and social health. Just like encouraging children to get on their feet and eat healthy, helping children build social relationships and encouraging dialogue about mental health is equally as important especially as we continue to heal from the pandemic.

**Summer Skill Building:** Thursday, July 14, 2022

As youth look towards middle school, high school, and beyond, it is important for them to take time to think about how they would like to chart their own course. Activities that aid practical and applicable skill-building, as well as dialogues with youth about their future plans, can help set children up for success.

**Amazing Arts:** Friday, July 15, 2022

Whether it be music, literature, dance, theater, visual arts, or something else, the arts can be great avenues for self-expression, creativity, and imagination. This summer, encourage youth to appreciate and engage in the arts!
SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

Safe, Fun, and Enriching

EDUCATION

Even though many schools and Out-of-School Time (OST) programs have moved to more traditional classroom modalities, like in-person instruction, **students are performing lower** in 2021–2022 as compared to 2020–2021. **This suggests that the ongoing pandemic continues to significantly disrupt learning and student achievement.**

- **Students, in general, are 4 months behind in math achievement and 3 months behind in reading.** **Students of color are especially impacted** as studies have demonstrated that **students in majority Black schools, when compared to majority-white schools, are 12 months behind in math.**

- **In addition, students are 2.7 times as likely to have chronic absenteeism** than compared to pre-pandemic numbers.

Luckily, afterschool programs provide much-needed academic assistance for students. **73% of afterschool programs offer STEM learning and academic help, while 69% have reading or writing time** for students to further hone their literacy skills. These programs have resulted in highly **positive outcomes**, with more than 7 in 10 students who attend 21st Century afterschool programs showing improved reading and math grades through consistent attendance in afterschool programs. Overall, data suggests that it is important to provide hybrid opportunities that may be more accessible to youth in your area.

PHYSICAL HEALTH & NUTRITION

As a result of the debilitating impacts of the pandemic, **nationally, 6.1 million children are food insecure.** In addition, pandemic worries and the long hours of school classes give students limited opportunities for movement in their daily lives.

However, afterschool programs help combat these issues. **85% of parents shared that afterschool programs provided fun physical activities for their youth.** Similarly, **68% of parents indicated that their children were able to access nutritious foods over the summer** due to programs in the region.

Indeed, reports have shown that school-aged children have a **higher daily intake of fruits, vegetables, and key nutrients on days they eat afterschool meals** compared to days they do not.
The isolating impacts of the pandemic continue to affect children’s mental health today. **28% of parents have reported that they are very or extremely concerned about their child’s mental health.** Again, **students of color are impacted at a higher rate,** with more than 33% of Black and Latinx parents concerned about their children’s mental health.

However, **afterschool programs provide opportunities for children to engage with peers and build social skills.** 90% of parents believe that afterschool programs allow children to develop social competency and aid their children’s mental health through fun and supportive interactions with friends and knowledgeable providers.

Studies have demonstrated that **afterschool programs can help children develop prosocial behavior, intrinsic motivation, better concentration efforts, and a higher sense of self-worth.** These social-emotional competencies aid children not only in their learning environments but throughout their lives and in the community.

**SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND MENTAL WELLNESS**

Finally, **OST and summer learning programs are safe spaces where children can learn, explore, and develop.** 92% of parents believe that these experiential programs have positive settings with safe environments, and also with **knowledgeable and caring staff.** Surrounded by a nurturing environment, youth are continuously supported, occupied, and learning positive life skills.

In addition, out-of-school programs are shown to **reduce crime and juvenile delinquency.** With increased adult support, youth feel safer and have lower instances of being left unsupervised once the traditional school day concludes.

**SAFETY**

It is clear that **summer programming is highly beneficial and necessary for students throughout Illinois!**
ADVOCACY TOOLS

While we have seen a historic investment in youth development and an emphasis on focusing on the needs of the whole child via federal funding for afterschool and summer learning, summer is also the perfect time to elevate the experiences of youth in your program and thank our policymakers for supporting the afterschool and summer learning providers in Illinois.

