



COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS PACESETTER BOSTON

Category: Summer Learning

Boston is known as the unofficial capital of New England for its economic and cultural impact on the entire region. The city is also determined to be a leader in education and is making progress in reducing summer learning loss thanks to its Summer Learning Collaborative program.

United Way of Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley's (UWMBMV) launched an innovative model in 2010 to improve literacy instruction offered during out-of-school time summer programs. The Summer Learning Collaborative brings together UWMBMV, United Way of Central Massachusetts and United Way of Pioneer Valley, along with two respected state leaders -- Build the Out-of-School Time Network (BOSTnet) and WestMOST, a Western Massachusetts -- afterschool stakeholders network, to work with approximately 20 summer programs in seven underperforming districts (Boston, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, Holyoke, Springfield and Worcester).

In those districts, 63 percent of children are not reading proficiently by third grade. Boston has aligned this model with the recommendations in *Turning the Page: Refocusing MA for Reading Success*, a report widely used by Massachusetts educators to ensure all children are reading proficiently by third grade.

To ensure program success, out-of-school time program staff provide ongoing professional development; programs are matched with a literacy coach who has school experience; assistance is given to align out of school time and school curriculum; and techniques for increasing family and engagement are practiced. These components improve children's literacy proficiency, increase the quality and competency of program staff teaching practices and build positive relationships between the programs and their partners, families, schools and community entities.

The Collaborative reaches approximately 2,000 youth each summer. In its first year, 85 percent of youth avoided the typical summer learning loss described in research. The program saw comparable numbers in 2011 and also reported that 76 percent of children said they enjoyed reading more at the end of the summer than at the beginning. And most staff felt children improved their vocabulary and showed increased interest and engagement in reading.

Coaches with school experience helped staff apply training theory into everyday practice. These relationships grew and continued throughout the school year, thus improving year-round school and afterschool connections.

STRATEGIES

- **Launched Summer Learning Collaborative to fight summer learning loss**
- **Reached approximately 2,000 youth each summer across seven underperforming districts**
- **Aligned school curriculum with summer programming**