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The summer trap : the struggle to create affordable educational programs

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The Summer Trap: The struggle to create affordable educational programs

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Abstract

Children from low-income families deserve an equal opportunity to stay educationally engaged over the summer. However children from the community of Cedar are offered no summer enrichment. Since children get three months off during the summer they usually return back to school a few months behind their peers who had the opportunity to engage in summer activities. Creating a free and fun educational summer program would give these children a way to keep their minds active while on summer vacation. The researcher focused on a low-income community and school where four teachers, three parents, and three community members were interviewed. The researcher learned that creating a summer program would take a lot of money, time, and volunteers. In response a donation letter was created to help get funding to make this summer program available at a free or reduced cost. The support from within the community and its members is what will make this summer program possible for the children of Cedar.

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The Summer Trap: The struggle to creating affordable educational programs

I was born in a big town called San Jose, California. I lived there until I was in fourth grade. Then my parents, mainly my dad, decided that it would be a good idea to raise his girls in the small town where he graduated. At the age of nine my family moved to a small town of about two thousand people called Cedar California. It was a big change for me moving from a big city to a small town. In San Jose there were many parks, arcades, amusement parks, and multiple summer programs. Cedar was totally the opposite. While it was a very pretty small town it only had two parks, a lake about 20 minutes away, one little arcade and a few summer programs.

When I was a little girl living in San Jose during the summertime I would be involved with many activities both educational and extracurricular. These activities involved summer school, summer reading programs through the city library, soccer camp, and swimming lessons. Once we moved to Cedar all that changed. There were no swimming pools, the public library was open once a week and had no reading programs, and summer school was very limited. There was, however, a small cheer camp, a drama camp that put a play on at the end of the summer, and a lake to go swimming in if you could get a ride to it. A downfall of the cheer camp was that it cost a lot of money, so the program did not last very long. The drama camp went on for many years, even after I left for college. However, about two years ago the drama camp ended due to a lack of leadership.

Living in a small town can have its strengths and weaknesses and Cedar is definitely a good example of this. Some strengths about living in a small town is that you know almost everyone in town, so if you become very involved you will be well known. Another strength is that your community members are willing to help you in any way possible, especially if you are doing fundraisers, canned food drives, or possibly helping bring an educational summer program

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to town. There are some weaknesses though. First, it is very hard to find a job and most families either have to travel at least 15-30 minutes if they want a better chance at finding a job. The factor of not having a job or having to travel means that there is not a lot of money coming into households. Cedar sadly has about 50% of the town on Unemployment or Disability. This is a major factor that we must consider when we bring a summer program, since most families rarely have money to survive, so how can we expect them to be able to send their child or children to a summer camp. I want to take the families into consideration and make it affordable or free for their children to have an educational fun summer. I understand the struggle that families in Cedar are going through; it has not been easy living for my family either.

Slowly programs and even the Cedar Unified School District has started going down the drain and it has gotten worse since I have gone away to college. For starters, there has not been summer school in either the elementary school or high school since 2004. Then any program that was present in our town seemed to fade away due to the lack of funding, the lack of money families have to send their children to programs, and sometimes the lack of support to keep the program running. The latest thing that has brought a set back to our small town is that the elementary recently got shut down this past year due to mold in most of the classrooms. Now both the elementary school and high school have been combined and it has been hard on everyone such as teachers, children, and the community.

The loss of the few programs we did have and the lack of effort for future programs caused a rise in children walking the streets and getting in trouble with the law. When I go back home during summer break I see children in fourth or fifth grade getting into drugs and alcohol because there is nothing to keep them out of trouble. It is truly sad to see children getting addicted to drugs and alcohol at such a young age and some children will not graduate high

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school. Many children will get stuck in Cedar due to the lack of motivation to leave and explore new places.

I have a younger sister who is fifteen years old and just started high school this past year. I know my sister is a good person and I want to believe that she will not get into drugs or alcohol, but as her sister it is very scary to see the amount of drugs and alcohol pass through Cedar. Due to the lack of summer engagement my sister and her friends have, I am scared she is going to want to experiment with things due to peer pressure. My sister has a bright future ahead of her. She wants to move to the San Francisco area and pursue a career in art, baking, or cosmetology. I know that it is a little late to bring summer programs to children her age, but I want to start this program with my sister so she can keep it running for the few years that she is in high school and then pass it on to other high school children. I feel like this gives children her age a chance to help out in their community and realize they have potential and running a summer program can look good on their transcripts for college!

How does Low-Income affect Children' Summer Learning activities?

Due to the lack of resources available in small towns there may not be as many opportunities for children, especially if they come from a low-income family. One issue that may occur for student of low-income families is not having money to send their children to summer programs. That being said, children can come back to school only a month behind where they left off when summer started. Through my own experiences as a child growing up in a small town called Cedar California, where most families are low-income, we had limited programs being offered to the students during the summer. Now after going away to college and coming home for breaks I have seen that the town is

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getting worse; we have lost any programs that were available when I was in elementary school and sadly we had to combine both the elementary and high schools due to mold. The lack of resources available to our town makes it difficult to start any program and keep them running for a long period of time. If you drive about 13 miles to another small town, a little bigger than Cedar, you will see that they have a lot more resources and summer programs that cost a lot of money, making it very unlikely for children of Cedar to attend, unless sponsored by somebody.

