



Summer Camp Restoration Helped Thousands of Middle School Children, But Abbreviated Timeline of the Partial Restoration Left Thousands of Children Without Camp:

CFY 2019 Funding was for One Year Only—So Thousands of Children, Families and Providers Will Face This Cut Again and Districts Set to Lose the Most Summer Programs Have High Rates of Child Poverty

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Despite the well-known fact that summer camp programming can help close the achievement gap, prevent summer learning loss, and keep children safe and participating in developmentally appropriate activities while parents work in July and August, the de Blasio administration has once again failed to fund summer programs for 34,000 children for future summers, including the summer of 2019.

Summer camp programming is a critical component of the after-school system. From its inception, the City's original Out of School Time (OST) after-school model included summer camp programs. When the de Blasio administration rebranded and expanded the system to be universal for middle school students, advocates, families, providers and children applauded this critical investment. Unfortunately, after the first year of implementation, the approximately 34,000 middle school after-school slots created by the de Blasio administration no longer included summer camp programs for the middle school children. This left advocates, providers, families and City Council Members advocating for their restoration year after year.

While the advocacy efforts have been successful each year and City Council members are committed to summer camp, the uncertainty that accompanies the annual budget dance is stressful for parents, particularly low-income parents, trying to make arrangements for their children, as well as for the staff who are unsure whether they will have a job. The one-year restoration has also come at different times during the year, including the February Preliminary Budget, at the Youth Services Executive Budget Hearing in May, in early June for an early budget and in mid-June for an on-time budget. It is very challenging for programs to hire and screen staff, find adequate space and recruit children in June for a program that begins in July.

Given the annual budget battle resulted in a partial restoration in June this past summer and the difficulties expressed by families and providers, Citizens' Committee for Children and the Campaign for Children surveyed agencies providing SONYC after-school and summer programming to learn more about the impact that the late partial restoration had on summer camp programs this summer. The survey documented that while thousands more middle school students were able to go to camp this summer due to the restoration, there were thousands more unable to attend. SONYC agencies discussed the obstacles

to fully utilizing even the 22,800 slots budgeted¹ due to barriers such as hiring and screening staff, finding space, and recruiting children.

This past spring, thousands of middle school children wrote letters to the Mayor telling him why summer camp was so important to them and their families. Child after child wrote that without summer camp programs they would be home watching tv, playing video games or on their phones, though they would rather be active and healthy in camp, going on trips, socializing with friends and learning new things that they do not learn in school.

“Dear Mr. Mayor... Summer camp is really important to me because I have nothing to do during the summer. It is important to be active, stay healthy and be on the run. Kids like me just sit on the couch, eat potato chips, and use their phones....Do you want to know a secret? Summer camp is one of the best things I’ve ever attended. At summer camp we learn to be kind to one another. We also learn about problem-solving and being nice to our community. We get free food and we also meet a bunch of fun new faces,” wrote 11 year old Isbriel from Manhattan.

“Summer camp is important for my family and I because it provides safe supervision. If there was no summer camp I would be home alone playing video games and watching tv,” wrote 14 year old Justin from the Bronx.

“By you not funding our program for summer camp, you are putting burdens on families that don’t know where to put their child during the summer when they are working. If we didn’t have camp, then many of us would be left wandering the streets and making bad decisions. During camp we go on trips, we learn about STEM related topics, and we do art. We did physical activities and many more gym related activities,” wrote 13 year old Sy’ra from Queens.

These children inherently know what the research has proven. According to the National Summer Learning Association, summer learning loss accounts for two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap in reading, and low-income youth lose two to three months of achievement each year.² As the Community District map of these cuts shows in Appendix 1, the proposed cut impacts children and families in every corner of the City – and the cuts are particularly drastic in communities with the greatest needs.

Research has also shown the negative impact of screen time on children and teenagers. A 2017 study published in *Clinical Psychological Science* found a correlation between teens who spent significant time on electronic devices (e.g. computers, cell phones and tablets) had an uptick in symptoms of depression and suicidal thoughts, especially among girls.³

In November 2016, the American College of Pediatricians issued a position statement on media use and screen time which stated, “While the limited use of high-quality and developmentally appropriate media may have a positive influence, excessive or developmentally inappropriate use carries grave health risks for children and their families. Excessive exposure to screens (television, tablets, smartphones, computers and video game consoles), especially at early ages, has been associated with lower academic performance,

¹ The full restoration would be \$20.35 million for 34,000 slots.