As we emerge from the pandemic, ACT Now encourages program providers to invite policymakers to participate in physical site visits as well as schedule meetings with elected officials in their district offices. Legislators are keen to participate in summer programming, hear from youth themselves, and connect with families! If your program continues to be virtual, it is easy to engage policymakers remotely through mailing letters and sending advocacy emails, calling their offices, and tagging them in posts and videos on social media platforms. You can also invite policymakers to join your online program or hybrid setting and provide youth with a leadership opportunity to interact with elected officials. Some popular online platforms include Zoom, WebEx, and Google Hangouts.

Types of Advocacy

Advocacy can look different for different people! Advocacy can look like sharing photos and tweets on social media, calling your legislators to tell them about the great programming you’re conducting, sending them an email to alert them of difficulties you are facing, or even just having a conversation with someone to raise awareness about the importance of summer programming. Regardless of modality, we encourage you to reach out and share your work!

ACT NOW’S ACTION ALERT

If you decide you would like to personally write to, email, or talk to your elected officials, that’s great! It’s very easy and quick! The Illinois State Board of Elections hosts a District and Official Search page where you can find your elected state and federal officials. To access this website, click here.

Note: You must enter a complete address with a corresponding zip code (ex: 101 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1700, Chicago, IL, 60606, Cook County) for the map to locate your legislators’ information. Otherwise, you may enter the county in which you pertain (ex: Macon County, Macon County) in order to find out your elected officials.
PERSONALIZING LETTERS AND EMAILS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

Sending emails can be a very efficient and meaningful way to communicate!

Well Written Correspondence Is:

- **Targeted:** Include the most important aspects of your program or highlight an issue that is crucial to your organization and the local community.

- **Brief:** Try to keep correspondence to one page and explain why summer learning opportunities are so important. How does federal relief funding positively affect your program or the youth and community your program serves? Have local businesses and community members helped your program by providing materials/mentors/funding? Highlight the unique aspects of your summer program!

- **Individualized:** Be sure to deliver a unique message to the elected official. Personal messages are more likely to influence legislators to learn more about your cause!

- **Nonpartisan:** Remember, there is a higher chance of receiving a response to your advocacy if the message does not center on partisanship. However, knowing more about what your legislators care about, and the topics that they prioritize (eg. agricultural education, criminal justice reform), can be helpful when trying to tailor your messaging.

Letter Outline

**Opening Paragraph:**

- State the subject of your letter
- Use the bill number or budget line name
- Identify yourself and your organization

**Body of Letter:**

- Explain the issue clearly and factually at a level your legislator will understand. They are not experts! For instance, try not to use acronyms in your writing.
- Give an “on-the-ground” and personal example of the impact of the issue to make the legislator care
- State your position on the bill or policy where appropriate
- Thank the elected official for their attention to the issue
- Let your legislator know that you are a credible contact in the case they want more information

**Conclusion:**

- Thank them again for past, present, and future support of your cause
- Give a summary of the main points you wanted to address
- Ask for a reply!
Dear Senator/Representative Last Name,

I am writing to you with regard to (summer learning opportunities in Illinois). I am the Program Facilitator/Director/Coordinator of (organization’s name) which annually serves (#/geographic location) students, youth, and their families. OR provides (#/type of activity) programs at (organization’s name) that...

As your constituent, I want to thank you for supporting summer learning opportunities for Illinois’ youth and invite you to celebrate with (insert your program name) throughout National Summer Learning Week 2022, starting on July 11, 2022, to July 15, 2022.

For afterschool and extended learning providers, summer is a time to help supplement students’ in-school experiences. As we move out of the pandemic, most students are still 3-4 months behind on their math and reading achievement rates, and this is especially true for students of color, who are up to 12 months behind their white peers. In addition, youth remain impacted by the isolating effects of the pandemic, with 30% of parents being extremely concerned about their children’s mental health. However, summer programs help combat these negative outcomes by providing academic enrichment, social-emotional learning competencies, services focused on mental health, nutritious meals, safe and supportive environments to engage with peers, and positive adult influences that help reduce juvenile delinquency.

I ask that you continue to support summer learning opportunities for youth in Illinois as they provide crucial support services for communities. (Insert a brief story about your program or how the services you offer combat summer learning losses and help keep kids healthy and safe). With your help, we can ensure all young people in our community and across our state have the tools they need to successfully transition into educated, self-sufficient, accomplished adults.

