SUMMER PROGRAM START-UP GUIDE

Summer is a time to shine!

Vermont Afterschool

WWW.VERMONTAFTERSCHOOL.ORG

Overview

This guidebook is intended to assist you in planning and starting a summer program.
It is important to note that this is not intended to be a complete planning document; rather as an overview for the start up phase of program implementation. Whether you are a parent, school board member, teacher, community member, or out-of-school time professional, this is aimed to help anyone and everyone who wants to take leadership in creating a program.

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INTRODUCTION

About this guide

"How and where do I start?" Think of this guidebook as a response to that question. We offer practical advice to help you create a new program in your community. While we're not recommending specific activities or documents, you will find information, ideas, and resources to help you move forward with your own process.

Summer camps and programs are...

A unique type of community where children and youth come together to have fun, make lasting friendships, and develop important social-emotional skills.

Proven to accelerate learning gains and address learning loss. Programs engage youth in enriching, hands-on projects that relate to the real world.

Safe spaces with caring adults and learning opportunities based on student interests that spark engagement and foster creativity.

Who are we?

Vermont Afterschool is dedicated to strengthening programs, building partnerships, and transforming communities so that all Vermont youth are active, engaged, connected, and heard.

Vermont Afterschool, Inc.
150 Kennedy Dr. South Burlington, VT 05403
802-448-3464 or info@vermontafterschool.org

WHY SUMMER MATTERS

Afterschool, summer learning, and third space programs re-imagine how, where, and when our young people learn. Youth spend approximately 20% of their waking hours in school over the course of a year. How they invest the other 80% of their time is a game changer.

SUMMER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Summer learning programs help Vermont students stay safe, remain active, access healthy food, build interests and learn new skills over the summer, and start the next school year ready to learn. Summer programs are also key to keep kids on track academically. Studies have shown that up to two-thirds of the academic achievement gap can be attributed to differences in summer learning opportunities.

KEEP KIDS SAFE

Summer programs can build protective factors such as connectedness, self-control, self-confidence, adult mentors, and quality peer relationships which can prevent youth from engaging in risky behaviors. They also provide a safe place to be while parents and caregivers are working.

ACCESS TO FOOD

Many summer programs provide students with access to nutritious meals or are connected with summer meals sites, which is especially critical as the pandemic has caused increases in hunger and food insecurity.

SUPPORT FOR WORKING FAMILIES

Parents benefit from peace of mind when their children are engaged in quality programs. In Vermont, 77% of children and youth ages 6-17 have all available parents in the workforce. For most families, there is a gap of 15-25 hours per week when parents are still at work and children and youth are out of school and need supervision. This need for programs is even greater during school vacation weeks and over the summer.

BUILD COMMUNITY

Summer and third space activities provide a supportive environment and help students form and grow positive bonds with staff and their peers. According to the 2017 Vermont Youth Behavior Risk Survey, 60% of high school students feel like they matter to the people in their community. For young people who participate in afterschool activities, this measure of belonging goes up to 71%.

TYPES OF PROGRAMS

One important thing to consider as you start out is what type of program you'd like to offer. What you offer will depend on the age of youth served, type of activity, and the number of youth. Reference the information below on types of programs to consider as you move forward.

LICENSED PROGRAMS

➤ A licensed childcare program (including during the summer) is considered any place operating as a business or service on a regular continuous basis with or without compensation. This childcare service is provided by an entity or person other than the child's own parent, guardian, or relative.

➤ The Vermont Child Development Division (CDD) monitors and oversees all licensed afterschool childcare programs (ages 5-15) in the state. They also provide support for those seeking to become licensed.

➤ For more information about afterschool licensing regulations in Vermont, please visit the CDD and childcare provider websites:
dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers
dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-regs/childcare

Or call a licensor on duty: 800-649-2642 option 3 (M-F) or email
ahs.dcfcddchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov

21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMS

➤ The Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Center (21C) Initiative is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to afterschool and summer learning programs. Funds are administered through the Vermont Agency of Education through a competitive grant process.