There are many benefits to bringing a summer program to Cedar. One major benefit is that children would have the opportunity to stay engaged with educational and fun lessons over the summer. It is important that children have an educational summer, and not just fun, because we want children to have a better opportunity to excel when they go back to school after summer vacation. Another asset is that children will have a place to go and hang out with other children for a few hours a day, giving the children the chance to be engaged in activities with their peers rather than walking the streets and getting in trouble. Last, I would like to make this program affordable for families to be able to send their children. I have lived in Cedar since I was in 4th grade and I understand the types of situations families are going through. Some example would be most students are in the free lunch program at the school due to the family's income, children have to do fundraisers to have the opportunity to go on academic field trips to places such as colleges, and many parents are on unemployment due to the lack of jobs available in the area. Every child deserves an equal opportunity, especially during the summer months and due to the main factor of money many children do not get this opportunity.

Summer Learning Loss

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Children leave school for the summer having gained a lot of knowledge, but once they return from summer they find themselves in “this phenomenon is known as the "summer learning loss" and essentially refers to the loss in knowledge and academic skills during the summer break” (Salhotra, 2012, p.1). In my opinion children from low-income families are less likely to have the opportunity to go to an educational summer program, due to the lack of finances or lack of resources being offered. However there is research that has been done where “researchers have studied this effect and found that every summer low-income students lose on average 2.6 months of math skills and 2.0 months of reading” (Salhotra, 2012, p.1). In Boulay & Fairchild (2002) study shows:

It’s difficult to imagine a professional musician or athlete whose performance would not suffer from a three-month vacation from practice each year...

Similarly, it’s reasonable to assume that professional athletes who completely abstained from exercise during the off-season would be unable to compete at optimal levels. While it’s clear that everyone should experience periodic breaks from their daily routines, it’s also true that prolonged periods of time without practice affects performance. (p.2).

Whether a professional or a student takes a three month break there is going to be negative affects on their performance in sports, music, or school. The statement above does say that periodic breaks are acceptable, but a three month break will have bad outcomes in the end. Every child deserves to have the opportunity to engage in educational summer programs giving them the chance to go back to school with less educational loss like some of their peers who have the opportunity to participate in summer programs/activities.

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Disadvantage to Low-Income Families

A policy brought forth to the California Board of Education was the Assembly Concurrent Resolution 134 which was introduced on April 29, 2008. The measure would, “increases legislative attention paid to the need for summer enrichment activities for school-age children to promote health, provide safe summer activities, increase non-academic enrichment learning, and reduce summer learning loss.” (DeSaulnier, 2008, p.1). The measure was not identified as urgent, meaning it may have gotten pushed off to the side. Low-income children are still not being provided with the resources they need in the summer. Policies like this one need to be put into action. What usually happens in the summer is children and families have all these fun filled ideas, but what usually happens is the total opposite as stated on National Summer Learning Association (2009) website states:

Many Americans have a wonderful image of summer as a carefree, happy time when "kids can be kids," and take for granted the prospect of enriching experiences such as summer camps, time with family, and trips to museums, parks, and libraries. (p.1).

This image can be out of reach if you do not have the funding to take your children to museums, summer camps, or family trips. In small towns there might not be libraries, museums, or summer camps available. This means that families have to travel to get to educational experiences, which adds more money for the traveling cost. In the summertime children are expected to spend time with their families, but reality for most families is the parents are working to make ends meeting meaning children are getting shuffled to a babysitter. I agree the time children spend with their family is important

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and hopefully they are working to create a little bit of education in that family time, but due to being tired and exhausted from work educational opportunities in the household do not arise very often.

Children's Engagement

At a young age children need all the educational and social interaction they can get since children's minds are developing and molding during this time children can lose some of this development over the summer if they do not have the proper resources. One theory that relates to this theme which was stated on the Tool of the Mind (2014) website stated:

At the core of Vygotsky's theory (also known as Cultural-Historical theory) is the idea that child development is the result of interactions between children and their social environment. These interactions involve people—parents and teachers, playmates and schoolmates, brothers and sisters. They also involve cultural artifacts, such as books or toys, as well as culturally specific practices in which a child engages in the classroom, at home, or on the playground. (p.1).

Vygotsky's theory hit so many important points. For example, every environment, including home, school, or summer programs, a child is in creates an important learning experience. Vygotsky's also stated that interactions between peers, parents, teachers and siblings helps to shape the person you become. There are many factors that play a role in the child they grow up to be and I feel that the main point Vygotsky's is trying to make is that children need to stay in engaged no matter where they are, who they are with, or what they are doing. Summer programs are important because without them the child may not have the opportunity to interact with other children or stay engaged

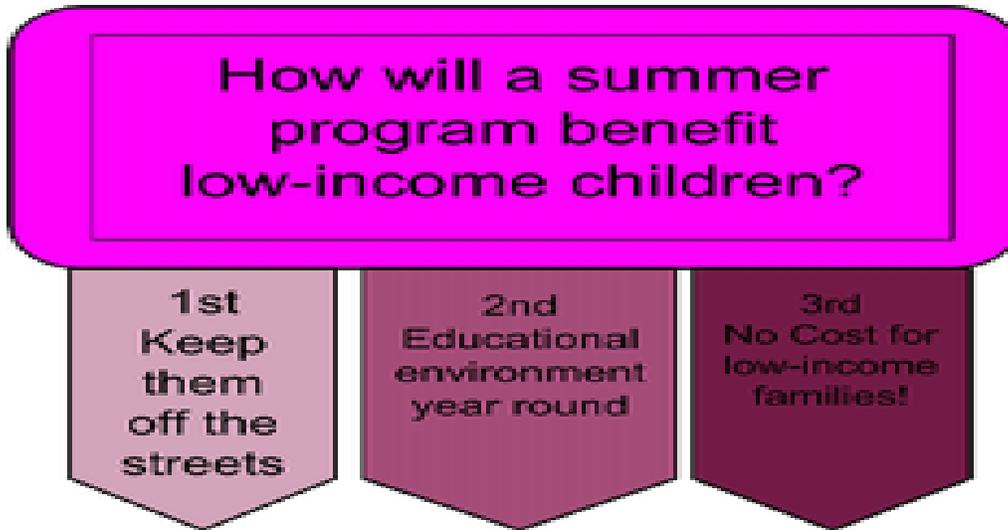
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with educational and fun activities. In the near future parents, teachers and community members need to work together to help the children of the future have a brighter summer. The Annual APPAM Research Conference (2002) stated:

Teachers and youth development professionals could use the summers to learn from each other and bridge historic communication and programmatic gaps between schools and youth programs. Rather than oppose cultural norms about summer as a time for relaxation, high-quality summer programs should demonstrate ways for students to continue learning during the summer that do not involve textbooks, tutoring, and traditional teaching methods. (p.16).

I think it is important that teacher communicate with summer programs to helps keep the students on track, so once children come back from summer break they are ready to pick up from where they left off before summer vacation. Children deserve to take breaks and have fun but at the same time we need to keep their brains thinking. I agree with the above statements about not using textbooks, not being boring, and not talk at children. Rather, create interactive lesson plans where children are having fun but learning at the same time. Every child deserves an equal, educational, and fun summer program to stay engaged during the summer.

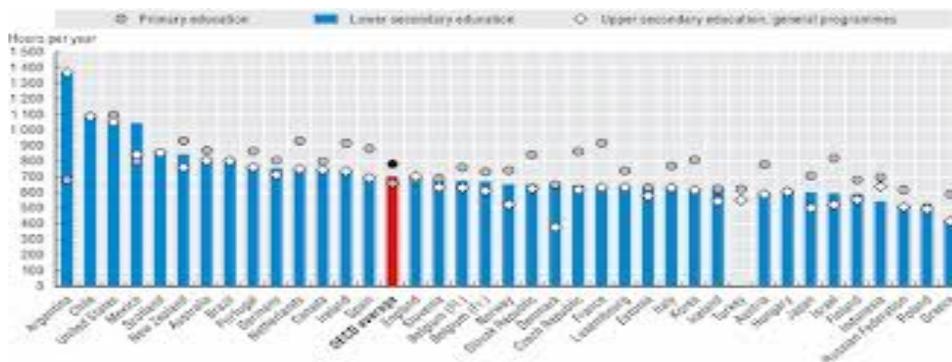
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How to support bringing and educational summer program to families of low-income?

Where to Start

Students spend most of the year with their teachers besides breaks and weekends.



In the chart above the United States is ranked third highest in the amount of hours a teacher teaches in a year. For Primary education United States ranges around 1,100 hours. Meaning that teacher should help to provided educational lesson plans that summer programs can take a look at and help students to stay on track for next

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year. Boulay and Fairchild stated “by demonstrating the power of informal learning experiences such as educational field trips, reading for pleasure, and gaining exposure to new cultures and ideas. Policies could support summer school models that use a community-based enrichment approach to promoting academic achievement.” (Boulay & Fairchild, 2002, p.16) This quote is saying that it is still summer and integrating fun activities with educational lesson plans is the best approach for a successful summer program with children.

Community Connections

Communities play a major role because if you do not have the support of your community members your program will not get off the ground. Once community members are put into place they can help you to start planning your program. The Partnership for Children and Youth (2014) stated:

At the same time, many developments have community spaces and staff that can host afterschool and summer programming. Providing these services close to home offers an excellent opportunity to maximize safety, provide academic and social supports, and strengthen bonds between children, parents and program providers. (p.1).

Finding these strong connections will lead to a successful summer program since they are the foundation of the program. Community partners will bring forth opportunities that focus on supporting you financially, supporting you through volunteering, and just support in general. Community members have a general idea on what is needed in their town and will help you find the best way to incorporate your ideas.

Volunteers

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Volunteers are very important because they will be helping to contribute in an important part of the children summer. Volunteers also contribute their own time with no pay, but they do get the satisfaction of changing a child's summer by helping and encouraging them to keep learning while showing them in a way that is also fun. Without volunteers a summer program would not be possible because as one person you could not manage thirty children or more ranging from k-6th by there self. Volunteers are very much appreciated and usually familiar faces in the community such as parents, teachers, high school students, and involved community members. Finding volunteers can be hard due to the fact that many people work over the summer. I think volunteers are also important because they will help keep the program running in the future if we find a few high school freshmen who are interested in helping that would be idea. The reason for this is because they will be able to help for the next few years and then be able to train other students making the program last for many years.

Resources

Creating a free summer program for low income families can be hard due to the fact that the program still cost money to run, but we are not charging for the children to attend. The resources around you ties back in with finding connections in the community through people, organizations, and companies. If you have a strong connection with your community you can get the resources needed to create a free summer program. "There are many resources offered within the community for free or at low cost, it is all a matter of going into the community to look" (Flynn & Kershaw, 2000, p.4). However they will not be handed to you, you must go out and search, ask, and find the resources you need. Since resources are not just handed to you the first step is planning out everything you

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will need and then going out and connecting with community members who fit those specific needs. Such resources they can contribute to the program could be parks and recreation, local business, organizations, and individual town members. By going to these resources you can receive things such as donations like money, food, crafts, and other needed things to run a summer program.