Sincerely,
(Your Full Name)

SAMPLE THANK YOU LETTER

Dear Senator (Full Name):

Thank you for taking the time to converse with me on (Date of conversation) to talk about the importance of summer learning programs in Illinois and in your district (Include district number/area). As we discussed, and as you have witnessed on-the-ground, summer enrichment programs help to improve academic and social-emotional outcomes, keep youth safe and healthy, and support workforce development not only in underserved and historically marginalized communities but across the state of Illinois. I know first-hand that our summer program(s) stepped up to ensure that youth did not fall behind last summer and are continuing to renew learning outcomes this summer. Many providers are ready to collaborate with state agencies and school districts in order to support the diverse needs of young people as they relate to providing learning renewal opportunities and summer experiences.

I look forward to speaking with you again to discuss further the ways in which we can work together to ensure that young Illinoisans within our communities have the tools they need to successfully transition into educated, self-sufficient, accomplished, empathetic, and civically minded adults.

Sincerely,
(Your Full Name)
PERSONALIZING PHONE CALLS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

How to Make Your Phone Call

- To reach your legislators in Springfield, call the switchboard at 217-782-2000. You can also find the numbers listed for the Illinois House and the Senate. (Note: As the summer progresses, you will want to call your legislators’ district offices first before calling their offices in Springfield as they will be out of session.) If speaking to a legislative aide, jot down their name and contact information.

Phone Calls Should Be:

- Prepared: Research your legislator so you know their stance on out-of-school programming. Tailor your content to fit their legislative goals. Develop a concise list of talking points you want to share with the legislator during the call. Craft these points to highlight the main issue, your work, and the youth you serve. Incorporate the impact/outcomes (data) from your program.

- Clear: State your name and identify yourself as a constituent. Provide your address and telephone number if the legislative aide requests it. If you are calling about a specific piece of legislation, identify it by name and bill number. If you are calling on behalf of a program, note the name and location of the program. Let the legislator know what actions you would like them to take!

- Appreciative: If your legislator has supported your cause in the past, let them know that you appreciated it. Add that you are hoping they will continue to support this issue.

Sample Phone Call

**Staff Member:** Thank you for calling Representative/Senator (Last Name)’s office. How may I help you?

**Caller:** Hello, my name is (Your Full Name) from (City or Town), and I am calling on behalf of (Name of Afterschool Program or Organization).

**Staff Member:** Wonderful, what can I do for you?

**Caller:** As a constituent of Representative/Senator (Last Name)’s district, (Insert information on why you are calling. Include why summer programming is important to you, your program, and the youth and community your program serves). Remember, be brief!

**Staff Member:** Thank you for sharing your concerns with us. I will relay your comments to the Representative/Senator (Last Name). Can you share your phone number or email address?

**Caller:** Yes, my phone number and email address are (Insert phone number and email address), thank you! Have a great day, and I look forward to hearing back from Representative/Senator (Last Name).
Social Media Content Examples

Social media continues to be a powerful resource for program providers, youth, advocates, and families to connect and share information. It allows people to network, share ideas, advocate, and raise awareness about a variety of campaigns and issues. If you or your organization is not already on social media, the first step is to sign up for a free account on a platform! With summer programs facilitating activities virtually and digitally already, it will be seamless to engage policymakers remotely by tagging them in your content or inviting them to join an event.

Most legislators use Twitter and Facebook to interact with their constituents and local community members. Some also use Instagram to reach more people and specifically youth populations! Set up a Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram page today!

6.1 million children are food insecure. Summer programming helps combat this by providing healthy meals for students. Reports show that children in out-of-school programming eat more nutrients than those who are not. [https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH](https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH) #ACTNow4SummerLearning #SummerMatters

Summer learning experiences are proven to help social, emotional, and mental wellness. Additionally, these programs provide safe environments where youth can feel supported and feel a sense of community. Share this with elected officials! [https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH](https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH) #SummerMatters

National Summer Learning Week 2022 is quickly approaching! The entire week of July 11–15, 2022, there will be opportunities to engage youth + families in fun & diverse STEM, Art, and Reading activities! Celebrate with @summerlearning: [https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH](https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH) #DiscoverSummer #ACTNow4Summer

Summer programming can not only help youth’s physical health by encouraging them to get active, but they can also help their mental health by fostering new relationships! Thank you to all our amazing summer learning providers in IL! <3 [https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH](https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH) #SummerMatters

As youth look toward high school and beyond, skill-building and conversations around future plans are important! Engage with #SummerLearningWeek to discover and access programming that helps build life skills.

