



Summer Learning Program:

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

Final Report 2023

CODE

Table of Contents

Introduction (slide 3)

The evolution of summer learning in Ontario.

“Yesterday” (slide 6)

From research-based pilot project to a province-wide summer learning program.

”Today” (slide 11)

Boards include summer programs and strategies in their board/school improvement and student achievement plans.

“Tomorrow” (slide 21)

A new era as CODE leadership and responsibility for the SLP ends.

Concluding thoughts (slide 24)

Leading voices share their observations about summer learning - yesterday, today and tomorrow.



Introduction

First introduced in 2010, the CODE Summer Learning Program (with support and funding from the Ministry of Education) has evolved from a handful of school boards taking part in what was essentially a [research-based](#) exercise (designed to study and document the effects of a summer literacy program on student summer learning loss and the reading levels of identified primary students) to what it is today: a respected and established province-wide program recognized by boards as integral to student success and school improvement planning.



Parent engagement: Built-in to summer learning

Parents: The key to student success

Early research into the SLP included interviewing parents to better understand barriers to becoming an active part of their child's learning.

Creating classroom connections

Evolving engagement strategies included lunch programs, volunteering, and meeting with teachers.

Positive attitudes about schools

SLP teacher: "Some families that haven't had the best school experiences are really excited to get kids in the (SLP classroom) during the summer. It just creates such a positive atmosphere."

A place to develop parent strategies

These include parent surveys, classroom presentations, report cards, regular communication, and building engagement for the regular school year.

Parents are partners in learning

Director: "(SLPs) made teachers stronger and (they) realized the greatness of some things that could happen when you're teaching and one of them was truly engaging with parents. They're not your enemy. They're your partner in learning."



SLP Timeline

2010 - 2013

Launch of pilot program
Research project
Numeracy component
FNMI support

2019 - 2022

Late confirmation of 2019 program impacted planning
Pandemic-related disruptions were significant
Pivot to Virtual Learning
Upside to VL: Increase in participation for remote/rural areas

2014 - 2018

SLP now well established
Research confirms effectiveness
Launch of summer learning website
Increased focus on teacher PD

2023 -

Final year of CODE oversight
MoE will provide 2024 funding
Boards enhance Ministry SLP
funding with own funds



“Yesterday”



The Summer Learning Journey Begins

CODE launched the “Summer Learning Project” in 2010 with 28 boards and 55 classes

Each class required a minimum of 15 students and was funded for \$15,000

The initial 28 boards were invited to participate by CODE directly under parameters and expectations outlined by CODE and the Ministry

CODE regional leads were employed to support boards as they implemented summer learning programs

Summer Learning: The Beginning

Focus for the Summer Learning Project was to “minimize summer learning loss for students living in disadvantaged economic and social conditions”

The Project was to include a significant research base with an emphasis on supporting students who needed more support

A summer learning pilot project with two boards was undertaken in 2009

The Ontario Ministry of Education approached CODE to organize and implement a province wide Summer Learning Project

The target population was students in Grades 1, 2 or 3 and was not designed to support students with special needs



Researchers were hired from McMaster University and the University of Waterloo to analyze and report the results of summer learning

Based on advice from the researchers, boards were required to participate and report on results collected through STAR testing (a program designed and managed by Renaissance Learning)

*Interviews with teachers and parents, along with findings from site visits, suggest that summer programs . . . had a positive impact on student and parent engagement and teachers' professional development. Many programs build in parent and community partnerships . . . The balance of a high-quality and fun learning environment has proven to be extremely popular with families and students, and demand for these programs remains high.**

