



Design Principles in Practice

Summer Learning Series

Summer Learning Program Profiles

*Advancing Student Learning and Opportunity through
Voluntary Academic Summer Learning Programs*

Academic summer learning programs can lead to improved student achievement, but effectiveness is not guaranteed. Certain program elements, such as duration, attendance, use of time, and quality of instruction, appear to be key factors in programs that show stronger academic benefits. But, as helpful as [evidence-based design principles](#) are, using research to inform programs that maximize academic growth and social-emotional outcomes is a complicated process. Even once researchers have identified likely drivers of effectiveness across programs, these design principles often cannot be easily replicated across districts with varying contexts and goals.

This series of program profiles provides a glimpse into how different districts in Rhode Island and Tennessee created programs that align with design principles in some respects and diverge at other points. These are not meant to be overviews of perfect programs, but rather real-world examples of what developing a research-aligned program looks like in practice. The intent here is to highlight possible choices and tradeoffs to gain a clearer sense of how districts balanced research recommendations, program goals, and local priorities.

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Component of Design

Research-based Considerations *Adapted from the EdResearch for Recovery brief*

Program Structure	Duration	Programs that last at least 5 weeks and include at least 3 hours of academic instruction per day have been demonstrated to generate significant and lasting effects on student achievement. Optimally, programs will be offered to students for multiple summers.
	Class Size	Small classes capped at 15 students per teacher support stronger individualized instruction and help build relationships in academic and enrichment periods.
	Attendance	Attendance is strongest when programs communicate the benefits of high attendance during recruiting, establish an enrollment deadline, and create an engaging site climate with positive adult student relationships.
	Enrichment Activities	Engaging enrichment activities that take place alongside academics can help fill the "opportunity gap" and have been shown to reinforce regular attendance.
	Academic Curriculum	High-quality curriculum materials, including lesson plans that align with school-year standards and student needs, maximize the effectiveness of instruction. Summer programs are short in duration and provide little time for teachers to plan their own lessons.
Personnel	Academic Teachers	Certified teachers with content knowledge and grade-level experience enhance instructional quality in academic classes. Specialized support personnel can enhance learning and provide greater continuity across the school year for students with specialized needs.
	Enrichment Instructors	Enrichment lessons led by instructors with content expertise are more likely to engage students. Partnerships with community organizations can create opportunity for additional personnel with specific expertise in distinctive enrichment activities.
	Administration	In addition to site administrators, large, centralized summer programs require early and comprehensive planning led by a half-time summer program director who can begin working in January, if not earlier.

Design Principles in Practice

Woonsocket

Rhode Island

Summer Program by the Numbers:

- 6 Sites
- 28 Total Days
- Grades K-5
- 498 Students
- 12% English Learners
- 65% Economically Disadvantaged

Component of Design

Research-based Considerations

Adapted from the EdResearch for Recovery brief

Component of Design	Research-based Considerations
Program Structure	<p>Duration</p> <p>While the full program was six weeks long, it was broken up into three different two-week sessions. This model of three two-week sessions allowed Woonsocket to engage students who otherwise might not have been able to attend a six-week program.</p>
	<p>Class Size</p> <p>Classes ranged from 6-12 students, with at least one teacher and one paraprofessional. Low teacher-student ratios combined with additional interventionists and support staff led to more personalized instruction and learning for students.</p>
	<p>Attendance</p> <p>Woonsocket allowed individual schools to connect with students and families directly by leveraging existing modes of communication and personalized recruitment. Clear communication of behavior and attendance expectations helped ensure attendance.</p>
	<p>Enrichment Activities</p> <p>Woonsocket partnered with local CBOs to run enrichment activities for students. In the planning process early and leaned on their expertise and resources to create a program that offered students enrichment opportunities in addition to academics.</p>
	<p>Academic Curriculum</p> <p>High levels of teacher autonomy and built-in planning time gave district-certified teachers flexibility to plan lessons based on their experience with students and their interests, leading to high student engagement.</p>
Personnel	<p>Academic Teachers</p> <p>The district invested heavily in hiring qualified personnel. They doubled the typical rate of pay for summer programs, allowed teachers to sign up for 1, 2, or 3 of the two-week sessions and hiring adequate support staff to complement academic instructors.</p>
	<p>Enrichment Instructors</p> <p>Enrichment instructors were individuals hired directly by partner CBOs, lending their experience, knowledge, and expertise to ensure students were offered a diverse array of quality enrichment opportunities.</p>
	<p>Administration</p> <p>The district hired summer site coordinators at each school who oversaw school-based planning teams. While most programmatic decisions were left up to these teams, the district provided central support for student transportation and food services. This made program administration manageable and customizable for each school.</p>

