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*The Promise of Summer as a Time for
Teacher Professional Development:*
Companion Guide

Introduction

In the study, *The Promise of Summer as a Time for Teacher Professional Learning*, researchers examined how summer is being used and can be used for teacher professional development (PD) in a way that differs from traditional PD throughout the school year. The study found that teachers taking part in academic summer programs were exposed to opportunities for developmental feedback, most often through observation and subsequent real-time coaching. These teachers reported that the practices they learned helped them to improve in certain areas of classroom practice during the school year. This experience however, is uncommon. On the heels of a year when teachers lost out on professional learning during the pandemic, this study explores ways that summer programs can create supportive PD environments where teachers can experiment with new strategies and receive feedback, with impact that continues throughout the school-year.

This guide helps practitioners identify and apply evidence and insights
from the study to ensure meaningful and high-quality summer PD.

Turn Evidence into Action

Summer programs often combine many learning and enrichment experiences, including instructional remediation, social and emotional learning, sports, field trips, extracurricular activities, and teachers taking on slightly different roles. While still functioning as lead instructors, teachers also become mentors, play leaders, and co-investigators as they learn next to students and help them interpret their learning experiences. In this way, teachers have valuable opportunities to connect with students and families in new ways while improving their own instructional practice. Schools and districts can utilize this time to provide meaningful and substantive professional learning that can impact the entire academic year.

1. **Schools and districts should consider capitalizing on academic summer programs as a time for teachers' professional learning.**

    While many teachers take advantage of needed downtime away from school during the summer, approximately 25% are on campus and working. Academic summer programs offer a unique opportunity for teachers to participate in professional learning. Research has shown that the best PD is timely, job-embedded, ongoing, and can be put to use immediately. Summer programs provide a "learning lab" for teachers to put their professional learning into action. Teachers who participate in summer programs are not only more likely to participate in PD, but they are also more likely to receive coaching and constructive, developmental feedback. In order to take full advantage of this opportunity, districts should make professional learning part of their daily summer program in the following ways:

1. **Weekly professional learning themes.** Focus each week on one component of a larger program goal. For example, if developing a growth mindset in youth is a priority for the program, week 1 of PD could focus on how best to integrate growth mindset language into daily lessons and activities.

2. **Daily community debriefs.** Since summer programs are short in duration, daily debriefs are an important part of continuous improvement, to adjust the program for the next day. Debriefs are an opportunity for teachers to work collaboratively and as a professional learning community to learn from one another while best meeting student needs.

3. **Instructional coaching.** As teachers implement their new learning daily, instructional coaches have the opportunity to give direct and strategic developmental feedback that can be put to use immediately.

2. **Create environments that are low-pressure, positive, and supportive to enhance teachers' professional learning.**

   While the school year is fast-paced, curriculum and testing driven, and stressful, the summer tends to be a lower-pressure environment. It provides opportunities for teachers to experiment, try on new hats, and be seen in a different light by students and their families. To make the most of professional learning during the summer, schools and districts can:

   A. **Design and implement learning opportunities that offer a blend of academic and enrichment activities.** When teachers have the opportunity to teach and/or participate in both academics and enrichment, they can experiment with different approaches to instruction and areas of interest, and often become learners alongside the students they serve.

   B. **Provide ongoing coaching.** As teachers implement their new professional learning daily, coaches can observe and provide feedback. Daily adjustments to instructions can be made and put into practice the next day.

   C. **Provide a supportive environment.** Districts can be supportive to teachers by creating an environment where teachers are encouraged to experiment, have fun, prioritize relationships with students, and make connections to real world situations. Making sure teachers have the tools and supplies they need is another form of district support.

3. **Prioritize student-centered teaching practices—particularly strategies to support students' SEL and positive behavior management.**

   As teachers adjust practice for summer learning, they have the chance to make connections with students in a new and different way. They can be seen as learners and as explorers. They can propose questions and listen intently to students. They can follow the lead of students, choose to dive deeper into a finding from an experiment and let the students own the learning. These practices create a more student-centered environment, which in turn creates an environment that is much more conducive to the social and emotional learning of students. To create more student-centered environments schools, districts and teachers can:

A. **Survey and talk to students about their interests.** Student voice is a key to effective student-centered environments. When students feel that they are heard, they can become more engaged and have fewer behavioral issues.