² National Summer Learning Association. *Research Brief: More Than a Hunch: Kids Lose Learning Skills Over the Summer Months.* http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research_Brief_04_-_Cooper.pdf.

³ Patti Neighmond, *Increased Hours Online Correlate With an Uptick in Teen Depression, Suicidal Thoughts*, NPR Radio All Things Considered. November 14, 2017.

increased sleep problems, obesity, behavior problems including increased aggression, lower self-esteem, depression, and increased high risk behaviors, including sexual activity at an earlier age.”⁴

With a mere \$20 million, the City would ensure that 34,000 middle school students were able to participate in summer camp programs rather than stay home to watch tv, play video games or be unsupervised in their communities.

The most recent survey conducted by Citizens’ Committee for Children and the Campaign for Children surveyed SONYC agencies during the first two weeks of August 2018. Twenty-nine agencies, with programs serving all 5 boroughs, responded to the survey. Together these programs serve 11,076 middle school students during the school year. Without the restoration, they would have only been able to serve 2,247 middle school children, or 20% of students served during the school year. With the partial restoration, these agencies were able to serve 6,371 children.

Even with the restoration coming just weeks before summer camp programs were starting, 20 of the surveyed agencies were able to use all of the slots the City offered to them. For the remaining 9 agencies, 7 were not able to use all of the slots offered, 1 agency had no slots offered to them and 1 agency had no slots cut (and thus none offered). Even with so many of the surveyed agencies using all of the slots offered, only 6 of the surveyed agencies (including the one that did not have any cut) were able to serve the same number of children during the summer as during the school year. Thus, while the restoration enabled an additional 4,705 middle school children to attend, the agencies were still only able to serve 58% of their middle school capacity this past summer of 2018.

While the survey asked the agencies to rank the potential obstacles to using the summer camp slots awarded to them in June/July, the survey results showed that of the 6 potential obstacles offered, there was no one or two primary obstacle that stood out in the survey. Securing space for summer camp; finding staff to work in summer camp; screening staff to work in summer camp; getting the word out to families; recruiting children; and ensuring high quality programming was in place in time for the start date were all obstacles the agencies needed to try to overcome.

The voices of the agencies themselves are helpful to understanding how difficult it is to organize and run a high-quality summer camp program when the funding comes just weeks before the start date. The agency voices, in addition to those of the children discussed earlier, also show how critical it is to do everything possible to make this less than perfect situation work because the children and families rely on these programs.

“In order to provide a robust summer program service to our participants it is important that information is shared earlier than the end of June. This approach hinders finding appropriate applicants for the various staffing positions, recruitment of participants, and ensuring summer sites are confirmed.

“Although we started to recruit, notify families, and have staff “on call” before the funding was secured in order to be ready, this isn’t the ideal way of working. If we hadn’t received the slots, we would have had to call back families and leave staff with no work, which tarnishes our reputation within the community.”

⁴ American College of Pediatricians. *The Impact of Media Use and Screen Time on Children, Adolescents and Families*. November 2016.

“It is extremely difficult to organize a camp in a couple of weeks.”

“The notice of funding came too late for us to staff up all of our camps. We had already reassigned the staff who normally work in our SONYC programs to other sites. In addition, many staff had already left us for other job opportunities since we could not guarantee summer work.”

“Parent interest was high and space was available. But the wait time for slots and planning time were obstacles.”

The Campaign for Children strongly urges the de Blasio administration to avoid this unnecessary fight in the upcoming FY2020 budget for the summer of 2019. The \$20.35 million needed for the 34,000 middle school children to attend summer camp must be restored and baselined as soon as possible. In addition, the City needs to return to the original after-school model whereby summer camp programming is a component of the program model. Every child participating in an after-school program should be able to participate in a summer camp program. Middle school children are typically 11-13 years old (with some as young as 10 and as old as 14). The same parents who need their children to be in a safe and developmentally appropriate environment from 3-6 PM during the school year also need their children in this type of environment during the months of July and August.

Notably, if this is not resolved, it will once again negatively impact all 34,000 children across the five boroughs, but the poorest children in New York City – those who need summer learning the most – would bear the brunt of these cuts. A closer look at the seven Community Districts with over 1,000 slots at risk shows that nearly all of these communities have child poverty rates exceeding the citywide child poverty rate of 26.6%. Furthermore, academic achievement in the school districts of these communities falls well below the citywide average, with significantly fewer children meeting math and reading comprehension standards.