Design Principles in Practice

Pawtucket

Rhode Island

Summer Program by the Numbers:

- 4 Sites
- 19 Total Days
- Grades K-5
- 401 Students
- 28% English Learners
- 56% Economically Disadvantaged

Component of Design

Research-based Considerations

Adapted from the EdResearch for Recovery brief

	Component of Design	Research-based Considerations
Program Structure	Duration	The program ran for Monday - Thursday for 5 weeks during the summer. Students could attend a total of 19 days of summer programming.
	Class Size	Across sites, Pawtucket worked to maintain a 1-10 student-teacher ratio.
	Attendance	Pawtucket intentionally focused their recruitment efforts for summer programming on students who were testing one or more grade levels below. They worked with classroom and building leaders to identify students. During the program, Pawtucket tracked average daily attendance across all four program sites. Summer teachers were responsible for following up with families if a student was absent.
	Enrichment Activities	While academic instruction took place in the morning, students had the opportunity to participate in afternoon enrichment activities offered by community-based organizations.
	Academic Curriculum	Using iReady, Pawtucket was able to standardize curriculum across all four sites and design a pre- and post-test that assessed students' mastery of standards addressed during the summer program.
Personnel	Academic Teachers	Pawtucket hired their own certified teachers to provide academic instruction during the summer.
	Enrichment Instructors	Enrichment instructors were hired and managed by local CBOs
	Administration	The program was centrally managed by Pawtucket's district office. They managed schedules, curriculum, student recruitment, and transportation. Individual classroom teachers were responsible for tracking daily attendance and following up with students who missed any days of instruction.

Design Principles in Practice

Newport

Rhode Island

Summer Program by the Numbers:

- 4 Sites
- 30 Total Days
- Grades K-4
- 188 Students
- 38% English Learners
- 85% Economically Disadvantaged

Component of Design

Research-based Considerations *Adapted from the EdResearch for Recovery brief*

Component of Design	Research-based Considerations <i>Adapted from the <u>EdResearch for Recovery</u> brief</i>
Program Structure	Duration Newport’s program ran for 6 weeks, allowing students to attend up to a total of 30 days of summer program.
	Class Size Class size varied across Newport’s 4 sites, but administrators at each site worked to keep teacher-student ratios at 1-5.
	Attendance Teachers and administration select students for this program based on the spring diagnostic testing and classroom performance. Newport also aimed to engage repeat attendees so that students are encouraged to come multiple years. Each site oversaw its own recruitment and leveraged pre-existing relationships with the families to create trust and generate buy-in for the program.
	Enrichment Activities Enrichment activities, including field trips and service learning activities, took place throughout the week, intentionally interspersed with academic work to help increase student engagement.
	Academic Curriculum Each site used their own curriculum to best support their students. This allowed individual sites to tailor academic instruction for their students. One site in particular, enrolled a high number of Multi-Language Learners (MLLs), and was able to structure curriculum to ensure their needs were being addressed.
Personnel	Academic Teachers Each site hired, trained, and managed their own certified academic teachers and teacher assistants to oversee reading instruction for students.
	Enrichment Instructors Enrichment instructors were not centrally managed or hired through the program.
	Administration This program is a partnership between Newport Partnership for Families, Newport Public Schools, the Boys & Girls Club of Newport County, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, the Newport County YMCA and the Newport Family and East Bay Community Action Program’s Newport Family and Child Opportunity Zone (NFCOZ). Newport Partnership for Families serves as the backbone organization, coordinating key components of the program structure, while program implementation and student recruitment is handled by individual sites.

