

EDUCATION

Keeping brains engaged on break

Summer learning programs abound, from math and science to origami and sailing

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Origami workshops, sailing lessons, math and reading catch-up camp: More than a third of Rhode Island's youth ages 5 to 18 participate in summer learning programs.

Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist is underscoring the importance of these programs Tuesday, when she visits summer learning sites in the capital city, including the YMCA of Greater Providence at the Southside Water Park, the Roger Williams Park Museum of Natural History and Save The Bay headquarters.

"Most of our schools have just closed ... but learning doesn't take a vacation," Gist said. While some programs are already full, others still have slots remaining.

Many of the options are free or low-cost, and most programs start just after July 4, says Adam Greenman, executive director of the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus alliance, which hosts a website dedicated to 165 of the re-

gion's summer programs.

"We think kids need a whole summer break, but in reality, they enjoy it for a week and then boredom does set in," Greenman said. "And research shows if kids aren't learning during the summer months, they really fall behind academically."

In fact, studies show that low-income children can lose more than two months of reading achievement over the summer.

The Providence After-School Alliance seeks to change this with its After-zone Summer Scholars program at Del Sesto Middle School, which is already full with 250 students this summer. About \$175,000 in federal and private grants pays for the program.

In Central Falls, about 150 Calcutt Middle School students are scheduled to participate in programs designed to boost their math and reading proficiency and explore the life sciences. And nearly 200 high school students can make up credits, expand their English skills, take a course at the Community College of Rhode Island or attend Brown University's Summer High School.

"More times than not," says Central Falls Supt. Frances Gallo, "students who participate in [these] programs start the new school year on an achievement level as good if not better than the previous school year."

To find summer programs in Rhode Island: <http://afterschoolri.org/for-parents/program-map>

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