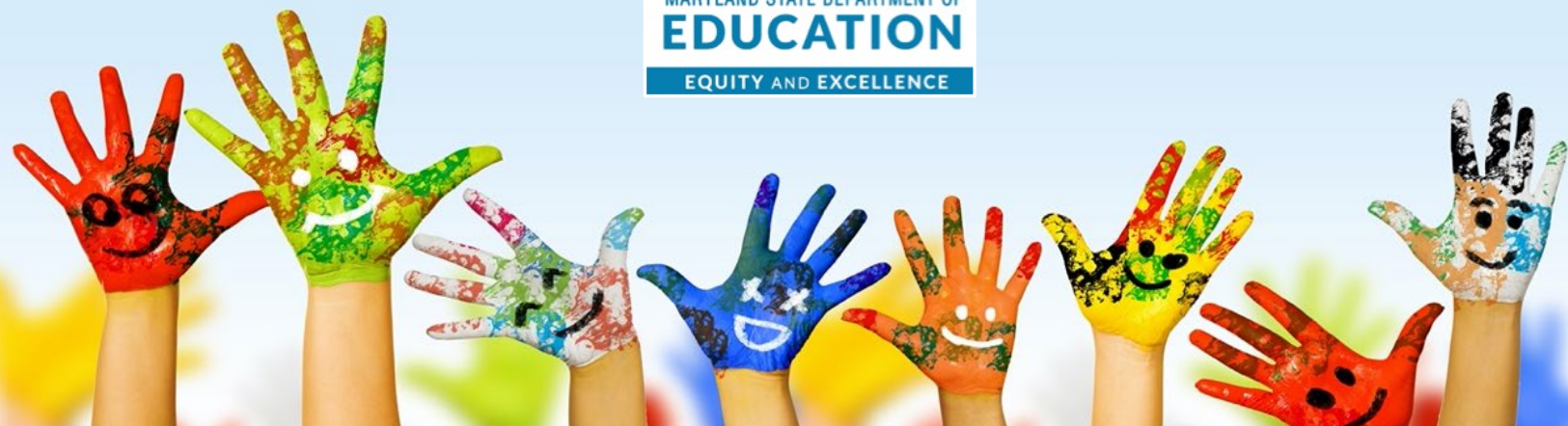


SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

GUIDANCE TO MARYLAND LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS



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SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

Guidance to Maryland Local School Systems

Introduction

The effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on student learning are significant. Educators must explore creative ways to address these effects by finding ways to provide opportunities for student learning experiences in addition to those provided during the traditional school day. One such avenue that should be leveraged is to make use of time during the summer to provide Summer Learning Programming. Matthew Boulay, Founder of the National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) states:

“Summer learning is not summer school. In fact, the most successful summer experiences often feel as different from formal schooling as possible. They provide the freedom for students to explore new ideas, new interests and new activities in ways that can be difficult to do during the constraints of regular schooling.”

The NSLA publication [Summer Learning : A Bridge to Student Success and America’s Recovery , a COVID-19 Playbook](#) is a resource that can be used to support some of these activities. Educators may consider this statement along with other information provided in this document as they plan Summer Learning for 2021.

Vision for Summer Learning 2021

Summer is traditionally a break for students from the work of the school year; however, the 2020-2021 school year has proven to be a challenge for students in maintaining expected learning. As a result, summer learning programs should be available for students to provide enrichment and learning opportunities while centering on promoting health, wellness, and a love of learning. These learning opportunities will prepare students for returning to in-person learning, ready for the challenges of grade level standards, and a revised model of what school can and will be. Summer Learning is a time to re-establish or build relationships with school leaders, teachers, and with other students. Above all, summer learning should focus on learning and growing and not be viewed as a punishment for incomplete online work during the school year. While all students will benefit from summer learning programs designed to engage, invigorate, and enhance student learning, the programs will be especially beneficial to students who have been underserved due to socio economic hardships, language barriers, and specialized learning needs to name a few. Learning and building relationships will be best served by in-person work; however, a virtual option should continue to be made available to students and parents who are not comfortable being in the school building at this time.