Advertising

I believe that many low income families would like a program to send their child or children to over summer vacation. An important aspect would be advertising since the program is free many parents do not have to worry about the burden of scraping up some extra money to send their children to this summer program. If parent knew that their were program to stop things “when the school doors close, many children struggle to access educational opportunities, as well as basic needs such as healthy meals and adequate adult supervision.” (National Summer Learning Association, 2009, p.1) I believe parents would search for a program, but I do not want parents to have to search I want to have tons of advertising that is easy to find. I also want that advertising to show that this program will help you children to stay both mentally and physically active during the summer break. Many parents are unaware that during the summer their children start to have academic loss which is an issue because they return to school academically behind due to the lack of engagement. I believe that making flyers and sending them out through the school system plus hanging up flyers throughout the town would create a big turn out.

Method

Summer programs keep our children engaged while they are not in school. For

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this Capstone Project the researcher investigated what community leaders think about bringing a free or reduced educational enriching and fun summer program to Cedar¹, California. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researcher used what she learned to formulate an action that responds to the focus issue in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience. After interviewing community leaders the researcher learned from each individual what kind of support the researcher would need to bring forth a summer program. This is important because without the support of the community, it would be very hard to bring a useful summer camp to Cedar.

Context

Lumberjack Elementary School is located in Cedar CA, a small town with a population of 2,000 people. Cedar's main source of business is logging or prison guards due to the rural town setting, which makes opportunities limited. Other families are on unemployment or disability making the family's status low-income. Due to the fact that the logging industry only runs in the summer months it can be a struggle to survive during the winter. Cedar does not have any name brand industries; only small stores, restaurants, and gas stations make up this small town.

Now looking in to Lumberjack Elementary School there is a total of 134 children enrolled With an ethnic breakdown of 111 white, 1 African American, 5 Native American, and 17 Hispanic (California Department of Education, 2012-2013, p.1) In the past year, the elementary school and the high school combined due to mold inside the elementary school classrooms. There is no playground for the children to run around on;

¹ Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

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there are mainly just open fields and a basketball court. There is a gym at the high school that has to be shared between high school p.e. classes and the elementary school children. Many of the students are also on the free and reduced lunch program.

Participants

There are many important people such as teachers, parents, and involved community members who I will invite to participate in this study. These groups of prospective participants are being invited to participate because they have an understanding of what needs to happen to create a summer program and how to help make it happen. I will make initial contact with the participants via email, in person, and phone.

The first group of people I choose to interview were teachers from grade kindergarten through third grade, because that was my initial focus group. The three teachers were all females and Caucasian. The kindergarten teachers name was Mandy Jackson, the first and second grade teachers name was Debbie North, and the third grade teachers name was Julia Grant. The teachers range in experience from Debbie who is a current college graduate to Mandy and Julia who have been there for over 10 years. All the teachers agree that students need to stay engaged over summer vacation.

The next group of people I choose to interview were parents who have children in different grade levels and are very active in their child's lives. I interviewed four parents all female and Caucasian their names are Bridget Night, Danielle Nordstrom, Mary Fin, and Sandra Hill. Bridget is very involved with the school system she is a substitute teacher and holds many positions on different boards. Bridget is School Site Council President, Parent Teacher Association Treasure, and Little League President. Mary is also

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very involved in the school she use to substitute teach until she got a job somewhere else, and now is the Parent Teacher Association President. Danielle and Sandra are two parents who you can see roaming the school finding any way to be involved in their students education.

The last group of people I choose to interview were important community members that I thought would be able to help get the program off the ground and running. I interview three Caucasian, one male and two females, community members. Their names are Ryan Burton, Maggie Apple, and Linda Bond. Ryan is in charge of Parks and Recreation and has brought many additions to Cedar CA like a skate park Maggie is in charge of Chimney Fund, a fund that provides food baskets, scholarships for high school seniors, and other funds donated for community support events. Linda is the President of the Chamber of Commerce in Cedar CA and plans multiple successful events like the Chili Cook-off, Children's Carnival, and other events around town.

Researcher

My topic is important to me, because growing up there were summer camps and summer school offered for students. This was very important because children stayed active in the summer, but once I got to be a senior in high school the programs started to fade. During the summer you will see children running the street with no educational or fun opportunities to engage in. I have personally seen children get into trouble due to the lack of resources available to them in the summer. Bringing a one or two week summer program for even only a few hours of the day, allows us to still spend time with the children and keep them off the streets. This summer program is a much needed in the town of Cedar, CA. It will help students to not just have fun but also to hopefully keep

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their brains active before going back to school and helping them to not be a months behind. I have worked and still do work inside the Lumberjack Elementary School system and sadly students are struggling when they come back from summer vacation.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

1. Why are educational and fun summer activities important for the children of Cedar?
2. What types of programs have been offered before? and were they beneficial?
3. What are your concerns about an educational/fun summer program being brought to Cedar? What are the obstacles or challenges to bringing a summer programs to Cedar?
4. What is currently being done to provide educational and fun summer programs for the children of Cedar? by whom? and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why?
5. What should be done about bringing an educational/fun summer program to Cedar?
6. Would you be willing to help bring a summer program to Cedar? If yes how can you contribute?
7. What can we do to help get funding for a summer camp?
8. What age group do you think would benefit the most out of this program?
9. Where would be the best location to provide these services?
10. What types of lessons inside the program would you like to see? (i.e educational, music, art, sports, ...)
11. Is there anything else that you would like to say about educational/fun summer programs?

