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[Jennifer Peck](#)

Executive Director, Partnership for Children and Youth

Changing the STEM Equation This Summer

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In California and around the U.S., the public, private, nonprofit and philanthropic sectors alike are investing resources and forging new partnerships to address America's glaring education **crisis in science, technology, engineering and math** (STEM).

Initiatives to bolster **STEM education** are becoming ubiquitous, with President Obama repeatedly emphasizing the critical importance of STEM in his 2011 State of the Union address and announcing the launch of the [Change the Equation](#) STEM business initiative. STEM education programs are now expanding beyond the traditional school year and school day to become an important component of summertime learning programs. It's not a moment too soon.

All children, especially disadvantaged students from low-income communities, lose academic skills and knowledge over the summer -- an epidemic known as "[summer learning loss](#)." Losing math skills and science knowledge is a common occurrence for those students who lack exposure to these subjects during the summer months.

At the national level, three of the nation's leading after-school and summer learning organizations have joined forces to promote STEM learning during the out-of-school hours. The [Afterschool Alliance](#), [National AfterSchool Association](#) (NAA), and [National Summer Learning Association](#) (NSLA) are working together to advance effective, meaningful STEM learning after school and during the summer.

California can and should do more to help curb summer learning loss in math and science. As a former science teacher, California [State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson](#) is passionate about increasing summertime access to STEM learning, and is working with organizations such as the nonprofit [Partnership for Children and Youth](#) to implement a new vision for summer learning that includes STEM learning and enrichment.

Also in California, innovative efforts like [EnCorps Teachers Program](#), which recruits and trains mid-career professionals to become math and science teachers in under-resourced schools, STEM innovation competitions like [STEMposium](#) and the [California STEM Learning Network](#) (CSLNet), which works to catalyze innovation in STEM teaching and learning, are likewise working to expand access to excellent STEM education during the school year.

Summer learning programs are wisely recognizing that summertime offers a wealth of opportunities to engage students in interesting activities, field trips, guest lectures, and outdoor experiments that bring science, technology, engineering and math to life outside the classroom in fun and memorable ways. Perhaps most importantly, these summer programs send students back to school with greater enthusiasm for STEM learning once the school year begins.

Now is an opportune time for California's STEM education community to innovate, [advocate](#) and invest in STEM education as part of summer learning programs. As a leader in driving technological and social innovation, California can lead by example in making STEM teaching and learning a summertime priority.

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