



Unlocking Opportunities: Using Afterschool and Summer Programs to Help Low-Income Students Succeed

By Soumya Bhat

Afterschool and summer programs offer hands-on and enrichment learning that goes beyond what students learn during the school day. These “expanded learning” programs improve academic achievement, keep children safe and supervised, and help working families. Children who participate consistently in quality programs have better school attendance and more interest in school, and they are less likely to be held back.

Unfortunately, there are not enough quality afterschool and summer programs to meet the needs of DC’s at-risk children. DCFPI highlights the programs currently offered to DC children and youth, and ways to improve access, in its new series, [Unlocking Opportunities](#). Here is what we recommend:

- **Expand quality afterschool and summer programs.** The District should aim to offer programs for all low-income children. Programs should offer sufficient activities during the school week and in the summer to be meaningful, and they should align with the school day curriculum.
- **Adequately fund summer school within the school funding formula.** A change this year folded summer school funding into a new pool of resources for at-risk students that can be used for many services. It will be important to monitor how those funds are spent to make sure schools continue to offer high quality summer school programs.
- **Streamline funding and reporting requirements for the District’s expanded learning programs.** Creating a common application and a common data collection system to measure outcomes for the city’s many expanded learning programs will make it easier for community-based providers to focus on quality programming, and for policymakers and the public to monitor programs.
- **Continue to collect centralized data and evaluate expanded learning programs.** Funding decisions for summer and school year expanded learning programs should be driven by assessments of where needs are greatest and by evaluations of how programs are working to meet citywide goals.

To read the complete issue brief on expanded learning programs in the District, click [here](#).