



Councilmember Ben Bartlett  
City of Berkeley, District 3

CONSENT CALENDAR  
June 13, 2017

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmembers Bartlett, and Davila  
Subject: Direction to the Children, Youth, and Recreation Commission: Tackle the Summer Learning Loss for Elementary School Children

RECOMMENDATION

Direct the Children, Youth, and Recreation Commission to tackle the summer learning loss for low-income elementary children through:

1. Consolidation, Education, & Outreach.
  - i. Database. The commission shall develop and maintain a database containing all summer academic opportunities and learning activities for elementary school children in Berkeley, along with any associated costs, application processes, and scholarship opportunities. The commission shall work with the City to ensure that this database is publicly available and accessible in public libraries and on the City website.
  - ii. Workshops. On an annual basis, the commission shall provide at least two educational workshops about available summer academic opportunities and learning activities for elementary school children in Berkeley. The workshops shall include information about the costs associated with any programs, guidance on the application processes, and guidance on scholarship opportunities.
  - iii. Outreach. The commission shall conduct outreach to low-income families in Berkeley to inform them about paragraphs i and ii. The outreach shall be done in partnership with the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) Family Engagement and Equity Staff.
2. Assessment & Policy Recommendations.
  - i. Assessment. The commission shall design and carry out a survey of BUSD elementary schools, in order to assess the extent to which low-income families do not have access to summer learning activities for their children, and the reasons for the lack of access.

- ii. Policy Recommendations. The commission shall make policy recommendations to council about how to expand access to summer academic opportunities and learning activities for low-income elementary school children. The policy recommendations can include budget referrals, recommendations to expand existing partnerships with UC Berkeley, recommendations to establish or expand public-private partnerships, and other policy solutions to increase equity in academic achievement through providing equal access to summer learning.

## BACKGROUND

For middle-class families, summer means fun outdoor activities and a break from school schedules. But for kids from low-income families, it also means too much free time. Middle-class options such as camps and sports are often too expensive for low-income families and families. The lack of high-quality, educational or recreational summer programming means low-income children often experience the “summer learning loss.”

The “summer learning loss” is the well documented phenomenon of students, particularly those from low-income families, losing achievement gains that were made during the school year. A number of empirical studies have found that learning gains made during the school year are similar for students from different social and economic backgrounds. However, when school is not in session, middle-class children continue to advance their quantitative and verbal achievement gains, while low-income children’s academic gains decline.

In a study conducted by Johns Hopkins researchers, low-income children made as much progress in reading during the academic year as middle-income children, but the poorer children’s reading skills slipped away during the summer months. The researchers found that “on average, youth from lower-income families lose two months of learning, or 22% of the school year, during their summer break—and those losses are cumulative, meaning that lower-income youth are also less likely to graduate from high school or attend college.”

The summer learning loss is considered to be a key element of the achievement gap between middle class white families and low-income families. The researchers found that “two-thirds of the 9th grade reading achievement gap can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during elementary school.”

BUSD has one of the highest racial achievement gaps in California. According to research conducted by BUSD in 2014, 42% of African American third-grade students and 53% of Hispanic and Latino third graders read at grade level, compared with 89% of white third graders.

It is widely agreed upon that high quality summer learning programs for low-income children can curtail the racial achievement gap. This item intends to help ensure that the children of Berkeley receive equal access to opportunities for academic achievement, regardless of socioeconomic status.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff time.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

This is in line with the City's environmental goals.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Ben Bartlett, 510-981-7130

