



## The Build Forward Together Summer 2021 Challenge



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### **It is time to leverage the opportunities created by COVID and the racial reckonings.**

The scope and scale of the disruptions not just to learning but to lives is beyond anything this country has experienced together in recent history. But so are the opportunities to disrupt the status quo:

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### **There is a broad commitment to build back better.**

It is widely accepted that COVID and the surge of white nationalism have exposed gaps and inefficiencies that must be addressed in every system. Many school, community and government leaders are committed to not go back to “normal.”

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### **There are growing calls to build back broader.**

As weeks turned into months, the contributions that youth, families, and community organizations made got more attention. These efforts are admittedly uneven. But they demonstrate the wealth of learning opportunities that could be in young people’s lives that, if recognized, could be resourced and leveraged in communities.

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### **There is increased recognition that teens’ and young adults’ needs are different.**

Efforts to support families and offer some in-person classes have focused on younger students and students with special needs. The real-time impact on teens and the near-term impact on the workforce is now gaining attention.

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### **There is growing interest in leveraging summer.**

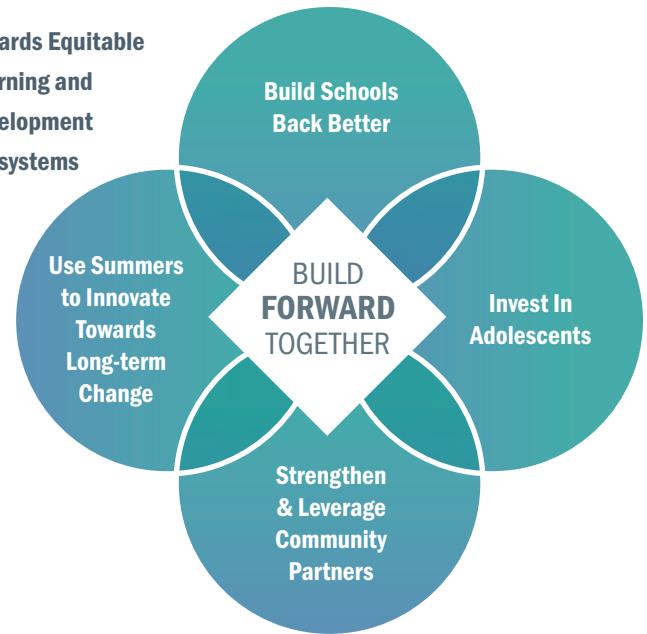
Summer 2021 has to be different than Summer 2020. Proposals to increase funding for summer programs, start the next school year early, create a national tutoring corps, double down on relationships and reconnection efforts are gaining traction.

# It is Time to Build Forward Together

The momentum coming out of the disruption presents a tangible opportunity to challenge and support school districts and community partners to create equitable learning and development ecosystems that unleash the potential of all learners, recognize the power of all committed adults, and optimize all learning settings and approaches.

**Build Forward Together partners will work with school and community leaders who are ready take a hard look at the inefficiencies and inequities that come not from being independent systems but from not recognizing their interdependence and not fully centering youth and families. To get started, we will focus on summer 2021 as a springboard to the year to come.**

**Towards Equitable  
Learning and  
Development  
Ecosystems**



## The Build Forward Together Summer 2021 Challenge



**The next three months are critical for shaping and demonstrating communities' broader commitments to creating equitable learning and development opportunities.**

Spring schedules are still uncertain. But there is growing confidence that schools will reopen in the fall. Now is the time to start to take stock. To identify innovations and understand roadblocks. To take a hard look at the ways school, family, and community leaders worked or did not work together. To hear the lessons learned from students, families, and front-line staff. Now is also the time to find creative ways to take action together – to use summer as a pivot point for longer-term, sustainable change.

**Build Forward Together challenges local school, government, and community leaders to leverage the urgency, innovation, and resources sparked by the dual pandemics to do four things:**

**1**

Use summer as a low-stakes testing ground to document, test, and scale different ways to leverage school, family, and community assets in support of accelerated learning and development that can help us build forward together post-COVID.

**2**

Prioritize children most challenged by the pandemic who are also the least likely to have resources for summer programs.

**3**

Place focused attention on teens, especially those whose success trajectories are threatened.

**4**

Ask how you will know how many students had great summers and why, so you can bring that data into the school year and have a baseline for improvement in 2022.



## Why Summer?

We recognize the challenges each system (schools, community-based organizations, parks & recreation, libraries, workforce) will have as they to plan to stand up programs. We recognize that it is a stretch to ask them to not only plan to do more but plan to somehow do things together. Very few communities are ready to make a full-blown commitment this year to make sure every family has what they need to craft incredible summers for their kids, or every teen has what they need to make successful transitions. But very few were ready to do this in 2019.

For most kids, Summer 2019 – pre-COVID – meant that required schooling was replaced by a mix of free time, family-arranged care, school and community-sponsored enrichment opportunities, vacations, sibling responsibilities, paid and unpaid work. Summer, in short, was a time when schools stepped back, and families stepped in and community organizations stepped up. This division of labor made sense because the stakes are not only lower in summer (no requirements, no grades, no tests) and the success metrics are different (keep academic skills sharp while having fun, mastering new skills, taking on family responsibilities, having different experiences).

**What will Summer 2021 look like?** It won't look like 2019. It shouldn't look like 2020. It could, with effort, begin to preview "the new normal." We are confident that there are many communities that see value in finding some way to use Summer 2021 to document, design, test, or even scale up some ways to Build Forward Together to make a down payment on the idea that, by the summer of 2022, every student should have equitable opportunities for learning and development because every young person and their family has the support needed to create learning pathways across the ecosystem that are attractive, accessible, affordable, appropriate, affirming and assessable.



# Are You Ready to Build Forward Together?

It starts with a commitment to take the time to...



## Think & Talk Differently

What is the language you want to use to have this not be just about summer but about reimagining learning and development?



## See & Hear Differently

What do you need to know/ map about the basic resources/capacities (space, money, staff) available and about the goals and needs of all the actors (youth, families, education staff, community, etc.)?



## Act & React Differently

What do you need to do to be prepared to knit these opportunities together in a way that you can communicate them, learn from them, and leverage them?



## Coordinate Differently

What coordination capacity is already at place at any level, from school “success coaches” to children’s cabinets or cradle-to-career partnerships?



## We're Ready to Help

Whether you decide to go big or start small -- work with one neighborhood, one group of trusted partners, or one targeted group of learners or families, Build Forward Together partners will be working across communities to find, test, and curate ideas, tools, and examples that best inspire you to think, see, and act differently as you rebuild and re-imagine their learning ecosystem. To learn more about the Readiness Projects, visit: [forumfyi.org/the-readiness-projects](https://forumfyi.org/the-readiness-projects)



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