➤ In order to apply, interested applicants must serve communities that meet income eligibility guidelines (e.g., in 2019 the guideline specified at least a 40% free and reduced lunch rate) or are eligible for Title 1 schoolwide status.

➤ Please note that while 21C programs are exempt from the CDD licensure requirement (see above), they can still apply in order to participate in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

➤ For more information please visit:
education.vermont.gov/student-support/federal-programs/after-school-programs

TYPES OF PROGRAMS

PROGRAMS FOR TEENS AND OLDER YOUTH

- Teen centers, youth centers, or other programs serving older youth outside the school day are also considered part of the afterschool, summer, and third space field.

- The Vermont Youth Center Alliance is a great resource based out of Vermont Afterschool that is here to support your work with teens and older youth.

- Email us (info@vermontafterschool.org) if you'd like to join the Vermont Youth Center Alliance.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Athletic teams, homework support programs, theatre groups, and other special interest clubs that meet afterschool and/or during the summer do not need to be licensed unless a school or program wants to create a comprehensive afterschool & summer program for children under the age of 15 and the school is not currently funded by a 21C grant (see page 5).

RECREATION AND SINGLE FOCUS PROGRAMS

- Parks and recreation departments may run sports leagues, single skill-based activities, and other short-term special programs for children and youth. These programs don't need school-age care licensure.

- Any individual, business, or organization that offers a single skill-based activity (e.g. pottery, dance, drama, martial arts, etc.) for children or youth in the out-of-school time hours would fall into this category and would be exempt from licensure.

PARTNERING WITH SCHOOLS

As we move into the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools are recognizing the need to provide student support that addresses learning recovery through summer learning-focused programming. The federal COVID-19 relief dollars, available through the Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund III (ESSER), will flow directly to school districts with the provision that at least 20% of these sub-grants are dedicated "to promote learning recovery including comprehensive afterschool programs and summer learning or enrichment programs." This funding infusion is a key way to boost the power of summer learning programs and increase capacity, quality, and access to summer programs.

Re-think "Summer School"

Summer programs that are jointly planned by school districts and community partners can include both academic support and enrichment opportunities, and a mix of certified teachers and youth development professionals, are more likely to meet the needs of young people and help them succeed. These programs include an array of activities that young people choose to participate in based on individual interests, along with academic support for all, are culturally responsive, and keep students engaged and attending regularly.

Staffing

Recruit and retain a mix of staff who are connected to the local community and local schools, including current and aspiring classroom teachers, youth development professionals, and community members with content expertise. Ensure all staff participate in the same training and professional development to ensure consistent, high-quality engagement with young people. Support additional professional development to respond to the increased needs of children and families, as well as necessary COVID-19 safety procedures and wellness checks.

Prioritize SEL

Programs that listen to youth and recognize the social and emotional needs of young people—which is especially important as we emerge from the pandemic—and are explicitly designed to enhance students' social and emotional learning (SEL) skills are better positioned to help young people grow socially and emotionally. Ensure your program fosters a welcoming, positive climate that promotes healthy relationships and consider hiring mental health consultants to provide support for summer programs.

WHERE TO START

Planning, starting, and managing a summer program is a comprehensive undertaking, but serves as an important opportunity to support your community's children and youth. The need for quality summer programming is growing and offering youth quality choices about how they spend their time in the third space ensures that they are engaged and supported in safe and caring environments.

Important First Steps

1 Conduct a needs assessment. A needs assessment tells you if there is a need for this service in your community, what resources are available to meet these needs, and gaps that exist. Surveys through the school, focus groups, and individual interviews are all effective ways to conduct a needs assessment.

2 Moving into the planning phase will require determining if you have the facilities, support, money, and staff to make a successful program possible. This is also a great time to form a stakeholder advisory group in order to involve school personnel, community partners, youth, and families in the design and development of the program.

3 Find a space that meets the needs identified in the assessment for your program and obtain contracts for the use of the space. Keep in mind that there are standards for facilities that need to be met whether you are applying for childcare licensure or not (i.e. fire safety codes, water suppy and wasterwater, etc.).