Use These Hashtags!
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Sample Twitter Posts

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Summer learning providers are extremely important. Parents love and trust these knowledgeable and supportive providers. They work so hard to ensure that children feel safe and fostered in their programs. In addition, with increased adult care, youth have lower instances of crime and juvenile delinquency. Programs are also shown to reduce absence rates in schools. Thank you so much to our providers! Continue supporting us by sending your policymakers our action alert thanking them for ensuring funding for summer learning! #SummerLearningIL https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH

Children nationally are 3-4 months behind on math and reading coursework. However, Summer learning experiences combat this by providing STEM activities, academic help, and reading and writing time. Additionally, summer learning can increase a sense of community, build social and emotional competency, and help youth feel supported. Summer 2022 is essential to keep supporting students who are still being impacted by the isolating and difficult pandemic. Let’s come together and help these students. https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH #SummerMatters

6.1 million children are food insecure. However, Summer programming can help combat this by providing healthy meals for students. Reports have shown that school-aged children in out-of-school programming eat more nutrients and healthy foods than those who are not. Keep these summer programs funded! Work towards ending summer hunger by supporting these summer programs! https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH #ACTNow4SummerLearning

Summer programming can not only help youth’s physical health by encouraging them to unplug and get active, but they can also help their mental health by fostering new relationships! Especially with the isolating impact of the pandemic, parents and families support these enrichment opportunities now more than ever. Celebrate these wonderful programs by sharing photos on social media and engaging your local community members and legislators! Thank you to all our amazing summer learning providers in IL! <3 https://bit.ly/3R0YLiH #SummerLearningWeek #ACTNow4Summer

Sample Facebook Posts

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ACT Now has compiled a variety of high-quality, new, and engaging summer learning activities and challenges that can be facilitated almost anywhere with household items or low-cost materials. Most of these resources are completely FREE! Remember, it is important to incorporate a variety of the Summer Learning Week’s themes into your program, for young people to get a well-rounded summer experience, reconnect, and renew wellness practices, STEM, literacy, art, and SEL competencies over vacation time. Use these tools to build a comprehensive and enjoyable summer learning experience for your community!

What You Will Find

- General Programming
- SEL Activities
- Literacy Activities
- Arts Activities
- STEM Challenges
- Physical Health and Nutrition Resources
- Mental Health Resources
- Skill Building Activities

General Programming

ACT Now: The Summer Activity Guide

ACT Now, in collaboration with the 50 State Afterschool Network, has been developing fun and engaging activities and challenges designed specifically to accommodate the COVID-19 summer. This resource is based on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies and hands-on learning, and learning and is easily adaptable for a variety of settings. Click here to access this Guide.