Design Principles in Practice

Hamilton County

Tennessee

Summer Program by the Numbers:

- 31 Sites
- 29 Total Days
- Grades K-7
- 4061 Students
- 9% English Learners
- 36% Economically Disadvantaged

Component of Design

Research-based Considerations

Adapted from the EdResearch for Recovery brief

Component of Design	Research-based Considerations
Program Structure	<p>Duration</p> <p>Programs operated for six weeks from June 6 to July 15 on Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM for elementary studies and 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM for middle school students.</p>
	<p>Class Size</p> <p>Hamilton County Schools set a goal to keep their student to teacher ratio at 1:15, but with the understanding that in some staffing situations it may be higher. For ELA and math classes, the district was able to maintain a ratio of 1:15 or lower.</p>
	<p>Attendance</p> <p>The district sent out applications to all students. Students received lunch and transportation was provided. The district sent orientation packets to all registered families.</p>
	<p>Enrichment Activities</p> <p>In addition to core instructional time, art lessons, and PE periods, Hamilton offered an innovation course consisting of LEGO construction and coding. In staff surveys, teachers reported that student engagement with these projects was very high.</p>
	<p>Academic Curriculum</p> <p>Each day students had instruction in reading and math, time for physical activity, and innovation, and hands-on activities. The core instructional materials provided a review of the past year's learning.</p>
Personnel	<p>Academic Teachers</p> <p>The district team created a survey for teachers to register to teach summer programs in each school site. About 70% of summer programming teachers were housed in the same schools where they taught year-round. The district offered elevated pay to teachers who worked in schools with high rates of economically disadvantaged students and found this to be an effective tool for keeping teachers in their own schools for the summer. Each Reach site was staffed with a staff coordinator, nurse, and counselor.</p>
	<p>Enrichment Instructors</p> <p>The district partnered with a variety of community partners. Students took field trips to the Chattanooga library, Montague Sculpture Park, Reflection Riding Arboretum and Nature Center, and University of Tennessee Chattanooga. Some students also visited Smith Farm in Ooltewah, TN to teach students about plant and animal growth cycles.</p>
	<p>Administration</p> <p>Each site was overseen by an aspiring assistant principal. In staff surveys, teachers praised site directors for their hard work, leadership, and organization skills.</p>

Design Principles in Practice

Lenoir City

Tennessee

Summer Program by the Numbers:

- 1 Site
- Grades 1-8
- 17% English Learners
- 29 Total Days
- 192 Students
- 38% Economically Disadvantaged

Component of Design

Research-based Considerations

Adapted from the EdResearch for Recovery brief

	Component of Design	Research-based Considerations
Program Structure	Duration	The program called Vacation Academy began May 23 directly following the end of the school year. For elementary students, the program ran for six weeks, from late May through the end of June for a total of 29 days of 7.5 hours per day. The program for middle school students started at the same time and lasted four weeks.
	Class Size	The district administration staffed their summer learning program using a 15:1 staff to student ratio. On summer learning staff surveys, teachers reported satisfaction with their class size, explaining that the small class sizes enabled their students to receive individualized instruction and bond with other students.
	Attendance	District and school staff used paper recruitment materials in both Spanish and English along with phone calls to the homes of about 200 targeted students to encourage registration. The district targeted students based on their universal screener data. One of six district students enrolled, including 27% of the district’s third graders.
	Enrichment Activities	Supplementing the core programmatic focus on math, ELA, and STREAM instruction, Lenoir City included active learning opportunities using games, learning stations, arts and crafts times, and daily recesses.
	Academic Curriculum	The summer learning program in Lenoir City targeted math, ELA, and STREAM education using High Quality Instructional Materials. The district’s stated goal was to improve grade-level mastery rates for their district and to balance fun and learning.
Personnel	Academic Teachers	The district assigned two certified content teachers to each grade level and hired college students to provide additional assistance. The district targeted college students studying education. The district gauged interest in summer learning staffing via a survey and administrators and district coaches made the final hiring decisions. The district reported high interest from teachers in staffing the summer learning programs.
	Enrichment Instructors	The district provided daily physical activity and scheduled special activities on Fridays, including cake decorating and field trips. Educators also centered many activities around the theme “Under the Sea.”
	Administration	Because there was only one summer learning site in Lenoir City, the program was operated by the district office. The district centrally managed staffing, student recruitment and registration, curriculum selection, etc.

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For More Information

This collection of program profiles is one document in a series on summer learning programs aimed at providing K-12 education decision-makers and advocates with an evidence base to ground discussions about how to best serve students during and following the novel coronavirus pandemic.

The EdResearch for Recovery initiative is a joint project of the Annenberg Institute at Brown University and Results for America. These program profiles were a collaboration between EdResearch for Recovery and the Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA).

[Click here](#) to learn more about the EdResearch for Recovery Project and view the set of COVID-19 response and recovery topic areas and practitioner-generated questions. To receive updates and the latest briefs, [sign up here](#).

