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## **RESCHOOL Survey Finds Mix of In-Person and Online Summer Camps Open for Denver-Area Kids**

*More than half of camps created online options amidst uncertain future*

**DENVER (May 11, 2020)** – Despite significant hurdles and much uncertainty, summer providers are adapting to meet varying family needs. Approximately 65% of Denver area camp providers anticipate offering activities young people can participate in at-home or online during the summer months according to a recent informal survey of Denver area summer camp providers conducted by [RESCHOOL](#), a Colorado non-profit creating more equitable, expansive education systems. In its survey, RESCHOOL found that 75% of providers plan to offer in-person programming during the summer months in accordance with state guidance, though some anticipate this happening later in the summer. That said, with the COVID-19 pandemic evolving rapidly, more than a third of camp providers aren't ready to announce finalized plans for this summer.

Summer providers resource their programming in various ways, and many rely on registration and program fees from families to run. In its informal survey, RESCHOOL found that most camp providers made a variety of adjustments to their programming in order to adapt to recent [guidance from Governor Polis](#), provide options to families and keep their own doors open. More than 60% of summer camp providers surveyed will decrease the number of kids in each session, half will decrease their total in-person program sessions and one-third will decrease the length of individual classes or sessions. Several providers are offering free resources to families and some will offer full refunds to those who have already signed up for camps that are canceled, recognizing that families' financial situations continue to change. All of these changes impact the bottom line and future of providers. A quarter of providers surveyed reported applying their personal finances to keep their programs afloat. In transitioning their program to smaller group sizes, providers like [Thorne Nature Experience](#) will lose \$400,000 and be able to serve only 20% of the campers they typically do.

As the school year comes to a close for more than 900,000 Colorado children, and businesses begin to open, many parents who need to get back to work will be making tough decisions about care they are comfortable with for their kids and whether they can afford to sign up their children for an online or in-person summer camp. However, families found it was difficult to afford summer programming before COVID-19, and now many families are enduring additional financial hardships. Earlier this year (pre-pandemic), RESCHOOL conducted a statewide study with the [OMNI Institute](#) and found a quarter of parents surveyed reported spending more than they could afford on out-of-school learning. And, in another study, focused specifically on 2019 summer activities in the Denver Metro area, RESCHOOL and its partners at the [Center on Reinventing Public Education \(CRPE\)](#) found that 50% of available summer programs for kids over five cost more per hour than the minimum hourly wage, creating a difficult tradeoff for families earning low wages. Nearly half of participants in the OMNI study reported difficulties in finding programs that are affordable or include scholarships.

“Summer programs provide fun, engaging learning experiences and play a significant child care role for many families,” said Amy Anderson, Executive Director at RESCHOOL. “Camp providers are doing everything they can to pivot, provide quality programming options during this time, and keep costs low but they don't always have donations or other resources to cover

program expenses so they must charge participation fees. Without this revenue coming in, many providers will have no other option than to close their doors. It can be expensive to run a quality program – especially if you have to reduce the number of kids due to physical distancing. A week-long summer camp pre-COVID 19 could cost upwards of \$400 or more, particularly in the Denver Metro area. At this time, as kids are spending significant time out of school, perhaps even into and beyond this fall, we need to invest in a more expansive learning landscape of in- and out-of-school providers in order to ensure continuity of learning and prevent inequities.”

To help parents find learning experiences, RESCHOOL’s [Blueprint4SummerCO](#) website now provides an organized list of a variety of online classes, take-home kits and in-person summer activities for kids age 3-18 in the Denver Metro area. To date, the site lists more than 60 online and take-home summer program options and more than 250 online or in-person options that are either free or under \$100. The site is searchable by location, age, cost, interest area and more, which makes it easy for families to customize their search based on what matters to them. Arts, sports and academic activities were the most popular searches in 2019. The site is also free for providers to upload their information.

Some examples of camp providers adapting to the “new normal” during this time include:

- [The Art Garage](#) created a blog and YouTube channel with free lessons and ideas for projects from instructors, all of which can be accessed anytime. Families can pick up home activity kits free of charge. Donations are suggested.
- [Thorne Nature Experience](#) is working with social service organizations in Boulder County to provide nature activity kits to over 540 low-income families to empower safe access to the benefits of nature. Thorne has also been creating and sharing free nature at-home activities in English and Spanish for parents through their [Outside Everyday Challenge](#), as well as nature lessons for teachers that meet Colorado state science standards for grades 1-5.
- [Avid4Adventure](#) has shifted its traditional day camps to small group adventures (no more than 5 kids). Families can make a “private group” just for their child and known friends and family or join an open group and meet new kids their age. They also have a “Camp at Home” option where parents create their own group and an Avid instructor brings camp to your location utilizing home and nearby spaces. Finally, they have an online camp option where different age groups participate in 4 hours of daily engagement.
- [Scholars Unlimited](#) created a YouTube channel, provides weekly newsletters with activities and resources, and conducts weekly phone calls to families to check-in.

Over the last few years, RESCHOOL has distributed over \$100,000 in scholarships for out of school programming. In light of COVID-19, RESCHOOL is re-prioritizing its budget to also support learning providers as they adapt their programming due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Families interested in camps and activities for Summer 2020 can visit [Blueprint4SummerCO](#) at [www.blueprint4.com/co](http://www.blueprint4.com/co) to start a summer activity search, learn about programs, sign up for a free user account to save search results and access other features and can connect with [Blueprint4SummerCO](#) via [email](#), on [Facebook](#) or follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

### **About RESCHOOL**

[RESCHOOL](#) started in 2013 as an initiative of the Denver-based Donnell-Kay Foundation and became an independent nonprofit organization in 2018. RESCHOOL partners with families to surface their educational interests and goals, navigate learning opportunities, within and beyond school, and co-design new concepts, resulting in the creation of more expansive, equitable education systems. RESCHOOL’s primary focus is on learning outside of school, especially for

those who historically haven't had access to these opportunities, because 75% of a young person's waking hours each year are spent outside of school. RESCHOOL's ultimate vision is to have an education system in Colorado that validates relevant learning that happens in many places and spaces. Blueprint4SummerCO is one tool that is part of RESCHOOL's broader efforts to modernize our education system and better support families in navigating complex systems of learning.

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