



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Summer Learning Initiative Launching in Southeast Michigan

*Ballmer Group and United Way for Southeastern Michigan unveil Summer Discovery: a free learning initiative to bridge educational gaps for K-8 students
Application now open for sites looking to provide summer learning!*

DETROIT, MI – January 30, 2024 – United Way for Southeastern Michigan and Ballmer Group Philanthropy today introduced Summer Discovery. This innovative learning initiative is set to empower schools and students in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties by providing essential funding and support for instruction and enrichment activities tailored to qualifying K-8 students during the upcoming summer. United Way for Southeastern Michigan will offer the program to students and families at no cost.

"Ballmer Group is proud to invest in summer learning and exploration for students in Southeast Michigan," said Steve Ballmer, Co-Founder of Ballmer Group and Detroit native. "We know the importance of summer in maintaining students' progress and providing enrichment. We're supporting schools to offer opportunity to kids in Southeast Michigan who wouldn't have the same chances as kids in other parts of Michigan. The importance of access to opportunity cannot be overstated."

According to a recent survey conducted by United Way for Southeastern Michigan, 76% of parents and 82% of community leaders agree that there are not enough summer enrichment programs for students in the region, and 68% of parents cite transportation and cost as barriers to enrolling their children in the limited programs that are available.

"This investment in summer programming fills a long-standing gap in equal access to providing all children, regardless of zip code, with a safe learning environment over the summer," said Dr. Nikolai Vitti, Superintendent of Detroit Public Schools Community District. "DPSCD is grateful for this meaningful, thoughtful, and strategic investment in our Detroit families, students, and community."

Summer Discovery is a regional effort designed for students and families in Southeast Michigan, where many students need more access to learning and activity opportunities during the summer break. The program will offer enrichment activities that increase exposure and interest in careers, engage families, and provide fun learning experiences.

“We are thrilled to launch Summer Discovery with these amazing partners. Together, we're working to ensure that students in Southeastern Michigan have access to high-quality summer learning opportunities,” said Dr. Darienne Hudson, president and CEO of United Way for Southeastern Michigan. “These proven, effective, and engaging enrichment activities will help students maintain and grow their learning after the school year ends. Summer Discovery will prevent learning loss, close opportunity gaps, and foster a love of learning and a sense of belonging among our students.”

Ballmer Group has engaged Building Impact Partners and United Way for Southeastern Michigan to develop this program. Building Impact Partners (BI), a philanthropic advising organization that has successfully implemented and managed similar programs in [New York](#) and [Indiana](#), is leading the project. BI comes to this work with deep roots in supporting philanthropic partners through launching high-impact grantmaking initiatives and will provide project management and support for applicants throughout the process.

On January 30, interested schools are invited to apply. Schools across Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties may apply as a Summer Discovery site. All sites will have access to a math and English/language arts curriculum created by Lavinia Group that is aligned with Michigan state standards, teacher training, and other resources to successfully administer the program if the Lavinia curriculum is selected.

Grantees have the flexibility to create programs that resonate with the needs and interests of their students, teachers, and families. Sites that use the [Lavinia RISE curriculum](#) are eligible for teacher training resources. The grants, up to \$2,000 per student, can be used to introduce or enhance existing programs or reduce barriers such as transportation.

These guidelines are designed to ensure that each program funded by Summer Discovery enhances academic skills, fosters a love of learning, nurtures student interests, and provides a comprehensive summer experience that benefits both students and their families.

Interested schools can visit the [Summer Discovery website](#) for more details or to apply for this grant. The deadline to apply is **March 1, 2024**. Questions about the application or the Summer Discovery program can be directed to summerdiscoverymi@buildingimpact.co.

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About Ballmer Group

Ballmer Group is committed to improving economic mobility for children and families in the United States, funding leaders and organizations that have demonstrated the ability to reshape opportunity and reduce systemic inequities. They focus on multiple impact areas and systems that can impact economic mobility – such as early learning, K-12 education, college and career pathways, housing, behavioral health, and criminal justice

– and they support leaders and organizations that focus on undoing systemic racism and the barriers it has created. Ballmer Group is both a national and regional funder – they have a presence and invest deeply in southeast Michigan, Washington state, and Los Angeles County. Ballmer Group was co-founded by philanthropist Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft, founder of USAFacts, and chairman of the Los Angeles Clippers. Learn more at www.ballmergroup.org.

About Summer Discovery

Summer Discovery is a new summer learning initiative for students in grades K-8 in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. The initiative is funded by Ballmer Group and administered by United Way for Southeastern Michigan. It aims to provide high-quality instruction and enrichment activities to prevent summer learning loss and close opportunity gaps. The programs will also include meals, transportation, and other support services for students and families. For more information, visit summerdiscoverymi.org.

About United Way for Southeastern Michigan

United Way for Southeastern Michigan, a member of the United Way Worldwide network and an independently governed 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, works to help households become stable and ensure children have the support they need to thrive. For more than 100 years, United Way has been a leader in creating positive, measurable, and sustainable change in communities throughout southeast Michigan. To give, advocate, volunteer or learn more, visit UnitedWaySEM.org.

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