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Online map helps Hawaii parents find summer learning programs for their kids

By [Susan Essoyan](#) • May 31, 2021 • *Updated 11:27 am*

Parents looking for summer learning programs to help children rebound from the pandemic can explore options through an interactive website created by the Hawaii Afterschool Alliance.

“After this past year, we have so much ground we need to make up — academically, socially, emotionally, physically and more,” said Paula Adams, executive director of the alliance. “As much as anything, our kids need a return to some sort of normalcy, which during the summer should include a chance to have fun and be kids.”

The 2021 Summer Program Map spotlights offerings at public schools as well as community-based learning programs, Summer Fun sites and free-meal pickup spots, all arrayed island by island. Clicking on the color-coded pins on the map reveals details on each program and a link to its website.

The map can be found online at hawaiiafter-schoolalliance.org. It will keep evolving as providers add more to the database.

Private providers include well-known organizations such as the YMCA, Kamaaina Kids, Boys & Girls Clubs and After-School All-Stars, many of which are collaborating with public schools. And there are newer alternatives, such as “Reel Camps for Girls” offered by Hawaii Women in Filmmaking.

“We have a catalog of community-based providers that are ready to partner with schools to offer a robust summer program,” Adams said. “It is listed by complex area so schools can click on it and see ... figure out what they want to do and who they want to partner with.”

“We are pushing for the whole-day, whole-child type of approach where kids have access to academic support but also enrichment activities,” she added. “Kids need to look forward to summer programs.”

Public schools are offering traditional courses, learning hubs on campus, as well as transition and extracurricular programs that vary by campus. Elementary schools are offering a three-week transition program to give incoming kindergarten students who missed out on preschool during the pandemic a chance to get rolling before school officially starts.

All the summer sessions at public schools are free this year to encourage enrollment. Free grab-and-go meals for children up to age 18 will be available at nearly 80 schools starting Friday.

Since summer school is voluntary, educators are coming up with options they hope will entice students.

Students at Aiea Intermediate School can take up instruments in the school orchestra or get their hands on plants with an aquaponics program, offered alongside academics this summer. The activities are open to incoming as well as returning students. The summer session starts Wednesday.

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“For our students this is an opportunity to recover and also rebound,” said Alisa Bender, the school’s principal. “You get to come onto campus in an area of interest, and you’re learning, hopefully, in a very engaging, active way. We’re trying to make it as exciting as possible. Music is such a great way to reach out.”

Every morning will start with social-emotional learning, since so many kids felt isolated during remote learning. Aiea Intermediate has been on a hybrid schedule but will be fully in person this summer.

“We are about to get a group of students that has not had a regular school year for two years,” Bender said. “We want to make sure we’re offering them all we can.”

She is aiming for 100 students and still has plenty of slots available. Counselors and vice principals are reaching out with personal invitations and even doing home visits to encourage participation. The school also held informational nights, both in Marshallese and Chuukese. Aiea Intermediate has nearly 500 students in seventh and eighth grade.

Central Middle School near downtown also is offering an array of engaging activities to supplement its academics. They include arts and crafts, dancing, sports and cooking, offered through After-School All-Stars. A separate Power Scholars program helps incoming sixth graders transition to middle school.

“It’s good to get the kids active and doing something engaging, and it’s all free,” said Principal Joe Passantino. “They are not sitting at home; they are engaged, their minds are active. It’s a positive environment.”

“Especially with school having been in virtual learning ... we need to get kids back into a more school-like setting that’s every day, face to face, even though we have to wear a mask,” he said.

About 80 students have signed up so far, and he is hoping for more. Central has about 330 students, and counselors are reaching out to those who could benefit the most. The summer programs start June 7.

“There were students who were challenged, but the opportunity is in place for them and there are outreach programs for them to be able to make up credits,” Passantino said.

Although there has been concern that educators would be burned out by the end of the school year, both Bender and Passantino said they were heartened to find that their staff stepped up.

“We had a good turnout for staff,” Passantino said. “They want to be here. They want to teach. That was really positive.”

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