

Keeping Kids' Brains From Going On Vacation During Summer Break

(NAPSA)—With millions of children across the U.S. on summer break, now is an important time to focus on the year-round support kids need to ensure their development doesn't go on vacation.

To do this, YMCAs across the country are helping kids have “the best summer ever” by dedicating thousands of hours to youth development. By nurturing children's cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development at 2,700 YMCA facilities in 10,000 communities nationwide, the Y is helping kids reach their potential this summer.

Stopping the Summer Slide

Parents know that when summer starts, it can be tough to get kids to think about school, let alone prepare for the upcoming academic year. “Summer is often a time of learning loss for many students, especially those from low-income environments, meaning the achievement gap can widen after a long summer with minimal educational engagement,” said Jorge Perez, Sr. VP Programs & The Y Experience at Y-USA.

To help prevent summer learning loss and fight the achievement gap, the Y offers the Power Scholars Academy™ to support K-8 students in literacy, math, enrichment activities in STEM and the arts, along with a health curriculum. Children who participate in Power Scholars Academy™, gain, on average, 2 months of reading and 3 months in math skills, with 91 percent of parents reporting improvements in scholar's confidence and attitude toward school and learning.

Younger children reading below grade level can participate in the Y's Summer Learning Loss Prevention Program, designed for children in first and second grade. The program aims to help children read at grade level by third grade, a key milestone in children's academic careers.

Fighting Family Food Insecurity

When school is out, millions of kids and teens who rely on school to provide free and reduced cost meals are at an increased risk of going hungry. The Y's Summer Food Program helps fill this gap and is available to kids and teens at more than 1,500 locations across the country. The program provides meals, snacks and enrich-



When school's out, kids can keep up their learning skills while still having fun.

ing activities at YMCAs, as well as parks and apartment complexes, so that transportation is not a barrier for children and their families.

In five years, the Summer Food Program and the Y's Afterschool Meal Program have served more than 53 million healthy meals and snacks to over 460,000 youth. “Thanks to the partnership with the Walmart Foundation since 2011, the Y is better able to nourish the potential of youth in need. This summer we aim to serve 5 million healthy meals and snacks to 250,000 kids,” said Mr. Perez.

Happy Campers

In addition to educational enrichment, the Y is also known for their camp and swimming programs. The Y offers a variety of different types of camps (Overnight Camp, Day Camp and Specialty Camps) as well as outdoor leadership development (BOLD/GOLD) program excursions in national parks.

“Camp, like many Y programs, is about learning skills, developing character and making friends. Few environments are as special as camp, where kids become a community as they learn both how to be more independent and how to contribute to a group while engaging in physical, social and educational activities,” said Mr. Perez. “Attending summer camp is beneficial to every child's development. The experience teaches essential leadership and social skills and helps youth develop the confidence and independence needed to reach their full potential.”

Learn More

Families interested in finding out more information on all of the summer programs and resources the Y provides all year round, can visit YMCA.net to find a local Y near you.