B. **Build in opportunities for students to make choices in their learning.** When students can make choices about their learning, they are practicing decision making in a safe environment. They feel a part of the process and have more ownership of that learning.

C. **Practice relationship skills through discussion and questioning.** Asking probing, open-ended questions lets students talk about and process what they are thinking and feeling. These talks also allow teachers to connect as caring adults.

Ultimately, the summer is a time to learn, practice, experiment, and share knowledge for both students and teachers. It is a timely opportunity for schools and districts to offer their teaching staff ongoing learning supported by feedback and coaching.

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Professional Development Planning Tool

Quality professional development (PD) is integral to creating positive changes in educator practice and ultimately in providing sustained growth in student outcomes. The Learning Policy Institute has identified key elements to effective professional development, which include[1]:

Content focused: Is the PD clearly focused on the discipline to be taught?

Active learning: Does the PD provide authentic opportunities for participants to engage actively with the materials and the subject matter?

Supports collaboration: Are there opportunities for staff to collaborate and share professional learning?

Provides coaching and support: Is coaching available to provide expertise on evidence-based practices?

Sustained duration: Is there adequate time scheduled for teachers to learn, practice, implement, and reflect on their learning?

In designing PD, it is important to allow adequate time to practice instructional delivery and to adapt lessons and materials for any needed educational modifications for specific populations. The amount of time devoted to instructional practice will vary by how familiar staff are with the content. It is typical for summer programs to offer 16+ hours of PD prior to program launch, with additional ongoing opportunities throughout the summer.

Possible topics for PD can include:

Leadership & Administrative Staff	Instructional Staff
• Program Leadership Roles and Responsibilities • Program Culture and Climate • Program Planning, Budgeting, and Sustainability • Staff Recruitment and Hiring • Student Recruitment and Management • Family and Caregiver Engagement • Assessment and Evaluation • Quality and Continuous Improvement	• Creating a Positive Culture and Climate • Assessment and Evaluation • Instructional Practices & Engagement Strategies • Summer Curriculum • Enrichment • Positive Behavior Management • Family and Caregiver Engagement • Social and Emotional Learning

The following tables and exercises will help you to align your professional development opportunities to the goals of your program, as well as help determine new strategies, techniques, and skills you would like to further develop with your staff:

Step 1 – Aligning Program and Professional Development Goals

In order to achieve your summer program goals, staff need effective and meaningful professional development opportunities. Use the table below to map how your overall program goals align to your professional development goals and objectives, and what challenges and opportunities may arise over the course of the professional development process.

What are the Program Goals?	Why are these goals important?	What PD objectives are required to meet these goals?	What resources are required to meet these goals?	What challenges need to be overcome?	What opportunities might arise?
Example: Strengthen growth mindset and attitude toward learning	After a year of remote learning, mental health and social emotional needs are more important than ever	• Understand SEL focus areas for the summer program • Apply student-centered practices • Recognize the importance of SEL and mindset in academic achievement • Develop context for how/when to apply SEL and mindset strategies	• SEL Framework • Techniques and strategies to target SEL skills and improve mindsets • SEL pre/post assessment	• Creating buy-in for SEL practices • Supporting staff in changing their own mindsets • Staff burnout and need for self-care	• Improved mental health of staff as they gain new skills • Greater buy-in for SEL and the importance of integrating into academics • Teachers integrate these practices into the school year
1.					
2.					
3.					

Step 2 - Considering Summer as a Unique Environment

As you plan your summer PD, take a moment to reflect on these questions. Consider what takes place during the school year that aligns to and/or could support your summer program goals, and where there are opportunities to make the summer program unique, with its own culture, rituals, and routines.

- *What systems, processes, and/or procedures used in the school year would benefit and could be continued into the summer program?*
- *What systems, processes, and/or procedures will be unique to summer?*
- *What instructional strategies, techniques, and/or experiences emphasized during the school year should continue into the summer program?*
- *What new instructional strategies, techniques, and/or experiences should be emphasized and integrated into the summer program?*
- *How might summer be used to develop new skills, mindsets or resources that could be carried over into the school year?*

Use the table below to help organize your thoughts:

