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## CPS offers expanded summer school

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Call it summer school, supercharged.

At 13 of Cincinnati's most persistently failing elementary schools, officials are aggressively courting students to attend the "Fifth Quarter" in June - an extra month of school after mandatory classes end Thursday.

Summer school has been a staple in Cincinnati Public Schools for years, but this year's program is substantially more ambitious. Most notably, the Fifth Quarter will be a full school day, expanding from mornings only.

Each school will be staffed only by teachers already assigned there during the regular year, and only be open to students already attending those schools. That's not usually the case in summer school.

District officials think the expanded June offering will help make up the difference between students who keep learning during the summer break - thanks to museums, camps and proactive parents - and those who don't.

"As we've looked at the data, and we're looking to close the achievement gap, the gap really occurs in the summer time," said William Myles, administrative officer for school improvement.

CPS will increase summer school spending by 64 percent over last year, up to \$2.3 million. The cost of the 13 "Fifth Quarter" sites is \$1.5 million, more than the entire cost of the traditional program last year. Regular federal aid for high-poverty schools covers the cost.

With Gov. Ted Strickland's proposal to extend mandatory classroom time by a month being criticized for being too costly, the district and its partners know it's not easy to simply expand the school year.

But it's not as expensive as one might think, said Darlene Kamine, a consultant for CPS that helps neighborhood nonprofit agencies coordinate with district schools.

Many of the support agencies that serve schoolchildren still operate in the summer, she said. For instance, the Cincinnati Health Department nurses who staff CPS schools are year-round employees anyway - and they often jump at the chance to do more health education work with the students, she said.

"There are lots of programs that are already being funded, that already have the staff, so wouldn't it make sense to do this with the support and the synergy of a school building?" Kamine said.

CPS expects a surge in student participation, with 2,239 students confirmed by Friday for the 13 schools, compared to 844 participants last year at those same buildings, spokeswoman Janet Walsh said. That's about 38 percent of the total elementary enrollment of the 13 schools.

Parents are excited, said Vanessa Nash, a parent of a second-grader at Rockdale Academy in

Avondale. They see little downside to more school time, they said.

"Go ahead and give your children the extra curriculum they might need, it's not going to hurt them," she said.

The day will be split in half, with the morning devoted to math and literacy skills - the two subjects that determine whether schools meet improvement goals under No Child Left Behind.

In the afternoon, the schools' outside partners will conduct less academic, more camp-like enrichment programs, such as nature lessons, tutoring and gardening, Kamine said.

CPS will know shortly after the beginning of the school year whether the strategy worked. Students begin taking practice standardized tests to establish a benchmark in late August. When compared with the official test scores from April, teachers will see whether they've made a dent in the traditional summer dropoff.

Traditional summer school programs will still be available at other CPS schools, Walsh said.

## Additional Facts

Fifth Quarter schools

Carson, Chase, Douglass, Hays-Porter, Oyler, John P. Parker, Pleasant Hill, Pleasant Ridge Montessori, Quebec Heights, Rockdale, Roll Hill, Taft Elementary and Ethel M. Taylor. For information or to sign up for Fifth Quarter, call CPS at (513) 363-0020.

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