

**Prepared Remarks by Dr. Terry K. Peterson  
for the DC Council Chairman’s Roundtable on How to  
Mitigate the Many Pandemic Learning Losses and  
Disconnections  
2/10/21**

To help mitigate the many Covid-19 related learning losses and disconnections, it clearly makes a lot of sense to dramatically add many more learning opportunities and supports in school, in afterschool, in summers and maybe even on weekends.

So, I applaud the Chairman and Council for discussing this now when there is time to plan, mobilize, and budget for the summer of 2021 and for better in-school and afterschool opportunities in 2021-22. Also consider how to continue to include these crucial opportunities in the future.

You have the research that shows dramatic losses in learning from Covid-19. Keep in mind they were only studying reading and math.

Please also think about the other very important lost learning opportunities -- in the sciences; languages; arts and music; sports; career and college pathway programs; the many lost structured afterschool activities with peers to facilitate social interaction and physical activity; student clubs, summer camps etc., etc.

For many students, these experiences are what really motivate and excite them to even go to school, stay in school, graduate and continue into the workforce. And they “teach” a whole set of crucial real-life skills and positive work and learning habits.

DC could become a leader in developing an “all hands on deck” approach to dealing with the negative aftermath of Covid-19 ...in-school, in after school and in summers.

For an “all hands on deck” approach, imagine how to rally all of your potential school and city partners: volunteer and youth groups; Y’s and,

Boys and Girls Clubs; parks and recreation; museums and libraries; literacy, STEM and arts organizations; and employers and colleges.

Often informal education professionals know how to engage young people with active learning, attention to social and emotional development, and much-needed connections with peers... and away from the ubiquitous screens. Pulling together in a city-schools-community-family collaborative can be transformational. Then asking many to pitch-in and help makes this real, serious, and relevant across DC.

Having worked on many education reforms over many years, I know in times of crises there are attempts to find that “silver penny solution.” No one has found that “penny.” Instead the best solutions are most often found by mobilizing your own community’s resources, expand successful existing programs and infrastructures, and incentivize your educators’ creativity.

Here are two big questions that you might think about:

1. By working together through a strategic approach, how can DC triple or quadruple participation in existing opportunities, like in the most engaging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, Y’s and Boys and Girls Clubs as well as in the clever non-profit programs like After School All Stars, DC Scores, Higher Achievement and others like them?
2. In summer and afterschool learning deserts, and in schools and neighborhoods with few enticing programs, how could DC organize hundreds more engaging and enriching summer, afterschool and weekend opportunities across the city in or near schools deploying school and municipal resources and working with partner organizations? But, be mindful do NOT burn-out your educators. And don’t forget all the many outdoor opportunities.

While you want lots of innovation, it is important to orchestrate and build collaboration among these many groups and opportunities. So, you might want to study how other successful district-city-wide partnerships are involving hundreds of groups in their summer and afterschool opportunities.

For example, Boston Afterschool and Beyond helps the city, school and nonprofits coordinate a large-scale set of summer and afterschool opportunities that together identified and strived toward common success

objectives and annually measure progress for tens of thousands of children and youth.

The Providence After School Alliance (PASA) cleverly uses its entire city to connect middle and high school students in productive out-of-school time experiences. PASA has a signed MOU with city agency directors to partner on programs and the Mayor serves as the chair of PASA – so there is strong city engagement.

Big Thought in Dallas works closely with the City and the School District and 700 partner organizations to close the opportunity gap in neighborhoods where kids have the greatest need. Their public-private partnership trains and coordinates hundreds of community arts and cultural organizations, museums, individual artists and scientists to engage 75,000 students in summer learning, resulting in improvement in both attendance and performance during the school year.

You are naturally thinking “does any of this work?” Yes, there is a growing body of research and best practices that clearly demonstrate that well-designed and delivered summer and afterschool learning opportunities make a positive difference. They help students catch-up, improve academic and foundational skills for school and life successes, and expand students’ horizons and connections.

Learn about a sample of this research and best practices by reviewing websites at the National Summer Learning Association:

<https://www.summerlearning.org/awardwinners/> and the Afterschool

Alliance: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/research.cfm> ;

<https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/awards.cfm>

The National League of Cities is great resource, too:

<https://www.nlc.org/article/2020/12/07/how-cities-can-support-afterschool-learning-programs-during-covid-and-beyond/>

Clearly more learning time and opportunities are needed, but they have to be productive and engaging. Therefore, it is important to point out that the research effects from extending the school year and extending the school day are not so promising ,and they tend to have a high cost. These approaches tend to burn out both teachers and students by tending to do the same thing longer. America already has more teaching hours than

most developed countries.( [http://www.oecd.org/education/EAG2014-Indicator%20D4%20\(eng\).pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/EAG2014-Indicator%20D4%20(eng).pdf))

In light of these findings, keep in mind that impactful summer and afterschool opportunities aren't "sit behind a desk and do drill and kill worksheets." Instead, they are full of engaging, inspiring, and hands-on activities. They build positive relationships and social-emotional supports which many students really need now.

Attached is an emerging draft of *Summer Learning Key Features To Inform Funding and Planning* that might help guide the development of many more impactful summer opportunities. Similar strategies work in afterschool, too.

This type of programming is not just fun and games, although they may intentionally include them, but they yield meaningful academic gains, too. Let me give you one example from nearby Baltimore that won a 2020 national summer learning award in partnership with their schools.

This summer learning strategy by Young Audiences of Maryland uses arts integration in reading and math and the offering of many arts opportunities to broaden, educate, enrich, and engage. Their student academic gains combined with higher summer attendance and extensive arts learning outperformed all the other more traditional Baltimore summer programs.