Goals and Outcomes

1. **Focus on equity.** Summer learning experiences have the potential to respond to the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and COVID-19 response efforts on historically underserved communities and those for whom existing systems most marginalize.
2. **Ensure mental health and well-being.** Summer programs can provide students the opportunity to focus on character development, behavioral intervention, and mental health and well-being. This can provide students with important skills to address the trauma and stress they faced this past school year, and it will better prepare them for academic instruction this fall.
3. **Build relationships.** Summer programs are uniquely able to assist students to build relationships among their peers and with educators and school personnel. It is a less structured time that may make their transition back into the school building less stressful. Activities and strategies for learning should be based on student, teachers, and community collaboration.
4. **Engage students in authentic learning experiences.** Summer programs can allow students the time to focus on project-based learning experiences that involve real-world problems and are relevant to the learner, especially with a summer camp-like character.
5. **Determine academic needs of students.** Summer programs can be utilized to mitigate learning disruptions from the 20-21 school year; however, this should be done through authentic learning experiences.
6. **Be creative.** Summer programs can be an opportunity to try something new and creative, to test new instructional strategies, and rethink the learning environment.
7. **Increase college and career readiness.** Summer programs can be used to prepare high school students for college entrance exams, industry credential exams, and career entry. Additionally, students can build resumes, work on the college application process, or engage in work-based learning experiences.

Summer Learning Delivery Methods

While face-to-face learning experiences are most desirable, if circumstances within a LSS make providing such summer learning options undesirable, the document provided by CCSSO entitled [CCSSO Virtual Summer School State Guidance for District and School Leaders](#) outlines best practices for virtual summer learning programs.

Summer Learning Program Types

1. **Credit Recovery:** Summer Learning programs have a long history of including opportunities for students who need credit-recovery. With the increase in the availability of technology, innovative opportunities for offering credit-recovery programs now exist. Promising practices for credit recovery are outlined in an article by

Steven D'Augstino entitled [Providing Innovative Opportunities and Options for Credit Recovery Through Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs](#).

2. **Tutoring Programs:** Consider including tutoring programs as part of a well-designed summer learning experience that reflects the research on the delivery of summer learning, such as project-based learning and a summer camp-type atmosphere. Research has shown that students who are behind in grade level content can benefit from well-designed tutoring programs. Consider some of the design principles for effective tutoring as outlined by EdResearch for Recovery in *Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosage Tutoring* (brown.edu). These include:
 - a. Delivery in high doses at least three or more times a week with group sizes up to three students;
 - b. Tutors may include volunteers and college students who receive training and support;
 - c. Ongoing informal assessments for individualizing support to students;
 - d. Evidence-based materials that support classroom instruction; and
 - e. Support those students who most need personalized instruction, but not create a negative stigma where tutoring is perceived as a stigma.

3. **Acceleration (Vacation) Academies:** Summer Learning programs may include Acceleration Academies that are designed to address academic learning loss and may include credit recovery. These are being expanded across the country. Acceleration Academies, as part of summer learning programs should reflect the research on the delivery of summer learning, such as project-based learning and a summer camp-type atmosphere. Effective practices include:
 - a. Small groups of students of no more than 10 students;
 - b. Taught or monitored by a certified teacher;
 - c. Uses evidence-based practices and materials; and
 - d. May be delivered online and face-to-face at the same time.

4. **Summer Programs to Support Mental Health and Well-Being:** All students will benefit from summer learning that emphasizes collaboration and creative opportunities. These programs should include opportunities for music, visual arts, movement/ dance, nature programs, journaling, and project based learning.

5. **Summer Bridge or Transition Programs:** Students who are transitioning between schools can benefit from a program to assist with that transition (Prekindergarten/Kindergarten, Fifth/ Sixth, Eighth/ Ninth). This can include opportunities to familiarize students to the new environment, focus on academic and behavioral skills, and study habits. [Building Effective Summer Bridge Programs](#) by Hanover Research outlines some tips to consider when building such programs.