Procedure

All interviews will be done in individually with the participant and myself. When it is not possible to interview participants in person, they will be invited to complete a

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pencil and paper survey of the same questions. Before the interviewee answers the pencil and paper survey I will give them a brief introduction to my project. Face-to-Face interviews will take less than one hour, be audio-recorded (with participant consent), and take place in an agreed upon setting. A semi-structured formal interview will be used for face-to-face interviews, to allow for follow-up questions if there are unclear, interesting or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys will be scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and should take a minimum of 20 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

The transcribed data was analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

An analysis of the data collected revealed some very similar and other not so similar responses from teachers, parents, and community members. Some key themes that emerged include financial hardship, stopping summertime trouble, and building awareness in the community.

Financial Hardship

While the teacher's concerns varied from financial stability, supervision, and organization of the program. Their main concern was being financially stable since the town is located in a low-income area where it is harder to find funding. However, they did have some suggestions about where to look for financials to get the program running. Examples were community organizations such as Chimney Fund, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Parks and Recreation and other small business in Cedar, California.

The parents had some other ideas on how to raise money from inside the

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community and its people which were fundraisers, raffles, and creating a donation letter to give to the local businesses and organizations to see if they can help in anyway. Flynn & Kershaw report that “For smaller scale improvement projects, programs might also opt to raise funds more informally through parents and community networks. For example a program could form a committee of parents to organize fundraising events in the community, or seek grant funding from local foundations.” (Flynn & Kershaw, 2000, p.9) The summer program will start out small, but through community fundraising events the program can evolve into a successful program. There are many ways the community can contribute like donations, fundraisers, and community businesses and organizations.

Out of the three community participants all of them said they are willing to help out in many ways. Ryan, from Parks and Recreation, said we could use the park and possibly get some funding through a grant. Linda said she would present my program to the Chamber of Commerce and see if they could help support an educational summer for children of Cedar, California. Maggie said to create a donation letter and she would present it at her next Chimney Fund meeting and that mostly likely they would be able to help out with funding the program.

Stopping Summertime Trouble

Looking at the teacher’s responses first they all came to a common agreement that children need educational environment year round and a place that keeps them off the streets during the summer. Boulay & Fairchild (2002) stated

“Studies also show that crimes committed by and against young people occur at substantially high rates when young people are not in school. School-age children and teens who are unsupervised during out-of-

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school time are far more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors receive poor grades; display more behavioral problems; and dropout of school than those who have the opportunity to benefit from constructive activities supervised by responsible adults.” (p.8)

This quote is stating that when children are not engaged in educational studies they are more likely to get in trouble with the law. Since children have three months off during the summer that would be the ideal time to get in trouble, but for those children who have the opportunity to be involved in a summer program there rate of getting in trouble is less likely.

The parents stated that there are very few activities in Forest and this would provide children with a healthy, educational, and fun place to go during the summer. Some concerns the parents stated where the age group it was being offered to, the location where it would take place, lack of staffing, lack of funding, and making the cost reasonable for low-income families since Cedar is made up of mostly low-income families. The Partnership for Children and Youth stated “Providing these services close to home offers an excellent opportunity to maximize safety, provide academic and social supports, and strengthen bonds between children, parents and program” (Partnership for Children and Youth, 2014, p.1). The parents bring up some really great points that go along with the quote which is that services should be offered at a nearby location close to the low-income community. This would make the parents will feel more comfortable sending their children to the program.

Age Appropriate

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Last the teachers did not agree on what age level the program should benefit. Debbie said Kindergarten through 6th grade, Julie said Transitional Kindergarten through 8th grade, and Mandy said Kindergarten through 4th grade. From the section about what age would benefit again was mixed with Sandra said 3rd through 6th grade, but also Kindergarten through 2nd grade would really enjoy the program. Bridget said Kindergarten through 8th then Mary and Danielle said Kindergarten through 8th grade. All of the community members agreed that student grade Kindergarten through High School would benefit from a summer program, but it would have to be broken up and supported as necessary to the grade level. Which means that I will be doing two different age groups one for kindergarten through 3rd grade and another for 4th through 7th or 8th. Splitting it up by these age group seems appropriate because in our elementary school they have Kindergarten through 3rd grade on one side of the building and 4th through 8th on the other side.

Building Awareness within the Community

An idea that was brought to my attention by Sandra, one the parents that I interviewed, suggested that I should create a flyer and not only to distribute around town, but also ask the school to put it in the letters they send out once a month.

My visual is describing how I will take the problems presented by my interviewee's and try to fix them. The number one factor that all my participants talked about was financial hardship. I think that if the program could be free to all the children we would be a great turnout and it would not put any burdens on the family income.

By creating a donation letter I can get some funding to get the program up and running. The second factor stated was having an educational environment year round this gives all

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the children an equal opportunity not just children who have the money to go to summer programs. The third major factor that all the participants stated was age appropriate summer camps. It is important to break up with program so each child gets the most out of the educational portion of the summer program. The last major problem is building awareness with in the community. Parents need to be aware of free or reduced program that are available for their children, and also how it will benefit to send them to the summer program



Description and Justification of Action

Rather than letting children have three months of no educational fun, a summer program can be a way of expanding their knowledge during the summer. This is because low-income students do not have the same opportunities when it comes to educational fun summer programs. This can be due to the lack of money circulating inside the

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household. Any potential action will need to inform and involve parents, educators, and community members in bringing a summer program to a small town of low-income families. Instead of getting three months off, bringing academics and fun into children's lives during the summer will increase their academic performance once they go back to school after summer break.