School Year & Summer Program Reflection	Keep from School Year	Summer to Summer Program	Skills to Develop and/or Resources Needed
Systems, Processes & Procedures	**Example:** Attendance system	**Example:** Pick-up and Drop-off procedures	**Example:** Duty schedule to be reviewed during professional development
Instructional Strategies, Techniques, and/or Experiences	**Example:** Positive behavior management strategies	**Example:** Small-group, center-based instruction	**Example:** Grouping students based on data and activity objectives

Step 3 – Outlining Professional Development Experiences

It is important to understand what is available to support you in implementing PD for the summer program, as well as any constraints or parameters you need to work within. Take a moment to consider the following:

Dosage	1. What are the total number of days/hours staff can dedicate to PD? 2. Does this differ by staff role?
Budget	1. What funds have been allocated for PD? 2. How are staff being compensated (hourly or stipend)? 3. Does compensation differ by staff role?
Resources	1. What resources can be leveraged to support PD (i.e. facilities, district laptops)? 2. What resources are needed to support PD? Do these resources require funding?

Explore each of the goals and topics you identified in the previous step. Determine how you will provide the required PD and the amount of capacity and resources to allocated for each topic.

What are the goals/ topics for PD?	What type of PD is required (check all that apply)?	Who is the PD for (check all that apply)?	# of hours needed to cover this topic	Who will provide the PD?	When does the PD need to take place?
Example: Differentiated and data-driven instruction	☐ Asynchronous ☐ Distance/Remote ☐ In-person ☐ Other (specify) _____	☐ Leadership/Admin ☐ Academic ☐ Enrichment ☐ Support (e.g. custodial) ☐ Other (specify) _____	1 hour	Summer Instructional Coach	1 week prior to program launch
1.	☐ Asynchronous ☐ Distance/Remote ☐ In-person ☐ Other (specify) _____	☐ Leadership/Admin ☐ Academic ☐ Enrichment ☐ Support (e.g. custodial) ☐ Other (specify) _____			
2.	☐ Asynchronous ☐ Distance/Remote ☐ In-person ☐ Other (specify) _____	☐ Leadership/Admin ☐ Academic ☐ Enrichment ☐ Support (e.g. custodial) ☐ Other (specify) _____			
3.	☐ Asynchronous ☐ Distance/Remote ☐ In-person ☐ Other (specify) _____	☐ Leadership/Admin ☐ Academic ☐ Enrichment ☐ Support (e.g. custodial) ☐ Other (specify) _____			
4.	☐ Asynchronous ☐ Distance/Remote ☐ In-person ☐ Other (specify) _____	☐ Leadership/Admin ☐ Academic ☐ Enrichment ☐ Support (e.g. custodial) ☐ Other (specify) _____			
5.	☐ Asynchronous ☐ Distance/Remote ☐ In-person ☐ Other (specify) _____	☐ Leadership/Admin ☐ Academic ☐ Enrichment ☐ Support (e.g. custodial) ☐ Other (specify) _____			

Step 4 – Ongoing Opportunities to Learn and Grow

Research has shown that teacher professional development experiences coupled with opportunities to collaborate, plan, as well as receive ongoing coaching and developmental feedback increases the probability that the skills, techniques, and strategies learned will translate into school year practices.

Use the table below to explore how you will provide ongoing opportunities to staff over the course of the summer program to increase the likelihood that skills will be sustained.

Timing	Collaboration & Planning	Professional Development	Coaching & Development Feedback
Example:	Academic teachers have 30 minutes of collaborative planning time daily during student lunch	• Week 1 weekly PD will be a recorded webinar on creating a positive climate and culture	• Summer Instructional Coach provides feedback on Week 1 lesson plans Thursday before program launch • Summer Instructional Coach will observe all academic teachers Week 1 to provide feedback on climate and culture
Week 1			
Week 2			
Week 3			
Week 4			
Week 5			
Week 6			

Professional Development Checklist

In order to provide a successful and impactful professional development experience, there are some recommended materials, tools, and activities to have in place. The table below highlights some of these common tools and practices.

Use this table to determine who is responsible to develop each suggested tool and/or oversee the suggested activity, as well as add any resources or logistical needs based on your specific program and professional development goals.

Item	Responsible Party	Due Date	Other Considerations
Summary Program Handbook			
PD Calendar			
Staff Survey Pre-PD			
Staff Survey Post-PD			
PD Content (e.g. PPTs and facilitator guides)			
Materials needed for PD (e.g. summer curriculum samples)			
PD Logistics &Communications (e.g. Zoom links & calendar invitations)			