

# Camp-School Partnership Project



# YOUR 2023 GUIDE TO CAMP-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

## What are camp-school partnerships?

A camp-school partnership is an effort between two organizations to reach mutual goals in order to better serve their youth throughout the entire school year. Often, these partnerships are created to address summer learning loss, the childcare gap, and recently, post-pandemic effects on youth. An ideal partnership has a division of roles and responsibilities between the camp and school, with clear expectations of outcomes and methods.

*The most common goals for camp-school partnerships over the summer are to improve academic, leadership, or social-emotional skills, in line with the school's mission and/or values.*

*"This program is giving public schools the opportunity to do what historically only private schools have been able to do." — DJ Owens, Mo-Ranch*

## What is the Camp-School Partnership Demonstration Project?

The American Camp Association (ACA) and the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) are funding 10 camps over the course of two summers in the creation of innovative partnerships between camps and schools to address the impact of the pandemic on youth entering or already in middle school. In 2022, these partnerships took place in seven states (Georgia, Wisconsin, California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, Massachusetts) and impacted 1,643 students from 140 schools located within public districts or charter networks. Most of the participants schools are located in cities, serve majority students of color, and qualify for free/reduced-price lunch.

## Who should I try to connect with when reaching out to schools?

Most of our participants had a school or organization-level main contact, while a few camps connected with someone at the district or charter network level. It depends on your capacity. If you are able to create a program for up to 50 kids, aim for a school-site contact. If you work on a district level, you have the potential to enroll hundreds more students, but you'll need to prepare for that capacity. Common advocate roles:

- School-based: School counselor, community assistant/coordinator, director of admissions or operations, teachers, and, of course, principals or directors
- District/network-based: director of operations, director of schools and partnerships, and, of course, superintendent
- The participating camps with the most enrollment had a strong school advocate — someone who was their champion at the school-level

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## What kind of program should I pitch to the school?

Find out what the school needs and have a menu of options ready to present. In our project, most of the partnerships were a two- to five-day overnight program, focusing on goals the school found important (like personal growth, team-building, or science). Some camps have found great success in day-camp and school-year options, which better fit their community and are successful because of their strong relationships and collaboration with school and community leaders.

## What are the additional expenses I can expect during a camp-school partnership?

Transportation, staffing, insurance, and operational costs.

## What is the value of evaluating my program?

School leaders need data to justify the value of your camp-school partnership. Not only will this make a stronger argument for why they should partner with you, but it might assist you in continuous improvement of your program and give you the information you need to start applying for grants and federal funding.

What are the additional services I can provide to make this partnership successful?

- Provide before-camp training for teachers and chaperones
- Build trust based on relationships and grow excitement among families and the community through camp staff visits to school, open house, or info sessions.
- Ask the school or district registrar if there will be any requirements around information to collect from families, and data they need you to share about campers.
- Suggest the first year be a pilot program, with a goal to expand after they see its success.
- Create a strong partnership that can withstand staff turnover. Develop procedures and communication plans with your partner so the program transitions with new leadership.

*"This partnership provided the ability to lift up students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and put them on equal footing with more fortunate classmates." — Andrew Wiens, Guided Discoveries*

## What funding is available?

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), students across the United States are experiencing "an average of 12 weeks of learning delay" ([mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-learning-delay-and-recovery-where-do-us-states-stand](https://mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-learning-delay-and-recovery-where-do-us-states-stand), accessed 2/15/23). Camp-school partnerships are innovative educational solutions that address this problem. Camps can receive funding from The American Rescue Plan and the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund by partnering with schools and community organizations that receive those funds to cover expanded summer learning for their students. Guidelines and requirements for accessing those funds vary by state. Visit [ACA Camps.org/research/special-projects/camp-school-partnership-demonstration-project](https://ACA Camps.org/research/special-projects/camp-school-partnership-demonstration-project) to learn more.

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