Options

In order to bring an educational fun summer program for children of low-income the community must be willing to work together to take the proper steps to making it happen. The three options that were identified as possibilities to address the issue of bringing an educational fun summer program are: 1) making a donation letter to distribute to people in the community; 2) gathering a group of people who have an opinion on your interest in creating a summer program; and 3) creating a parent informational which will be a specific day where parents can come and find out information about the program being hosted and ask any question they may have. With all three options, community members play an important role as they are the ones who will help implement the summer program into the community. Creating a free summer program will give low-income families/children the opportunity to increase their educational knowledge through a summer program that will incorporate educational fun lessons. Summer programs will create an educational learning environment for the children to explore over the summer with lesson plans such as baseball math, science experiments, environmental scavenger hunt, and much more. Working with community members, teachers, and parents will help to get funding for the program, ideas on what should be taught, and finding volunteers to help with the program. Integrating academics

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into a summer program will help the children to keep their minds active while having fun, because it is still summer. Finding teachers and parents who are passionate about their children's education over summer will help to bring ideas about the summer program and provide help with the actual program.

Evaluation of Options

To decide which of these options is best a rubric was created with three criteria. The criteria selected to better evaluate the options included probability impact, time, and reasonableness. Probability impact includes face to face interaction with donors, community members, parents, and teachers. The reason face to face will have more impact is because I am able to speak with the donor and give them more information on why their donation will benefit the children and this program. It also shows the amount of dedication you are putting in to your project. Time includes the amount of time it will take to prepare or complete the task. Reasonableness is how hard or easy the task may be to perform. On a reasonable scale the options are rated from low to high, low means the task will not have as much impact or time, whereas high will have a bigger impact or more time. In Table 1.1, the project options are rated using the rubric criteria.

Table 1.1	Probability Impact	Time	Reasonableness
Making a donation letter to distribute to people in the community.	High	High	Med
Gather a group of	High	High	Med

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people who have
an opinion on your
interest in creating a
summer program.

Create a parent	Med	High	Med
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informational so
parent's have an idea
about the program
that will be offered.

The first option involves finding donations to make a summer program happen. Characterizing this project is a high amount of probability impact, high amount of time, and medium amount of reasonableness. This option will have a high probability impact as I have to create a donation letter for all the donors. This option also goes along with high time required to hand out every donation letter I have created. The reasonableness factor is at a medium rating because I can disperse the letters, but I cannot make the donors donate to my program. Depending on the donors I could get funding, snacks, items for lesson plans, and other significant things needed to make a summer program happen. As we start to get donations plans will be put into action with creating a summer program. The project option is reasonable since it can be done within a few months. However, there is no vision of what specific amount of items will be donated to the program.

The second option is gathering a group of people who have an opinion on your

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interest in creating a summer program. Probability impact would be high because a group of people sitting down letting ideas flow will help to make the best summer program possible for these children. Time would be high because multiple meetings would need to be organized to make sure everything runs smoothly. However there could be problems getting everyone together at the same time. Reasonableness is medium because it is hard to get people together, but a few people ideas being heard and talked about it is better than just having my own ideas. The project is reasonable as it can be completed a few times every month until the summer program happens. This will also give future leaders of this program ideas on how to keep the program running for a long time.

The third option is create a parent informational so parent's have an idea about the program that will be offered. Probability impact is medium because it will give the parents an idea on what type of program is being placed into their community and how it is going to help their children. Time is high because it is hard to accommodate to everyone's needs so that means I might have to do more than one informational. Reasonableness is medium because I will not actually have all the answers since this will be the first year the program has been hosted and there has never been one before in our town that I know of. This information I will present to the parents is important because it gives them an idea on what types of activities their children will be engaged, provides a safe environment for a few hours, and show the credibility I have to run this program and why I think it is important.

Evaluation of Evidence

While evaluating donations letters, gathering a group of dedicated individuals to help construct a program, and creating a parent informational, it is important to weigh the

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options against the literature results. Creating a donations letter to handout to donors does not make things happen, you have to present yourself with a plan on what will be happening in the program and what you need from that specific donor. Since I will be hand delivering my letter I will be able to communicate how important their participation is in helping me to make this summer program happen. Flynn and Kershaw stated “Community leaders and program developers may be able to access grants from both the public and private sectors and raise private donations to support facility improvement projects.” (Flynn & Kershaw, 2000 p.7) Any donation would be one step closer to the program being created, because from those donations I will know what type of lesson plans and events I can run. However I do not know what to expect out of the donations I will receive, but this will play a big factor in the program with things such as cost, lesson plans, snacks, and crafts.

While evaluating the group gathering of important people who have similar interesting in making this summer program happen, you have to have your ideas and let the group give you their opinions as well. I have assembled a group of teachers, parents, community members, and high school students who I believe know what would be best for the children in this community and the program in general. Flynn and Kershaw stated “Bring them together to move forward a capital development project. No single person or organization is likely to be able to do the job alone.” (Flynn & Kershaw, 2000 p.3) As one person, I can not create a summer program for these children, but with these active members of the community on my side giving me great ideas I know this program is possible. They are my eyes and ears since I cannot be there to see the changes that need to be made in our community while I am in college. However, getting everyone together

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to talk at the same time might be a bit difficult as schedules are always conflicting. I want them to know that their voices are being heard and that I will do my best to create a successful summer program for the community but mainly the children.