6. **Programs for Students with Disabilities:** Local school systems and public agencies are required to provide students with disabilities a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Summer programming that addresses a student's FAPE needs may include Extended School Year

(ESY) services and/or compensatory education/recovery services. ESY services are the individualized extension of specific special education and/or related services that are provided beyond the normal school year, in accordance with the IEP. Compensatory education/recovery services are designed to address the loss of a FAPE stemming from the extended school closures. ESY and compensatory education/recovery services may include tutoring, skill-focused summer school programs, etc.

7. **Programs for English Learners (ELs):** Students who are English learners may benefit from summer programs. Consider offering programs to ELs designed to enhance their academic language skills through the content of Social Studies, Science, Math, STEM or English Language Arts. It is also important to consider the needs of newcomer ELs and ELs who may have limited or interrupted education. These groups of English learners may benefit from programs designed to develop social language skills, academic language skills and/or literacy skills. Additionally, it may benefit high school EL students to have the opportunity to earn credit for summer programs or to have opportunities to recover credit. EL Summer Programs should be designed so that English learners are utilizing the four domains of language: reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
8. **Programs for Career and Technical Education (CTE) Students:** Opportunities must be provided for students in CTE to engage in work-based learning experiences, prepare for industry credential exams, earn hours required for industry credentials, or provide opportunities for students to develop technical skills and explore career programs. CTE summer programs must be facilitated in-person to provide students opportunities to work with tools of their trade on clients and in small groups with their peers.

Strategies/ Best Practices

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

In project-based learning, teachers make learning come alive for students. Students work on a project over an extended period of time – from a week up to a month – that engages them in solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question, which would be guided by student interest. Based on a student’s interest, he/she can demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a public product or presentation for a real audience. These projects can be planned by an interested teacher who will also lead the summer learning. Project-Based Learning allows students to work on topics of interest to them, that are engaging, and unique, and with teacher input, the projects can align with the MCCRS. As a result, students develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills. Project-Based Learning unleashes a contagious, creative energy among students and teachers.

- **Involve the community.** Consider local businesses or colleges/universities as a partner this summer. Can they provide tutors or mentors? Involve high school students in enrichment activities for younger students. Small groups of students can be offered field trips into their community to provide service and learn more about their area.

- **Encourage attendance.** Students must be in attendance to learn and grow. Find creative ways to encourage students to want to learn. Try not to use the traditional approaches to learning. Consider the climate and relationships between faculty and students. Developing good attendance habits begins with Prekindergarten and Kindergarten students and their families. Attendance Works has developed a series of resources and webinars for Maryland schools' use (see resource list).
- **Be realistic about results.** Consider how much schools/ districts can realistically expect from a summer program. What goals are most important to ensure student success as they enter the next school year? Consider your end of the year data and student surveys about this school year. Avoid difficult to implement programs and mandates. Pre-Kindergarten ELA and Mathematics priority standards have been identified and shared with Early Learning Supervisors to guide summer learning programs.
- **Evaluate your programs.** Collect data on the implementation and outcomes of your summer programs, and compare that data with the program goals.

While the Maryland State Department of Education does not require a particular form of program evaluation, the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future \(2021\)](#) states that local school systems "shall establish and implement a summer school program for public school students...to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education that...administers an educational assessment to each student in the program prior to beginning the program and on completion of the program; and evaluates the effectiveness of the summer school program at the conclusion of each year" (HB1372, Section 4(a)). These assessments can be used to evaluate program outcomes.

Further, the Blueprint for Maryland's future requires that school systems report on a number of elements **to the Legislative Policy Committee of the General Assembly** (and **not** to the Maryland State Department of Education) (HB1372, Section 4(c)).

Specifically, "On or before January 1, 2022, and January 1, 2023, each county board of education, including Baltimore City, shall report...to the Legislative Policy Committee of the General Assembly on the county board's implementation of the summer school program in that year, including:

- (1) how many students the county board served through the program;
- (2) the structure of the program, including the number of hours of instruction provided each day, how instruction was delivered to students, and the partnerships established to enhance the summer school program;
- (3) the method the county board used to identify students with the greatest learning loss;
- (4) the budget and expenditures for the program; and
- (5) the outcomes of the program for students, including academic progress and other outcomes."

