MORRY'S CAMP EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM
SPONSORED BY THE COLLEGE BOARD

Follow-up Report

On April 7, 2006 Morry's Camp hosted a first annual Education Symposium (MCES), bringing together some of the best and brightest teachers, researchers, policy makers, curriculum experts, and Morry's Camp staff to consider the issue of learning loss with respect to summer and out-of-school youth development programs. Research indicates that youth with an abundance of unsupervised out-of-school time are more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors; receive poor grades; and drop out of school (Carnegie Council, 1994). In addition, children experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer (Cooper, 1996). To combat these dangers of out-of-school time and to mitigate the loss of learning young people suffer, the MCES was organized to build capacity for youth development organizations and establish next-steps for the field.

The outcomes generated from the MCES gathering have implications for the growth and development of organizations in the field as well as the ability of these programs to better meet the challenging academic needs of participants. The day consisted of two sessions. In the morning session groups of participants brainstormed the definitions of learning, summer learning, and year-round learning, in addition to a "wish list" of things we wish school *could* do. In the afternoon session participants met in focus groups to establish outcomes and next steps for categories previously established by the Center for Summer Learning (CSL) at Johns Hopkins University: policy, professional development/practice, funding and research/evaluation.

MORNING SESSION

Under each category is the entire brainstorming list composed by the groups during the morning session. Following the brainstorm, the group engaged in a rich discussion of the brainstorm and identified the common themes from the synthesized lists.

Learning Is
Empowering
Finding strengths and weaknesses
Setting goals and meeting them
Finding passion
Accidental
Liberating
Trial/Error
Hard work!
Questioning, Creating, Changing
Curiosity
Not always graded/evaluated

Good and Bad
Fearless
Not limited to academics
Multi-faceted
Fun and Rewarding
An on-going process in multiple settings
Awareness of one's self, abilities and desires
Lifelong
Mastery of core knowledge defined by society
Putting new tools into toolbox
Being able to shift perspective
Ability to process and understand the world around and beyond
On-going process of exploring many experiences
Appreciation of different cultures and forms of expression
Purposeful and Intentional
Result of direct interaction with other people, places and things
About building relationships
Is possible for those who are receptive
An active process
Hard
Scary
Questioning and Challenging
Navigating stimuli and information
Peaks and Valleys
Creative
Making choices

Summer Learning

Students experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. According to CSL, research shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of summer vacation (Cooper, 1996). Furthermore, summer learning loss contributes to the achievement gap in reading performance between lower and higher income children and youth. Research has found that while student achievement for both middle and lower-income students improves at similar rates during the school year, low-income students experience cumulative summer learning losses over the elementary school grades (Alexander & Entwisle, 1996). The following list from participants at the MCES compliments the research from CSL:

Summer Learning Should…
Bridge Academic School Year
Be outdoors/Get out of the house!
Offer emotional growth
Project driven
Foster Community Ownership and Leadership
Emphasize character building

Offer choices of projects for children
Continue social/emotional support typically only offered at school (counseling, etc)
Appreciate the individual as a part of a community
Know there are other adults who can/will help you on your journey
Expand sense of community support
Growth of self-awareness and confidence that child takes with them through out life
Problem solving/conflict resolution
Opportunities to discover individual passions
Make new friends
Be inter-generational
Flexibility—think outside the box
Opportunities to believe they are learners
Fun!
Challenging
Take time
Cooperative/Collaborative
Opportunistic
A place to imagine
Practice what you learn
Experience the excitement of learning
Tactile-hands on experience
Take advantage of the environment
Sneaky
Intentional
Experience out of school knowledge (art, music)
Equal balance (physical/mental)
You can breathe
Easier to take risks
Include positive experiences
Captures the experience

Year-round Learning
Several research studies have explored social development as the primary predictor of life success, including academic success, and have identified several critical skills contributing to life success. These skills include: 1) communicating effectively, 2) ability to work cooperatively with others, 3) emotional self-control and appropriate expression, 4) empathy and perspective taking, 5) optimism, humor, self-awareness, 6) ability to plan and set goals, 7) solving problems and resolving conflicts thoughtfully and non-violently, and 8) bringing a reflective, learning-to-learning approach to life situations (Elias & Weissberg, 2000; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). In an effort to understand the factors promoting the acquisition of these skills or positive social development of adolescents, researchers at the Search Institute has established the 40 developmental assets (Leffert et al., 1998). These 40 assets are categorized into eight domains representing the internal and external characteristics of a child and their environment: 1) support, 2) empowerment, 3) boundaries and expectations, 4) constructive use of time, 5)

commitment to learning, 6) positive values, 7) social competencies, and 8) positive identity (Leffert et al., 1998). The outcomes established by MCES participants compliment these researchers' findings.