While evaluating the creation of a parent informational, you have to realize parents have concerns and may be busy so finding a good time for most will be a little difficult. Parents want what is best for their children and not having the option of summer programs can be frustrating, especially if a lot of parents do not have time or money to spend with their children during the summer. The website for the National Summer Learning Association stated “Parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure that their children have productive things to do.” (National Summer Learning Association, 2009 p.1) This quote is very accurate especially if you live in a small town that does not offer any activities for children and the closest entertainment is the lake which is about 20 minutes away. I believe the parents would fully support a free or reduced program for their children to engage in during the summer, because they want their children to have opportunities to engage in educational activities and other children during the summer.

Decision Making

After weighing the options and consulting with the stakeholders, I decided that everyone’s actions were important but the primary action would be creating and dispersing a donation letter. The first thing that would need to happen is writing a letter letting the donor know what I am doing and what kinds of donations I need. The next step would be driving or walking to disperse the letter to each donor also giving me face to face interactions letting them know I am serious about this summer program and

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letting them know without their support this program will not be possible. The impact of this action is critical, as I do not have the funding or supplies to support this camp on my own. One of my community members is helping me to write the donation letter to make sure it sounds professional and appealing to the audience we are targeting.

Not getting enough donations would be the heartbreaking. However if this were to happen I would not let that stop me just because the program might not happen this summer does not mean it will never happen. It might mean creating a bank account, putting all the money donations in there and the rest in a secure area for next summer. By giving myself a whole extra year I can get more donations, have more time to spend on creating the summer program and more support from the community in making the program happen. This program is an important resource that needs to be implemented into small towns giving any child the opportunity to have an engaging summer.

My Position

While this summer program is important to me and I want it to happen this summer, I have to realize that there is a possibility it may not happen. I only have five to six months to plan everything, along with getting donations, and talking to teachers, parents, and community members. It will definitely not be possible to arrange this project within the time constraints of this semester. Working with community members on integrating a summer program into the town will have an impact on the community and especially the children.

Conclusions and Related Outcomes

I feel that bringing a summer program is possible even if it does not happen this summer the only thing that will do is make me work harder for the summer program to

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happen next year. This program helps all children to have the same opportunities during the summer months. The decision reflects the priority to make a summer program accessible for children in a small town. It allows students to interact with each other and have their minds engaged in educational activities.

Action Documentation

The researcher created a donation letter to hand out face to face to every store, organization, and community member. A group of community members and I decided to come up with a letter that addresses the needs of this summer program. This letter allows the community to help low-income children have the opportunity to access a summer program through their generous donations. This letter brings attention the issue of not enough funding within the community if the project was supported by one person.

Chelsey Chapin

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To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Chelsey Chapin I have been a resident of Cedar for 13 years and a graduate of Lumber Jack High School in 2010. I am currently a senior at California State University Monterey Bay. This year I am taking a college class called Capstone, the

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goal for Capstone is to take a current problem you see and create a solution. The current problem I am researching is how to bring an educational, but fun summer program to the low-income children of Cedar.

My goal is to launch this program in the summer. The reason for this is because I see so many children have no other resources over the summer, which may leads to bad choices. However with families of this community being mostly low-income, I would like to offer this program at free or low cost. I am reaching out to people who I believe will see that this would be a great opportunity for the children.

I am asking my surrounding communities and organizations to donate in any way possible. May it be money to sponsor children, gift cards to get supplies for lesson plans, or snacks.

Over the past years the community of Cedar has been thankful for your support and donations. It is through generous donations like yours that an educational and fun summer program will be possible for the low-income children of Westwood. This program would not be possible without your help.

Sincerely,

Chelsey Chapin

California State University Monterey Bay

Liberal Studies Senior

If you have any questions you can contact me through email at cchapin@csumb.edu or telephone 530-310-8099.

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The researcher's thoughts going into the project was to create an educational and fun summer program for low-income children. The problem is everything in this program cost money and I wanted the program to be free or reduced, since no one in Cedar have money to send their children to these types of programs. The researcher wanted the children to have educational and fun lesson plans to keep their minds engaged over the summer vacation. Through the researchers donation letter where she asked multiple stores, organizations, and community members for donations she found that the community is willing to help and support. However the research is not positive on what type of donations she will be receiving.

Based on the researcher's experience with this project she found that the program would be easier to create if she was closer to the community of Cedar as it is seven hours from Monterey. The researcher also experienced that the donation letter works, but you never know what types of supplies the donor is willing to give. This can be a problem as you need specific items and supplies to create the program and lesson plans inside it. One option the researched decided to use was having a passionate teacher, mom, and community member be her eyes and ears in Cedar when the researcher is not there or available. Bridget was able to help create a donation letter and start getting them passed out to people in the community. The researcher will help handing out donation letters to anyone she believes can help support the summer program and will not give up until this program is successfully started.

The researcher should stretch her options out to find more funding such as applying for grants, holding fundraisers, raffles, and possibly a Facebook page for

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anyone to donate to this cause. This will allow the researcher to get a reasonable amount of donations through different options not just a donation letter.

Critical Reflection

My project has helped me to ensure that I am still passionate at becoming an educator who stands up for underprivileged children like student from a low-income background. I feel that I can connect with these children as I also come from a low-income community and family. When I started California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) in fall of 2010 I declared my major as Liberal Studies. I have always wanted to be a teacher and my mind has never changed about that. I have spent four years as a Liberal Studies student and a Human Development minor. I am very thankful for all the service learning opportunities that were presented, which gave me an idea of the types of student population that was dominate in this area. In return that has helped me to realize where I would like to teach as I want to make an impact on underprivileged children who do not believe they can go to college because of where they come from.