In order to fulfill these requirements, systems should create a plan to collect the necessary data prior to the start of any summer programming. The data can then be collected and analyzed. Data collection can be quantitative or qualitative, and might answer some or all of the following implementation and outcome questions.

Implementation Questions

- How many days per week and/or hours per day was programming offered? How does that compare to the time the program was meant to be offered?
- Were teachers/instructors provided with training, and how many days or hours? How does that compare with the training that was planned or needed?
- What instructional or other program materials available, and were they available on the timeline needed?
- How many students participated? How many students did your system intend to participate? If the program was under-enrolled and/or targeted students chose not to participate, what reasons did students have for choosing to not participate?
- What was the attendance of participants? Were there any differences in attendance across student groups, for example by race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, or English learner status?
- Were instructors implementing the program as it was intended?

Outcome Questions

- How did student outcomes change from the beginning to the end of the program? Conduct the same assessment immediately before and after the program, and compare the results. (Outcomes may be related to student learning, social/emotional health, or whatever your system is choosing to address with its summer programming.)
- How did the outcomes of participants differ from students who did not participate? Compare outcomes between otherwise similar groups of students, for example looking at the entire group of students who were eligible for the programming and comparing those who participated with those who didn't.

Please contact the Maryland State Department of Education, Office of Research, if your system would like technical support or direct assistance at any stage in the evaluation process: planning for data collection, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and/or reporting.

- **Partner with families.** Give families resources and specific suggestions and strategies to support their children's learning. Make sure programs are convenient for family schedules. Make programs free for students including transportation and meals.
- **Research best practices.** Past research on summer learning programs, not aimed at credit-recovery, shows that effective programs have certain common elements. While Summer Learning Programs being designed to help target the impact of the COVID-19

Pandemic on learning may look a little different from those targeted in the research, LSSs may still try to embed program elements shown to be effective into their summer programs. According to a [RAND publication](#) commissioned by the Wallace Foundation high-quality summer learning programs include the following elements.

1. Highly qualified and specially trained staff, along with early planning that engages partners with clearly delineated roles;
2. Smaller class sizes, individualized instruction, and sufficient time on task (operating the program for at least five weeks, with three to four hours of academics per day);
3. Involving families and maximizing student attendance with firm enrollment deadlines, clear attendance policies, and electronic student records;
4. Strategic use of partnerships;
5. Using evidence-based, commercially available curricula and standardizing its use across sites
6. Providing carefully planned, engaging enrichment activities;
7. Voluntary, full-day programming that included academic instruction and enrichment activities (the latter mainly provided by community partners) for five days per week for no less than five weeks of the summer;
8. At least three hours of (engaging and inspiring) language arts and mathematics instruction per day provided by a certified teacher;
9. No fees to families for participation; and
10. Free transportation and meals.

Resources

[ED Covid 19 Handbook](#) (USDE, 2021)

[National Summer Learning Association \(NSLA\)](#)

- [Summer Bootcamp Resources - Summer Learning](#)

[CCSSO Summer Learning 2021 \(flowpaper.com\)](#) (CCSSO April 2021)

[Strategies and Considerations When Designing for Summer Learning](#) (Getting Smart, April 2021)

[PROOF POINTS: Slim research evidence for summer school](#) (Hechinger Report, March - 2021)

[Top Considerations for Your Summer School Program](#) (Apex Learning, February 2021)

[Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond](#) (Learning Policy Institute, August 2020)

[Summer Learning: A Bridge to Student Success and America's Recovery, a COVID-19 PLAYBOOK](#) (National Summer Learning Association, August 2020)

[Investing in Successful Summer Programs](#) (RAND Corporation, 2019)

[Getting to Work on Summer Learning](#) (RAND Corporation, 2018)

- [Summer Learning Toolkit Evidence-based tools and guidance for delivering effective programs](#) (The Wallace Foundation)

[Why Summers Matter Summer Learning Brief - Summer Learning](#) (National Summer Learning Association, 2017)

[What Keeps Kids Engaged in Summer Learning?](#) (National Summer Learning Association, 2019)
[Home - Attendance Works](#)