Cuts to Summer Camp Compared to Child Poverty Rate⁵

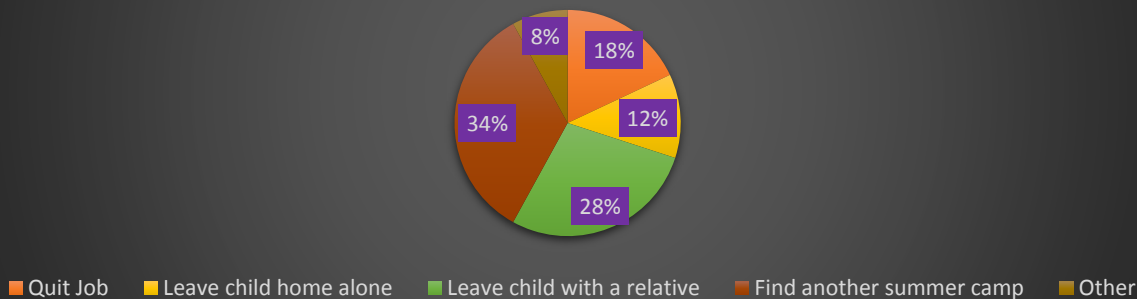
Community Districts with Largest Summer Camp Cuts	Number of summer camp slots at risk	Child poverty rate (CD)- 2016 (Citywide= 26.6% child poverty rate)
Brownsville	1,577	38%
East Harlem	1,281	47%
East New York	1,219	41%
The Rockaways	1,137	30.8%
East Tremont	1,097	46.9%
Central Harlem	1,087	42.6%
Lower east side	1,030	25.4%

⁵ Citizens' Committee for Children, *Keeping Track Online*. <http://data.cccnewyork.org/data/map/96/child-poverty#96/a/3/146/22/a>

We know, too, that summer programs are an essential resource for working parents and in particular the poor and working poor in New York City. In fact, during the 2015 budget fight for summer camp, Citizens' Committee for Children and the Campaign for Children surveyed⁶ nearly 2,500 parents whose children were in city-funded summer programs and documented that over 91% of the surveyed parents relied on summer programs to be able to work or go to school.

The survey also asked parents what they would do if they did not have a summer program. The responses showed just how much of a struggle it would be for these parents. A third of parents would leave the child with a relative in the absence of an educational environment; another third hoped they could find another summer camp, which is unlikely given the overall reduction in programs across the city. **Nearly 20% of parents said they would quit their jobs if they lost access to a summer program for their child, and 12% said they would leave the child home alone.**

2,500 parents Were asked: What would you do if there was no summer program for your child?



In addition, 64% of surveyed parents said they relied on summer programs for free, nutritious meals for their children, who may otherwise go without.

A few parents summed up the need for summer programs, saying:

"I need them to be in a safe place while I work. I do not have anyone I trust to care for them while I work so I would be unemployed without summer camp. They also learn while having fun."

"It is important for me, my child and my family because he will have an advantage come September. Because while other kids are watching TV and playing video games, my child is learning and that means so much to us."

There is no mistaking that summer programs play a critical role in addressing income inequality and improving educational outcomes, especially for low-income children. Summer programs enable parents to work. Summer programs keep children safe. Summer programs keep children positively engaged. Summer programs prevent summer learning loss. Summer programs are essential – that is why the administration

