

Summer School Strategy Guide

Introduction of Strategy

In this guide, we define Summer School as a voluntary summer learning experience for targeted students that provides daily literacy and math instruction for at least three hours each day over at least five weeks during non-school months in the summer. This definition does not include sending work home with students to do during summer months without direct instruction, such as summer reading programs or projects.

Research has shown that the following components support summer learning opportunities that have a statistically significant positive impact on student achievement. It is important to note that while there is evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of each component (see research following each component), these components are most effective when implemented together. The following components are derived from various articles and research that articulate what effective summer programming should include:

1. **Early Planning**
 2. **Policies to Maximize Participation and Attendance**
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Evidence Base

ESSA defines levels of research based on the quality of the study (Levels 1-4). CDE requires that schools and districts identify the research base for strategies that they select for their Unified Improvement Plans, and for applications for school improvement funds in the EASI application.

The research on summer school/learning opportunities that is cited here meets the definition of Level 3 research. The research cited focused on the impact on student achievement when all summer learning components were implemented. In addition, substantial research meeting levels 1-4 have been completed that found that when implemented to a high level, summer learning opportunities had an impact on student achievement.

Considerations

Possible Root Causes include inadequate, inconsistent or ineffective...

- Need for additional Interventions
- Student experiences

- Student preparation
- Inability to cover all standards during the school year

Is this strategy a good fit for your district/school?

- Does this major improvement strategy focus on a priority performance challenge and associated root cause(s)?
- Are the expected outcomes of this major improvement strategy highly valued?
- Do key leaders support this major improvement strategy? Do key leaders have the capacity to lead the strategy ongoing?
- What are the skills and competencies needed to implement this major improvement strategy with fidelity? What support/professional development do staff members need to implement this strategy effectively?
- Are the time, effort and resources needed for implementation feasible for the staff involved?

Considerations for Strategy Implementation

- Is there district and community support for evidence-based summer learning opportunities?
- Is there time to plan for high quality, evidence-based summer programming?
- Are there competing family, community, school and/or district demands that will lessen the effectiveness of summer learning opportunities?
- Are there teachers and administrators available and willing to provide summer learning opportunities?
- Is funding available to support summer learning?
- Is the purpose of summer learning clear and aligned to student needs?

Implementation Guide

Core Component 1: Early Planning (ideally begin by December)

Elements	Description
Establish Vision and Infrastructure	Ensure that there is a clearly articulated purpose for summer learning that connects to the school’s vision and mission. Decide which students summer programming will serve paying particular attention to demonstrated student needs and students that do not typically access educational experiences during summer months. Establish goals for summer learning that are tied to learning and school-year metrics, such as fall assessments. Recruit staff members and community partners who are willing and able to participate.

Determine Logistics	Summer learning has increased impacts on student achievement when there are at least five weeks, and preferably six weeks, of daily instruction, as well as class sizes of 20 students or less (15 or less is preferable). Students should receive two hours of teacher-directed instruction in literacy, blended between whole group and small group (3-5 students) instruction each day. Students should receive 60-90 minutes of math instruction each day. Summer learning opportunities should occur in a positive, orderly school culture that minimizes bullying, fighting and other negative student interactions.
High Quality Instruction	Curricula used should be evidence-based and aligned to school-year activities and student needs. Summer teachers should tie instruction to students' learning goals. Administrators or coaches should support instruction through teacher professional development and coaching. Strong efforts should be made to maintain regular schedules, maximize instructional time and encourage time on task.
Qualified Teachers	Teachers selected to teach summer learning should be motivated and have high school-year performance. Teachers should teach a grade level that they teach during the school year, or the grade level immediately below the grade level they teach during the school year.

Core Component 2: Policies to Maximize Participation and Attendance

Elements	Description
Recruitment	Intensive recruiting efforts should occur early. Ensure that there is an easy registration process, and families are notified about dates as early as possible. Ensure that there are clear attendance policies that are communicated with registration and recruitment. Make sure that there is a clearly communicated enrollment deadline.
Strategies to Maximize Participation	<p>Positive effects on student achievement occur when students participate in at least 25 hours of daily math instruction and 34 hours of daily ELA instruction.</p> <p>In order to maximize participation and attendance during summer learning experiences, ensure that summer learning experiences involve frequent peer interaction, youth voice, and a supportive environment where youth are actively learning, encouraging, reframing conflict and socially and emotionally safe. Focus on building relationships between peers and adults. Consider including activities that focus on supporting youth understanding of current events and social-emotional learning activities.</p>

Consider including frequent engagement activities such as field trips and/or enrichment experiences. Providing increased time outside the school building may also increase engagement, including increased time and activities outside for instruction and academic activities.

Partnerships with community agencies may be able to support frequent and engaging enrichment experiences.

Services such as nutrition, healthcare and mental health support should be included as part of the summer learning experience. Consider providing summer learning opportunities free of charge, as well as providing free transportation, free meals and day-long programming options using school resources or community partnerships.

Schools should also consider sustainability of summer programming in order to encourage consecutive summers of participation for students. Two or three summers in a row is recommended to sustain and increase the positive impact on student achievement.

Academic Studies Leading to ESSA Rating

Augustine, C. H., McCombs, J. S., Pane, J. F., Schwartz, H. L., Schweig, J., McEachin, A., & Siler-Evans, K. (2016). *Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Urban Youth. RAND Summer Learning Series. Research Report. RR-1557-WF.* RAND Corporation. PO Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138.

Browne, D. (2019). *Summer: A Time for Learning. Five Lessons from School Districts and Their Partners about Running Successful Programs.* Perspective. Wallace Foundation.

Gunderson, J., Zahn, L., & Wade-Mdivanian, R.L. (2021). *2021 California Summer Learning Guide: Investing in Resilience and Relationships. Partnership for Children and Youth and National Summer Learning Association.*

McCombs, J. S., Augustine, C. H., Pane, J. F., & Schweig, J. (2020). *Every Summer Counts.*

McEachin, A., Augustine, C. H., & McCombs, J. (2018). *Effective Summer Programming: What Educators and Policymakers Should Know. American Educator, 42(1), 10.*

National Summer Learning Association. (2020). *Summer Learning: A Bridge to Student Success and America's Recovery, A Covid-19 Playbook.* <https://www.summerlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Summer-Learning-2020-Playbook-1.pdf>

Pitcock, S. (2018). *The Case for Summer Learning: Why Supporting Students and Families All Year Is Vitally Important. American Educator, 42(1), 4.*