Mizzen by Mott

Mizzen by Mott is a free app built with and for afterschool providers. It has easy-to-access afterschool lessons, activities, tips, and articles! In addition, it offers organizational tools, a range of topics from arts to zoology, and opportunities to read user reviews and add reviews. Each session has step-by-step guidance, including learning objectives. This makes the app super accessible and easy to use. Check it out!
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<td>Soar With Wings focuses on helping kids <strong>build social emotional skills</strong> for school and life. Their <strong>digital lesson</strong> bundles feature standards-aligned <strong>activities, an educator guide, and a digital lesson PowerPoint</strong> for easy use and access. They <strong>serve grades K-5</strong> and have <strong>fun activities</strong> like “Act It Out!”, “Time to Play!”, and more reflective topics like “Inner Strength” and “Becoming My Best Me”. Click here to access these resources!</td>
<td>UNICEF has a page featuring <strong>22 fun team building games and activities</strong> for kids. These activities are a fun and more informal way to help kids build <strong>collaborative and interpersonal skills</strong>. In addition to instructions, UNICEF provides notes on how the activity helps build skills and which skills are being targeted. The page has <strong>both indoor and outdoor activities</strong> like “Forehead Dots” and classics like “Traffic Lights”.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Illinois State Board of Education</strong></th>
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<td>Casel works to make social and emotional learning (SEL) part of a <strong>high-quality and equitable education</strong> for all spanning from classrooms to statehouses. The <a href="#">CASEL Program Guide</a> is designed to help educators and school administrators <strong>select an evidence-based SEL program</strong> that best <strong>meets the needs of their community</strong>. They <strong>serve Pre-K through 12th grade</strong> and have <strong>86 programs</strong> including “Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR)”, “Captain McFinn: Explore Kindness”, “Facing History and Ourselves”, etc.</td>
<td>The Illinois State Board of Education has compiled <strong>resources</strong> for educators to <strong>implement social and emotional learning practices</strong>. They have <strong>positive behavioral interventions and supports</strong> that include Crisis Intervention, Culturally Sensitive and Responsive Teaching, Home School Community Partnerships, etc. They also have Anti-Bias and Anti-Hate resources, resources for supporting children of military families, and resources for promoting a <strong>healthy school climate</strong>.</td>
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<th><strong>Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Guidebook</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pure Edge</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>This guidebook contains ideas for <strong>incorporating SEL activities into classrooms</strong> and <strong>additional resources</strong> to inform educators and equip them with tools to integrate practices into their curriculum. Examples of specific exercises and interventions include <strong>activities to promote self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness/relationship skills</strong>.</td>
<td>Pure Edge provides a range of <strong>free classroom resources</strong> that include learner Brain Breaks, health &amp; wellness curricula, and Virtual PE. Their free curriculum for Pre-K through 12th graders outlined how to <strong>alleviate stress and to calm over-stimulated minds</strong>. Pure Edge also provides <strong>professional development</strong> and <strong>self-care strategies</strong> via adult Brain Breaks, trainings and webinars, and also offer ongoing <strong>support for our partner districts and organizations</strong>.</td>
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Reading Rockets

Reading rockets has a whole page dedicated to keeping youth on top of their reading skills during the summer. These activities range from trading cards to a scavenger hunt. In addition to activities, this website has tactics to make reading books fun during the summer. These resources are free and target kids, parents, and providers. Check it out!

Open Books offers a range of video resources, writing activities, and fun games like reading bingo! They also have a YouTube channel where videos feature their staff and even celebrities like Dolly Parton participating in story time by reading books out loud. In terms of writing activities, readers can sign up to receive daily writing prompts, or follow provided activities like MadLibs to infuse their writing with creativity and imagination. Their activities mainly target kids from grades 3 –12.

Reading is Fundamental – Literacy Central

Reading is Fundamental has nearly 16,000 literacy-focused resources for grades pre-K through 12. Materials range from lesson plans to coloring pages, games, and even author interviews! Using their database, you can even select for reading level, genre (like graphic novel and folktale), and themes (like bilingual & Spanish or American history). While some books require purchase on their website, these books are mostly accessible through Z-Library, the world’s largest eBook library!

Read Write Think has K–12 resources that are grouped into collections; these collections each include lesson plans, teaching materials, and professional learning resources and are based on topics, like primary sources or poetry. These programs offer in-depth thoughtful ways to engage students, and even have instructional plans and learning standards available for instructors to use! There are many lessons for all grades leaving providers several options to choose from!

Children’s Literacy Foundation (CLiF)

The Children’s Literacy Foundation (CLiF) is a nonprofit organization focusing on improving literacy. They have a compiled list of low or no-cost literacy activities that are fun and exciting for kids. These activities target pre-K to early middle school students, but they also have community-wide and school-wide options. From activities like character Facebook profiles to letters to book characters, these activities are sure to engage students!
Arts Activities

WheatonArts – Family Art Workshops
WheatonArts has created several arts and crafts video tutorials for families and youth to do each week. The activities use common household materials, plants, and low-cost resources. The tutorials are also great for children of all ages. Click here to follow along with the videos and check back for more uploads!

Beat By Beat
Beat By Beat has a whole page full of more than 150 compiled drama activities for youth. From warmups to ensemble building activities, to improvisation, these activities are sure to interest students. Each activity comes with a listed purpose, procedure, and comments from other people on what they liked and what they thought the activity could improve on.