Year-round Learning Should…
Use community resources
Cover topics outside of school standards
Present opportunity to take risks in exploring new ideas/experiences
Be structured
World work
Life centered
Use purposefully
Exploration of new and different sites, ideas and places
Long range goals
A real purpose
Continuity—one concept building on another, a common thread
Engage the changing seasons
Should include traditional, experiential and different types of environments and-reinvisioning what learning looks like and how it happens
Continuity of a team of teachers, role models, and community that is supporting a child's- learning. To help a child's sense of accountability and responsibility.
Institute self-awareness
Goals should include not just academic but emotional, social, moral and cultural-4 physical development and growth
Fun!
Peer mentorship
Cater to child's interest
Be a release

<u>**AFTERNOON SESSIONS**</u>

Practice/Professional Development
According to the Center for Summer Learning, summer programs should be used to support the recruitment, professional development, and retention of teachers and youth program staff. Summers should be used to encourage teachers to try new techniques, teach different subjects or grades, acquire new skills and mentor new colleagues. These findings are complimented by the following suggestions for youth development programs generated at the MCES:

- ✓ Offer more SAT prep/financial aid/college application support for high school level participants.
- ✓ Increase interaction with skilled practitioners during the year-round program to enhance participants' academic progress.
- ✓ Add classroom and school observations for summer and year-round program staff
- ✓ Visits to local colleges during the year-round program for high school level participants.

- ✓ Form connections with school to involve admission counselors and social workers through out the year-round program
- ✓ Involve families with summer and year-round curriculum
- ✓ Offer professional shadow day for high school level participants.
- ✓ Create a full-time staff development program for year-round program
- ✓ Increase participation in professional development in youth development and out-of-school time communities.
- ✓ Maintain a high level of staff retention for year-to-year consistency
- ✓ Establish a formal alumni network

Funding

CSL suggests summer learning should be a community-wide, inter-agency priority. As there are a wide variety of roles that public agencies and community-based organizations fulfill, improved collaboration and leveraging of funds from multiple sources will help ensure greater levels of access to programs. The MCES participants identified the following funding outcomes and next steps:

- ✓ Engage business communities where youth development agencies are located
- ✓ Build relationship with local chamber of commerce
- ✓ Find out what is important to the foundations/funder and market to them
- ✓ Implement members dues when you partner with other organizations
- ✓ Engage elected officials
- ✓ Secure community block grant money
- ✓ Hold fundraising events in communities where agencies are located
- ✓ Create a common language to better communicate the value of what we do and what it adds to youth development
- ✓ Articulate our model of year-round programming
- ✓ Enhance measurable outcomes
- ✓ Create more tangible expectations and goals for evaluation
- ✓ Create intentional goals for measurement
- ✓ Define government responsibility
- ✓ Define community responsibility
- ✓ Find and approach organizations that support year-round learning
- ✓ Identify the community contacts

Policy

Teachers and youth development professionals should use the summers to collaborate and bridge gaps between schools and youth programs. Summer programs should incorporate research-based practices for improving cognitive development from high-quality after-school enrichment programs. The MCES participants identified these specific next-steps to compliment the CSL research:

- ✓ Develop common language to communicate with people outside the field
- ✓ Present to teachers: who we are, what we do
- ✓ Create greater presence in communities
- ✓ Make staff available for workshops as youth development experts

- ✓ Communicate with local community leaders
- ✓ Help community see how youth development and out-of-school time can impact their community
- ✓ Create opportunities for youth to participate in communities other than their own
- ✓ Increase number of kids from each agency to increase peer reinforcement
- ✓ Increase support for the field in schools
- ✓ Increase opportunities for parental involvement
- ✓ Increase net-works with a variety of youth organizations
- ✓ Conduct Education Symposium annually
- ✓ Provide professional development for community and political leaders, not just program staff
- ✓ Create five year plan for program development
- ✓ Increase opportunities for community volunteers to participate

CONCLUSION

The conclusions and next steps generated from the Morry's Camp Education Symposium closely align with recommendations from the Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University which suggests that out-of-school youth programming and summer learning opportunities combat summer learning loss, help close the achievement gap, and keep children safe and healthy. According to this research, all young people should have consistent access to high-quality out-of-school time enrichment programs, including summer programs, throughout their educational careers. Like Morry's Camp, programs should be offered for multiple summers and include year-round support during the out-of-school hours.

This year's Morry's Camp Education Symposium started what we believe will be an annual event bringing together professionals in the fields of education, out-of-school time, and youth development. The outcomes and next-steps have implications for not only the summer camp profession, but also a wide body of practitioners and educators whose lives and work focus on the improvement of education programs for children and young people.

By all accounts, the Morry's Camp outcomes and next steps are moving the fields of youth development and out-of-school time learning in the right direction. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development has demonstrated that high-achieving students tend to spend at least twenty hours a week outside of school engaged in productive formal and informal learning (1994). In order for our efforts to increase the academic achievement and social well-being of participants, we must supplement their school experiences with opportunities that shape their intellectual and social competencies, and regard them as assets (Bridglall, 2005).

Organizations should feel welcome to use and share the information in this follow-up report. Hopefully, future symposiums will build on the success of this year's gathering and continue to serve as a resource for the fields of youth development and out-of-school time learning.

ABOUT MORRY'S CAMP

In its 11th year, Morry's Camp is a nationally recognized youth development organization with an intentional focus on the educational enhancement of the underserved youth involved in the intervention program. Morry's Camp is unique in the field of nonprofit camps due to the focus on the year-round support of its campers. First year Morry's Campers are entering the fifth grade, and over the next nine years, our year-round and summer camp programs guide children through a critical period of their academic and social development. In schools and communities where fewer than 50% of incoming ninth graders graduate from high school, 100% of Morry's Campers have completed high school on-time and have graduated to pursue higher education, military service or join the workforce as responsible citizens. This outcome, in conjunction with other evidence-based conclusions, indicates that our summer and year-round program enhances the academic performance and educational commitment of our participants.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE BOARD

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