



WHAT IS SUMMERTREK?

Research-Based

SummerTrek is a six-week summer expanded learning program designed to engage middle school youth as community problem-solvers. Through a series of dynamic and highly motivating project-based activities, youth participants become “trekkers”, developing interests, skills, and expertise as they explore ways to make positive contributions to their communities and the world.

SummerTrek builds upon several years of research and pilot testing aligned with quality principles for out-of-school time educational enrichment, service-learning and positive youth development.

Responsive to a Critical Need

The summer months provide an optimal time to engage youth in positive activities reinforcing and expanding upon knowledge, skills, and attributes taught during the school year. Such programming opportunities are scarce, particularly for middle school students in disadvantaged communities. Over time, the potential loss of up to three months of learning and skill development during the summer contributes significantly to the achievement gap between disadvantaged youth and their peers.

Intentionally Designed

SummerTrek provides a blueprint for six weeks of engaging, inquiry-based activities, each intentionally designed to enhance the development of academic literacy, college, career, and workforce skills, and civic engagement in middle school youth. The program is aligned with – and integrates into each activity – Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts, and the “Four C’s” of 21st Century skills (critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration).

Participants select and address one of three themes or challenges: bullying, the development of community gardens to address community food insufficiency, and the transition from elementary to middle school. Tapping into the middle school student’s quest for self-affirmation and recognition, *SummerTrek* introduces opportunities to make a difference, while developing the knowledge and skills necessary to think critically about civic issues and engagement.

SummerTrek engages youth in five service-learning processes throughout the six-week program: Investigation, Preparation and Planning, Action, Reflection, and Demonstration. These processes unfold to enhanced civic awareness of themselves, their school as community, their local communities, the United States, and the world in relationship to their selected theme. The final week of the program is dedicated to a public demonstration and celebration of their newly acquired knowledge and skills and resulting civic impact.

This project is currently being funded by the Walmart Foundation.

Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) is a nonprofit organization that facilitates the development of innovative, high-quality youth civic engagement programs and policies around the world. We believe that well-structured youth service programs can provide innovative solutions to social and environmental issues, while helping young people develop skills for future employment and active citizenship. ICP aims to build a world where young people in every nation are actively engaged in improving their lives and their communities through civic participation.