Deep Space Sparkle
Deep Space Sparkle has visual art related activities for K-6th grade. Each of the activities involve hands on art like drawing or painting and have video demonstrations and art guides to make them easy to execute and follow. Activities are colorful and have fun themes like “Penguin At Night” and “Just Add Glitter”!

Illinois Art Station
Illinois Art Station has great programs for providers, families, and youth! This website provides lesson plans, professional workshops, and creation stations. This is a great place to begin your art education while learning how to then provide that activity to youth. To learn more about these opportunities, click here.

Teach Rock
Teach Rock has lesson plans for elementary to high school students all about different types of popular music. Through their drop-down menu, practitioners can select lesson plans about genres like rock, soul, or Latin. Their music programming also incorporates topics like Black history, appropriation, and gender and sexuality. Each activity comes with music clips, procedure, handouts, common core standards to align with, and objectives.

Waterford.org
In addition to having 50 music related activities and a list of 10 picture books about music, Waterford has a section on the benefits of music learning on social-emotional learning and brain development. From games like music scavenger hunts to apps that teach children how to make music, Waterford has a range of activities that can accommodate different modalities and plans.

The Art of Education University
With 27 art activities and lessons using low to no cost ingredients, these activities are easily accessible. For example, paint made with spices or instant coffee. Instead of pottery, there are also alternatives like clay made out of paper or dough made out of salt!
**Stem 101**

Stem 101 is a great website that offers paid curriculum for middle school and high school students. The organization’s curriculum includes topics from manufacturing, and computer engineering, to architecture and design. The programming ranges from 56 to 220+ hours depending on the curriculum selected. Stem 101 has amazing engagement strategies and a reputation for leaving kids curious to discover more STEM-related topics. In addition, there are both remote and in-person curricula available. Check it out here.

**KidSpark Education**

KidSpark Education provides free STEM curriculum for elementary and middle school-age youth. This organization offers teacher lesson plans, STEM curriculum packets, student workbooks, instructional videos, and more. Not only is this program fit for virtual STEM programming, but it also can be utilized for in-person programming.

**Museum of Science and Industry**

The Museum of Science and Industry has developed a set of curricula that has small activities youth can do to learn about different scientific phenomena. These activities are great to incorporate into STEM programming whether remote or in-person as they require very few or low-cost materials. All of these lesson plans are free to the public. Some of these activities are hands-on, videos, and even virtual games. Click here to access past summer’s activities.

**Afterschool Alliance**

Afterschool Alliance has a page full of curriculum, professional development, and evaluation tools specifically developed for teaching STEM in the out-of-school-time environment. Check it out here!

**NASA**

Check out this blog post on summertime STEAM projects for K–12. These activities are all space-themed and just need simple materials! From making a moon phase calendar and calculator to making a straw rocket, these activities are sure to excite students!

**Science Buddies**

Science Buddies has more than 450 STEM activities for kids that let kids create and witness interesting scientific phenomena! Each activity has a section with key concepts, an introduction, and a “what happened” section so kids can think about and debrief what they saw. From turning milk into plastic to making a fire snake, these activities are super interesting!
National Summer Learning Association

The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) has developed strategies for incorporating physical activities and knowledge of healthy food choices into summer programming. Click here to read the handout and learn how to get youth moving and thinking about healthy lifestyles this summer season.

Summer Nutrition Program Social Impact Analysis

This report highlights research on the importance of summer nutrition, specifics ranging from summer meal access to helping kids have a healthy relationship with food. The report includes best practices and statistics on how to provide meals in the summer. Check it out for all the summer nutrition information.

The YMCA – The Y Feeds Kids

The YMCA Summer Food Program helps feed kids who rely on school for food in need of meals during the summer. Due to this need, the YMCA is providing free meals and snacks to kids in need. Their website also includes cost-effective and nutritious recipes like chocolate zucchini muffins, or roasted cauliflower tacos!

GoNoodle

Aside from being a fun name, GoNoodle helps kids get physical exercise through fun dance, stretch, and workout tutorials. Focusing on elementary school students, their programs focus on grounding kids in “the joy of being silly, mindful, and curious”. The videos are adorned with colorful images and people dressed up in funny costumes! They also have written activities based on their videos, and blog posts to learn more about their concept.