This example, among many, shows how community organizations can build on school goals while offering important and different, more varied, engaging, motivating and enriching experiences for children and youth beyond the typical school day and year. To do this well, these organizations need guidance and support. Collaboration with a school district and/or city and foundations broadens their reach, funding, and impact.

In summary, an "all hands on-deck" approach is needed to help students and families recover. The regular school day and year needs to be strengthened and educators need to be supported to do that. But that clearly is not going to be enough.

A massive increase in engaging, inspiring summer and afterschool opportunities and partnerships are also going to be essential. DC could be a leader in mobilizing all of her resources to accomplish this. If you decide

on this “all hands on deck” path, consider how you might launch it with a great deal of flair, involvement and excitement. See Attachment B to my remarks for an idea.

And remember for a full economic recovery, many parents will need positive supervision of their children and youth in afterschool and summers to be able to return to work full-time or look for jobs.

Also, please remember, older children and youth will walk with their feet if the programs aren’t interesting, engaging, and full of hands-on activities with lots of positive relationships. Older youth desperately need hands on, real world learning experiences, or work-based learning opportunities to understand possible career choices in front of them.

This is also a critical time to engage with your employers and corporate community and ask them to join you to support young people throughout the nation’s capital. Expanding DC’s large Summer Youth Employment Program even further this summer would be a great step forward.

We can’t return the time students have lost during this pandemic, but we can double down on partnerships, investments, and the quality enhancement of programs to reduce the learning loss they’ve experienced.

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Dr. Peterson serves as the chief counselor to former Governor and US Secretary of Education Dick Riley and Senior Fellow at Furman University and co-chairs the Afterschool Alliance. He has won awards in education, afterschool and arts learning. His compendium of articles, *Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success* is in its 4<sup>th</sup> printing.

Attachment A to Dr. Terry K. Peterson’s Remarks

### **Planning for Impactful Summer Learning**

by Jennifer Peck, President and CEO, Partnership for Children and Youth; Chris Smith, Executive Director, Boston After School & Beyond Summer Learning; and Terry K. Peterson, PhD, Chief Counselor to Former US Secretary of Education Dick Riley  
(Excerpt from a draft in progress (2/5/21))

To make a positive difference in an education recovery strategy starting in the summer, local education and municipal policy and funding decisions should consider the following program elements, focus areas, and engaging designs:

**Key areas to focus** from *Summer Matters pilot programs elements of high-quality summer learning*.

- Broadens kids' horizons.
- Includes a wide variety of activities.
- Helps kids build skills
- Fosters cooperative learning
- Promotes healthy habits
- Lasts at least one month.

\*Summer Matters Campaign. [Definition of high-quality summer learning programs](#). Campaign operated from 2010-2015.

**Program elements** from the *Wallace Foundation National Summer Learning pilot programs*:

- Voluntary, full-day programming that included academic instruction and enrichment activities (the latter mainly provided by community partners) for five days per week for no less than five weeks of the summer:
- For students struggling in the basics: at least three hours of (engaging and inspiring) language arts and mathematics instruction per day provided by a certified teacher.
- Small class sizes of no more than 15 students per instructor
- No fees to families for participation
- Free transportation and meals.

\*[Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer learning programs](#).(2016) Rand Corporation

***Lessons from a decade of citywide summer learning in Boston.***

- Think Beyond Boundaries
- Cultivate a Diverse Network
- Focus on Cross-Cutting Skills
- Learn Together
- Measure and Share Successes

\*Led by Boston Afterschool & Beyond: <https://bostonbeyond.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Summer-For-All-Lessons-Learned-Report-1.pdf>

### ***Critical design and deliver ingredients.***

- Employ a mix of staff connected to the local community and schools including classroom teachers and community teachers, and tutors.
- Encourage engaging learning in literacy, math, and STEAM/STEM and other core subjects by enthusiastic classroom and community teachers.
- Include active, enrichment experiences, such as in the arts and sports, coding and robotic clubs, service-learning, college and workforce exploration, entrepreneurships and apprenticeships.
- Use engaging and blended approaches deploying hands-on projects, social-emotional learning, arts integration, and family involvement.
- Provide positive adult supervision so parents can work enough hours.
- Offer wellness activities and address food access.

\*Highlights summarized from a composite of articles in Peterson, T.K. (Executive Editor), *Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success*, 4th Edition, 2017.

Attachment B to Dr. Terry K. Peterson’s Remarks

### **And Idea: Launch An “All Hands-On Deck” DC Summer and Afterschool Opportunity and Partnership Learning Fair**

To kick off an “all in” learning effort across DC, DC could hold the “best in class” summer learning and afterschool fair for interested

educators, city agencies, parents, even students, and prospective local partner organizations from all types of sectors.

Some of the best successes in summer and afterschool programming in the DC area could be highlighted. Also, it would be very important to learn from ten of the best national summer learning and afterschool winners, sharing their experiences and results. Together they could model best practices and create excitement right from the beginning.

Key groups large and small should be invited to participate in the fair... local volunteer and youth groups, museums, literacy groups, STEM/STEAM organizations, libraries, arts groups, employers and college students and staff, etc. They both could learn how they might become partners , but also show what human and other resources they can offer to help in an “all hands-on deck” DC learning collaborative.

The master teachers who work with engaging community and youth group educators could model successful design and delivery of engaging and impactful afterschool and summer programming for different age levels.

Existing successful summer and afterschool organizers could show how they could triple or quadruple their participation if they had more space, support, funding and/or partners.

Neighborhoods, housing projects, schools, and community groups who need and want better and more accessible summer and afterschool programs could describe their needs and ask for needed resources and help, too.

To create citywide excitement, ask teams of students, school and community teachers and parents to develop together short videos with playlists that share what they want and need in summer and



afterschool programs and partnerships. Request that the media consider ways to highlight the best leading up the Fair.