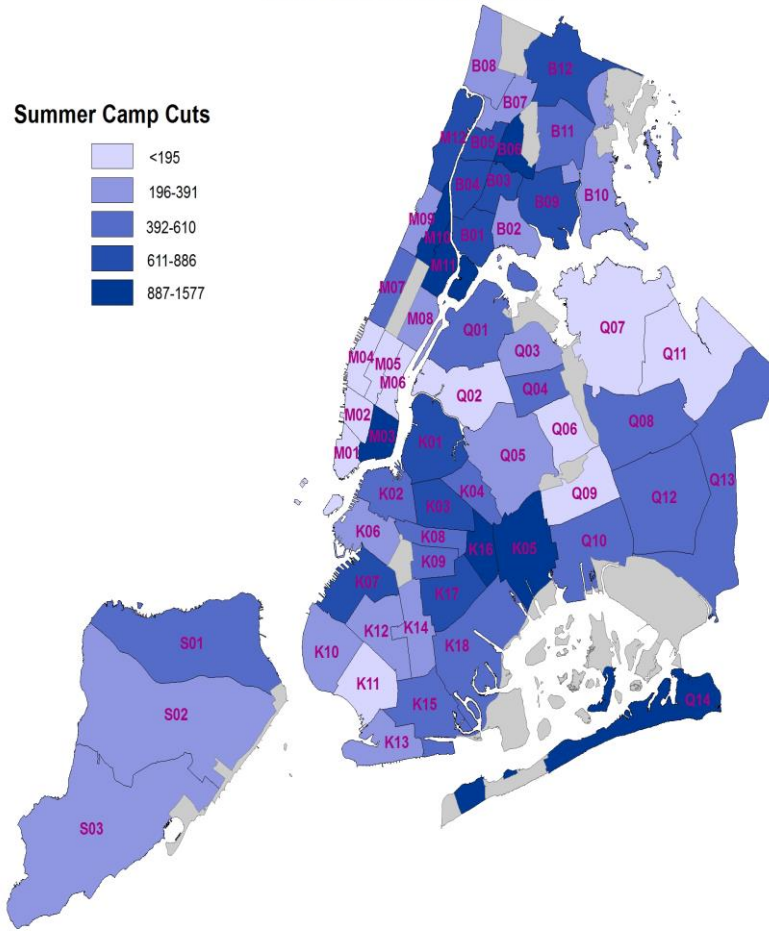
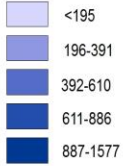
⁶ Campaign for Children, *Status Report on NYC's After-School System: Demand for Elementary, High School and Summer Programming Remains High*. September 2015. <https://www.cccnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CampaignforChildrenAfterSchoolReportSept2015.pdf>

must baseline and restore summer programs for 34,000 middle school students and once again make summer programming a component of all of the City-funded after-school programs.

Appendix 1: Summer Camp Slots at Risk, by Community District

Cuts by Community District

Summer Camp Cuts



Community District	# of Summer Slots at Risk
Mott Haven (B01)	870
Hunts Point (B02)	350
Morrisania (B03)	715
Concourse/Highbridge (B04)	816
University Heights (B05)	646
East Tremont (B06)	1097
Bedford Park (B07)	300
Riverdale (B08)	390
Unionport/Soundview (B09)	886
Throgs Neck (B10)	375
Pelham Parkway (B11)	500
Williamsbridge (B12)	735
Williamsburg/Greenpoint (K01)	671
Fort Greene/Brooklyn Hts (K02)	505
Bedford Stuyvesant (K03)	845
Bushwick (K04)	541
East New York (K05)	1319
Park Slope (K06)	391
Sunset Park (K07)	727
Crown Heights North (K08)	595
Crown Heights South (K09)	435
Bay Ridge (K10)	281
Bensonhurst (K11)	195
Borough Park (K12)	330
Coney Island (K13)	260
Flatbush/Midwood (K14)	335
Sheepshead Bay (K15)	442
Brownsville (K16)	1577
East Flatbush (K17)	671
Canarsie (K18)	591
Battery Park/Tribeca (M01)	131
Lower East Side (M03)	1030
Chelsea/Clinton (M04)	190
Midtown Business District (M05)	100
Murray Hill/Stuyvesant (M06)	50
Upper West Side (M07)	526
Upper East Side (M08)	295
Manhattanville (M09)	265
Central Harlem (M10)	1087
East Harlem (M11)	1281
Washington Heights (M12)	798
Astoria (Q01)	470
Sunnyside/Woodside (Q02)	145
Jackson Heights (Q03)	242
Elmhurst/Corona (Q04)	475
Ridgewood/Glendale (Q05)	305
Rego Park/Forest Hills (Q06)	195
Flushing (Q07)	185
Fresh Meadows/Briarwood (Q08)	555
Woodhaven (Q09)	80
Howard Beach (Q10)	491
Bayside (Q11)	105
Jamaica/St. Albans (Q12)	610
Queens Village (Q13)	560
The Rockaways (Q14)	1137
St. George (S01)	510
South Beach (S02)	390
Tottenville (S03)	320