OPEN – Online Physical Education Network

Through their “At Home Summer Camp” programming, OPEN offers 4 weeks’ worth of fun physical exercise activities that are easily accessible. From backyard games to sport stacking, these games are sure to help students more their bodies. Each activity also includes equipment lists, detailed packets about the programming, and YouTube demonstrations when necessary.

AFHK – Action For Healthy Kids

AFHK’s resource library offers videos, activities, and tip sheets to improve kids’ physical and emotional health in both English and Spanish! They feature activities that do not require many materials, like a backyard fitness circuit course, and also have pages about each activity with tips, the key points of the activity, and instructions for providers. Check them out here!
Mental Health Resources

Healthy Children

Healthy Children has a detailed article based on information from the American Academy of Pediatrics on how to talk to kids about tragedies or traumatic news events. It includes guidelines for children of different ages and children with different developmental needs. There is also information about the signs that a child may not be coping well.

The Youth Mental Health Project

The Youth Mental Health Project has simplified fact and resource sheets to help raise awareness about mental health and best practices for mental health. These sheets include information on different types of mental health professionals, loneliness, sleep, stress, anxiety, and more for older students to read or for providers to keep in mind.

National Federation of Families – Children’s Mental Health Acceptance Week (CMHAW)

CMHAW provides activities, workbooks, and videos for children, youth, families, and providers to have conversations and programming around mental health. CMHAW also has an activity workbook with 10 pages of activities for younger students to explore their feelings, identity, self-image, and self-concept. Check them out here!

ISBE Safe2Help

The Illinois State Board of Education has a 24/7 program, called Safe2Help where students can report school safety concerns in a confidential environment. This toolkit includes resources on how parents and educators can help remove stigmas around mental health and foster a culture of caring. Each section also includes sample classroom strategies, suggested resources, and research-based guidelines on how to use these resources.

Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership

Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership has webinars and professional resources in both English and Spanish. These resources include “Residential Treatment Guide for Youth with Mental Health Needs”, and “reflective practice guide”.

ISBE Safe2Help
Google has free digital skills lessons to help kids learn develop new skills using online resources. For instance, programs include teaching kids how to organize their time with a digital agenda or how to learn new vocabulary with flash cards. In addition, Google has virtual field trips with interesting themes like “History of Humankind in Kenya” or “Scavenger Hunt in Italy”. For providers and parents, each activity also has a full lesson plan, sample rubric, and certificates of completion that can be printed out and handed to students.

Skill Share has a plethora of online classes aimed at helping students learn new skills. From learning how to code to making pasta, the wide variety of activities are also taught by professionals!

The National Summer Learning Association has created a set of helpful resources for college and career readiness ranging from SAT prep to research briefs. To keep teen youth on tract for graduation integrate some of these resources into you summer programming. There are even simple tips to help guide teen youth with post-graduation plans.

EverFi has created engaging and self-paced lessons for college and career readiness. These expand from simple exploration into a topic to specific tips on what is next. The best part is that it is all free! Check it out today here!

You 4 Youth – College and Career Readiness

You 4 Youth has developed an entire page to help providers with college and career readiness. There is a set of modules that providers can utilize to learn how to guide students in the right direction. This program created mentors out of providers. Check it out here!

Kaboom offers programing for civic engagement geared towards specific age groups. They have a plethora of age-appropriate topics that will still teach young people to be leaders. Many of their programs are offered in Spanish as well. These resources are free and downloadable for your summer programming and even highlight if they are environmentally focused. Please check them out!

You 4 Youth

It is important for youth to learn about civic engagement as they have the power to lead. You 4 youth offers lesson plans and activities that get students involved and inspired to be change makers. These programs teach youth about the constitution and student-driven action. This program is aligned with 21st Century Learning Centers programmatic requirements as well. Check these materials out here!

ACT Now – College and Career Readiness Guidebook

Afterschool programs and summer learning experiences are excellent environments for youth of all ages to begin thinking about their post-secondary education plans and explore future careers. To help Out-of-School Time providers engage with, and incorporate these resources into their programming, ACT Now has compiled them into this straightforward guidebook to highlight quality, affordable, and creative activities and materials.