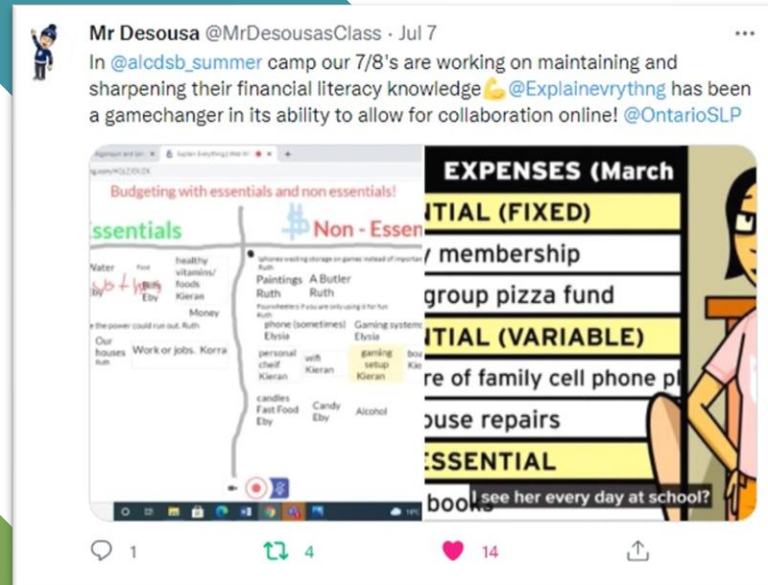
**From Summer Learning Program 2013 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Results, by Scott Davies and Janice Aurini*

Robotics engaged many students that might otherwise not have been as enthusiastic about summer learning. This resource also provided a valuable bridge to practical yet innovative learning for many students. In addition, boards reported that **student mentors**, either from secondary school or college/university and with the skills and interest to support the use of Robotics in the classroom, were a valuable support for SLP students. Mentors offered **professional learning for teachers**, assisted in the identification and purchase of robotic resources, and engaged interested parents.



Math and mentors

Summer learning has always proved itself to be flexible and innovative, with learning opportunities for everyone



In 2021, CODE provided support in developing and implementing an effective Summer Learning Program in numeracy for vulnerable students in Grades 7 and 8. The aim was to benefit students entering the new **Grade 9 de-streamed mathematics program** by engaging them through meaningful learning during the summer program.



“Today”

Observations from CODE & Board leads

Increased enthusiasm and recognition of the power of the SLP was clearly evident. As in previous years, the Summer Learning Program was an important strategy for boards to adapt to the changing curriculum, create additional resources, and build parental understanding of the changing approaches and challenges to effective teacher instruction.

In 2023, the objectives for summer learning remained consistent: Minimize summer learning loss, increase students' skills in math and literacy and build student self-confidence in learning. In addition, summer learning programs once again provided many forms of teacher professional learning while supporting parents during the summer and into the school year.

Boards demonstrated that they had become more adept at a) planning learning outcomes for more vulnerable students; b) measuring the success of these planned outcomes; and c) gauging the impact of these outcomes.

As in previous years, many boards included summer programs and strategies in their board and school improvement and student achievement plans. The priority for almost all boards was a safe and more confident return to school for participating students. New and experienced SOs found additional money and were determined and committed to adding classes and making SLPs an important part of their strategic planning for next year.

SLP 2023 - Statistics

Number of students
in SLPs

Over 20,000

Number of boards
offering SLPs

73

Total number of SLP
teachers

Over 1300

Number of boards
adding funds to SLPs

49

SLPs w/min. 45
hrs/3-weeks

All boards



SLP Management and Leadership

A strength of CODE's management and leadership of the Summer Learning Program is board accountability and reporting. As outlined in the Letter of Agreement between CODE and each board, all boards submitted a plan, reported in detail on measurable outcomes, and issued a final financial report. CODE regional leads in 2023 continued to link closely with boards through virtual meetings, phone calls, and summer learning classroom visits.



A number of boards boosted Ministry summer learning funding with additional board funding to increase the range and breadth of SLPs. However, there were a few boards that only met the minimum requirements for the number of classes and hours of instruction, and did not enhance or extend the Summer Learning Program past the minimum requirements. These boards were contacted more frequently and continuously supported and encouraged by CODE regional leads.

Challenges & Changes



Adapting to a post-pandemic world

One change for 2023 reflected the continuing impact of the pandemic, with most boards returning to in-person classroom teaching and school boards using different types of programming. Post-pandemic, there were a significant number of families moving from large urban centres to more rural areas where housing is less expensive. This led to some rural and smaller city boards needing to adapt to address the impact of large increases in diverse student populations. Summer learning programs present a positive vehicle for boards to do this.