As I begin to dig deeper into my Capstone I began to realize I am passionate about helping children who do not get equal opportunities. For this reason I chose to create a free or reduced summer program for children of low-income in the town of Cedar CA where I currently resided when not in college. To give these children the opportunity to stay educationally engaged while having fun in the summer would be ideal. The reason is because children lose the knowledge they have absorbed during the academic semester over the summer. Throughout the project the only question I asked myself was how I am going to have an action? I cannot pull all my resources together within five months and I cannot run a summer program during school. What I learned

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was I am very passionate about making this program happen and my action was not going to come to me overnight. However after gather a group of passionate community members my action fell right into place. This also made me learn that getting outside opinions is important because they could have great ideas.

When we talk about working toward change I realize summer program take a lot time to change as it takes many resources and volunteers. While I have a good group of community members that include parents, teachers, and organizations it takes more than talk it takes action by actually planning and creating how the summer program will be ran. It also takes funding, lesson plans, volunteers, and resources. A major challenge I faced was trying to find funding from within the community, grants, and organizations. I was able to create a donation letter and personal hand them out to prospective donors. However, I do not have a clear picture on what types of donations the donor will be able to give. This can be a problem as I do not have a lot of money to buy supplies for the summer program. I have a supportive community and believe they will be able to pull through and help me get this program started successfully. I am glad I choose to stick with this project as I almost went with a topic I was not as passionate about. Hopefully everything comes together and I can create a program that will last for many years and not just a one time deal.

Liberal Studies Themes

Looking at the Liberal Studies outcomes I can see the classes and coursework presented will help me in supporting my professional development. The five outcomes are developing educator skills, understanding diversity and becoming a multicultural scholar, utilizing innovative technology, collaborating on issues of social justice, and

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gaining a broad base of knowledge.

Developing educator.

Helping me to become a developing educator is my experience in Freshman Year Seminar FYS: 100, LS298s Intro to Teaching and Learning and LS 300 Major Pro-seminar. Inside FYS we were able to see what it takes to become a teacher and if we thought Liberal Studies was the major for us. Another class that also tied into FYS was LS298s in the class we learned the basic tools in managing a classroom and got our first actual experience with service learning. Through Major Pro-Seminar we had an advisor from the Liberal Studies department come in and talk to us more in depth about the credential program and what types of pathways were offered. Major Pro-Seminar introduced us to many educational philosophers through a group related activities. Lastly in Major Pro-Seminar we were introduced to Pre-Capstone and the basic concepts that we would be working towards when we finally did get in Capstone.

Diversity and multicultural scholar.

California State University Monterey Bay has and is surrounded by a very multicultural environment. In the Liberal Studies major there were multiple classes that surrounded the topic of multicultural education and how to integrate into your classroom once I become a teacher. The topic of multicultural literature can be very controversial as you do not want to offend any students or parents. The classes that address multicultural literature are Culture and Cultural Diversity, Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, and Social Foundations of Multicultural Education. Through all these classes my educational background with multicultural literature increased significantly, giving me the resources to incorporate lesson into my lesson plan. Coming from a white

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background parents from different cultures may believe that I am not suitable to teach their children about different cultures that is not my own. Through Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults I learned that there are many children's reading books that are not allowed in the classroom because they can have controversial topics. I was also able to learning about different cultures and authors. It is important for teachers to incorporate such literature in the classroom so children get a deeper understand of different cultures. A class that taught me multiple ways to incorporate multicultural lesson plans in to my class was Social Foundations of Multicultural Education. Our final project was all about splitting into groups of four or five people and creating a whole lesson plan with literature, activity, and wrap up. I found this very helpful because each group was given a different culture and you have to find appropriates way to incorporate activities without making it stereotypical.

Innovative technological practitioner.

There are not many classes in the Liberal Studies department that integrate technology. However, Professor Whang is good at integrating technology and social media into both the classes I have had her in which is LS 300 and LS 400. In these classes I was introduced to technological programs like zotero, Google docs, twitter, and word press. If it was not for these classes or professor Whang I would have never used zotero, twitter, and word press. However the only one that I would possible keep using would be word press where I can start a blog for the students or possibly parents who have any questions. I believe that it is important for teacher to learn how to incorporate technology in the classroom as today's society is evolving into all technology devices and straying away from textbooks.

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Social justice collaborator.

Social justice was brought up through many points like segregation, minority rights, and sexuality in Social Foundations of Multicultural Education taught by Dr. Bynoe. Multicultural Literature taught me how to address multiple issues when brought up inside of the classroom. Social justice needs to be taught inside the classroom so your students can learn how to make a change in their society. Change starts with one person and can spread to multiple through words and actions.

Subject Matter Generalist.

Liberal Studies has a wonderful program where you are introduced to every subject as teachers need to be able to teach any subject. Subject areas we focus on are math, science, history, dance, art, music, and English. I do not have any specific subject area that I feel more comfortable in so having a few classes in each subject makes are major open ended.

Future Plans

My plan it to attend iTEP beginning in fall 2014. This is the first step in getting my teaching credential and becoming a public school teacher. This program will give me a year full of student teaching experience inside a classroom with an actual teacher who helps you become familiar with running a classroom by yourself once I graduate from the program. After a year of the iTEP program I hope to find a job in the local community of Monterey and to benefit a low-income community that can use a fresh set of ideas inside their school. As a future teacher I have always said that we are life-long learners and that we can never stop learning may it be through technology and even our student never have a closed mind. I look forward to encouraging students to pursue higher education and to

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know that they can pursue their dreams of going to college even if they come from a low-income family. I would also like to start or join a summer program in this area once I graduate to pursue my idea of a free or reduced program for low-income children in the Monterey area.

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