E-learning: A place at the table

E-learning will continue to grow, but could never squeeze out direct learning. E-learning does have a place at the table, however. Continuing in 2023, some smaller, very rural and northern boards offered summer learning online as their most viable option.

A return to SLP's roots

While change and adaption are constants in summer learning, many boards still honour the program's roots with innovative and expanded summer learning activities that include recreation, nutrition, parent engagement, teacher professional development, student visits to community resources (e.g., museums, libraries, parks, etc.) guest speakers and visitors, and activities in the Arts.

Supporting increasing diversity

This year, many boards (especially more urban boards) identified concerns and noted changes in board needs regarding increased diversity due to immigration, high numbers of families relocating to smaller cities (e.g., London ON). This has increased pressure on boards to address the needs of these emerging communities, with some boards using the 2023 Summer Learning Program to support these students and their families.

Focus on: mental health



In the wake of the pandemic, most boards recognized the need for a concerted effort to support & promote the mental health and wellbeing of their students.

These strategies included: training in stress management and mindfulness; opportunities for physical activity; healthy snacks; positive social connections; and student staff relationships.

Extending learning into the community



Classroom visits

SLPs have invited storytellers, Indigenous speakers, symphony musicians and many others into summer learning classes.



Unique experiences

Summer learning can take students out of the classroom and into firehalls, libraries, museums and nature reserves.



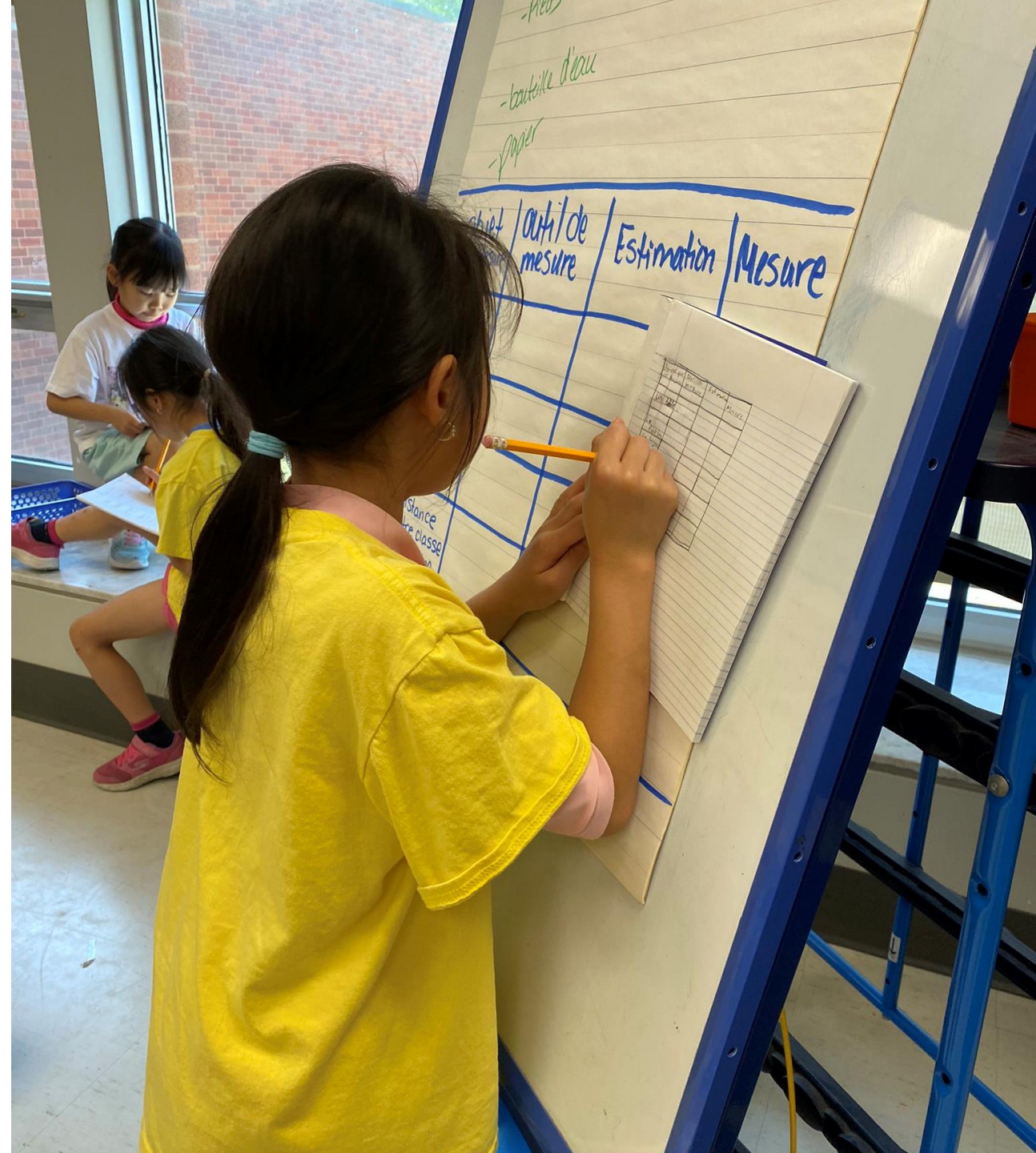
Nutrition and fitness

Organizations and individuals donate their time and healthy snacks to help keep students alert and active.



Faits saillants des programmes d'été dans les conseils scolaires de langue française

Le programme d'été dans les conseils de langue française a suivi le même parcours que celui des conseils de langue anglaise et a mis l'accent sur l'apprentissage de la langue (langage oral et vocabulaire) ainsi que l'apprentissage du sens du nombre et le codage.



Le parcours des programmes d'apprentissage pendant l'été (programme d'été) dans les conseils de langue française est similaire à celui des conseils scolaires de langue anglaise. En 2023, 12 des 13 conseils ont participé au programme.

Les programmes ont fourni un environnement accueillant et engageant aux élèves, parents et personnel.

Le programme d'été a été offert surtout à des élèves vulnérables et a mis l'accent sur l'apprentissage du langage oral et vocabulaire en littératie et en numération et sens du nombre en numératie ainsi que le codage.

Les conseils ont offert de la formation au personnel enseignant des programmes pour les classes offertes en présentiel ainsi que celles offertes en virtuel.



Les programmes ont incorporé des activités physiques, des visites, de l'animation culturelle, des expériences scientifiques, l'utilisation du Web de l'école ou des comptes de médias sociaux.

L'engagement des parents aux programmes via des rencontres d'information et des questionnaires ont démontré un haut pourcentage de satisfaction et ont démontré l'impact du programme sur la confiance en soi de leurs enfants.

Les évaluations pré et post-programmes ont démontré une amélioration de la langue parlée, la compréhension des directives et la connaissance du vocabulaire.

Les conseils ont partagé le succès de leur programme d'été avec leurs conseillers scolaires et la communauté. Les résultats ont aussi été partagés avec les équipes écoles afin de faciliter l'accueil des élèves participant dans leurs nouvelles écoles en septembre.

Deux conseils scolaires ont combiné leurs ressources pour offrir des cours en ligne à tous les élèves dans leurs grandes régions géographiques

Tous les conseils ont utilisé les fonds alloués par CODE pour leur programme et ont aussi contribué leurs propres fonds pour ajouter des classes aux programmes d'été.





“Tomorrow”

2024 and beyond: What we heard from SLP stakeholders

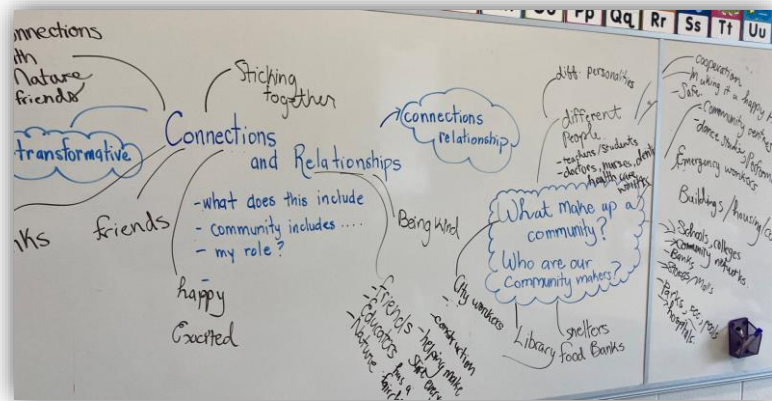
The ongoing and direct work of regional leads and CODE fostered many positive learning experiences for boards to share with colleagues. Boards, without exception, have requested to have this opportunity continue. CODE's significant role in initiating and supporting summer learning over the past 10 years has greatly added to the success of the program.

Time commitments for summer programs need to be critically designed and clear. Implementation should be followed for conformity.



In 2023, some school boards accepted the CODE funding as a bonus and used it to meet the requirements within their Letter of Agreement. At the same time, other school boards used this funding as a stimulus, adding their own in-board funds to create new programs, expand existing offerings, staff differently, and make other changes or enhancements. These boards should be rewarded with more funding as they make every dollar become ten.

2024 and beyond: New challenges and opportunities



The strength of the CODE SLP was that each school board could respond to their school community's needs, its diverse population, challenges due to geography, etc. One size does not fit all. And yet, there are ideas that may be shared and adapted which will be welcomed by all boards to fit their particular school board profile. The summer learning website shared such ideas; this is a rich resource that could be maintained.

Boards have been supported through CODE to build a community of learning for summer learning teachers and board leaders.

Changing teacher practice to meet the needs of more vulnerable students comes through dialogue, clear expectations, follow up, and board accountability.

Concluding Thoughts

Impact on teachers and teaching

“Educators have such a huge impact on the students that are in front of them, so if they know more, if they know something different, then they're imparting that knowledge and they're giving (new) opportunities to those students. So now we've got educators who are going back in (to September classrooms). They've been trained on the use of different programs (during their summer learning experience) . . . now they're able to apply that knowledge back in the classroom, and they're also able to help build the capacity with other educators that are in the building. So now even more people benefit from the learning that's happened over the course of the summer.”

“If (teachers) know more, if they know something different, then they’re imparting that knowledge and they’re giving new opportunities to those students.”

Aviva Dunsiger

Reading Specialist,
HWDSB

Concluding Thoughts



Responding to needs of diverse communities

“What's been created . . . is a really comprehensive opportunity for students to learn outside of the school day and throughout the summer, whether you are in the Primary Division or you're in the Secondary Division. And (the SLP) has been responsive to different community groups that are representative of the students that we serve, like the Indigenous community and the Black community. So, it's really innovative and responded to the needs of (these) communities.

“A (key) component of the program has been physical activity, and especially (for) newcomers, many of the students have never even been in a pool. And the opportunity to learn how to swim is a gift for their lifetime.”

“The SLP has been innovative and responsive to (diverse) community groups that are representative of the students that we serve.”

Clara Howitt
Superintendent of Education,
GECD SB

Concluding Thoughts

A welcoming environment

“Attention was paid to making the school environment warm and inviting and making the students feel welcome. I was most impressed when visiting schools and programs to see the leader of the program out welcoming kids at the bus stop and teachers outside the building, greeting children as they got out of the cars or off the bus to ensure that they were welcomed first thing and were feeling comfortable with the day.

“They also welcomed parents, and there were strategies to engage parents in their child's learning, not only during the Summer Learning Program but also all year long. They wanted to make parents feel comfortable with coming into the school and seeing what was going on there and feeling part of it.”

“(SLPs) also welcomed parents, and there were strategies to engage parents in their child's learning, not only during the Summer Learning Program but also all year long.”

David Lynn

CODE Regional Lead

Concluding Thoughts

Leveraging technology

“(Recently) I spoke to Executive Council about summer learning and . . . I really felt the sentiment in the room from senior admin and from the trustees based on their questionings that there's a real desire to continue to offer the program. I'd say the future looks very bright. Maybe not the Cadillac model of two classroom teachers and an EA, but it certainly will continue to live on.

“I would like to see the return of the innovation grants . . . it was successful. It was an opportunity to really leverage technology. I reached out to Senior High School students and university students and they served as robotic mentors and . . . that just made it a little easier for teachers to integrate those more sophisticated STEM challenges.”

“There's a real desire to continue to offer the (summer) program. I'd say the future looks very bright.”

Pat Runstedler

Principal, St. Isidore Virtual
Learning and Innovation

SLP Interviews

(See report supplement)



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