Please note: If your goal is to become a licensed program, review the afterschool regulations on the CDD website which also apply to summer programs. Your first step will be to speak to a licensor to get started (800-649-2642 option 3 or email ahs.dcfcddchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov).

Don't underestimate the power of support from families and community partners. Time, committment, and support from these key players will be necessary for success.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Being intentional and flexible when designing a program and creating a safe and supportive environment is fundamental to success.

Safe and Supportive Environment

> Location is often dictated by the operational arrangement of a program. For example, a school-based program will be located at a school, a government-based program may be located in a municipal building or recreation center, and a for-profit program may have its own building or be based out of a home.

> The look, feel, and safety of the environment will depend on the age of the youth you are serving. Transform the program space into a comfortable setting which fits the goals of your program. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways including:
> - Ensuring staff conduct themselves as role models for the youth they serve
> - Creating a comfortable lounge area in one part of the room
> - Providing a conference table for meetings
> - Ensuring adequate open space in the activity areas
> - Decorating the walls and posting quotes of inspiration
> - Most importantly, highlighting the activities and experiences of the youth through their own words

> Offering food is an important part of providing a quality program. Summer meals help to fight childhood hunger and make sure that all children and youth have access to healthy options during the out-of-school time. Additionally, offering snacks and meals increases participation in summer programs and improves the effectiveness of enrichment activities. Consider offering options that appeal to a variety of cultures. See Hunger Free Vermont for information on nutrition assistance programs: www.hungerfreevt.org/why-summer-meals

> Questions to consider:
> - Are the hours and location convenient for families and students?
> - Is there a fee to use the space?
> - Who will set up and take down the program if it's a shared space?
> - Can you serve food and offer all the activities in the space that will provide a quality program?

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

The summer and out-of-school time space is a wonderful time to get your students excited about learning while pursuing their own interests. It is a chance to be flexible, hands-on, and creative.

Curriculum Development

➤ The goal of quality summer programming is to offer different formats for exploration and learning (e.g., community service activities, field trips, different age groupings and sizes, bringing in outside experts, artists, and community members, etc.). Curriculum in a summer program should emerge from the children's interests and be adaptable and flexible.

➤ Summer is an opportunity to think outside the box to improve teaching and learning year-round by trying new hands-on instructional strategies, rethinking learning environments, and experimenting with staffing models before scaling. Programs should align to, but not replicate, school year methods.

➤ Provide youth with the opportunity to participate in the design, delivery, and evaluation of the program. Giving youth a voice to effectively create an environment that meets their personal needs builds critical skills for their future.

➤ Consider the cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical development stages of children in your curriculum development. All children develop in different areas and at different rates, which can make creating a curriculum challenging. The key is to create activities that can adapt to the different development levels of the children.

➤ Although structured activities are very important, do not underestimate the importance of daily free time. Always make sure that children and youth have choices.

➤ Mizzen by Mott is a free app built with and for out-of-school time professionals to provide high-quality, engaging learning content and tools to the field. Mizzen includes curriculum and learning content for all ages from top out-of-school time curriculum experts, as well as easy-to-use attendance, messaging, communications, and scheduling tools. www.mizzen.org

➤ The Summer Activity Guides are a suite of fun and engaging activities and challenges designed specifically to accommodate COVID-19 summer programs. There are five units with activities for youth ages 5-18 that are ready to go for your summer program. www.vermontafterschool.org/summerguides/

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Successful programs prioritize youth voice and choice by identifying what is of interest to the youth, asking for input, and running multiple programs at a given time to allow youth to choose. Programs can increase engagement levels within activities by including children in planning and reflection routines such as how to use their time, how to complete a task, considering changes and next steps.

COVID-19 Considerations

- Fundamental to any level of in-person programming will be prioritizing safety guidelines and building deep trust among families, staff, and students.

- Focus on the emotional state of youth and allow them to express their fears and receive information in a developmentally appropriate way. Camps and in-person programs can help children and youth regain a sense of normalcy and foster interpersonal connections that help youth build resilience.

- Know the health guidelines around masks, ratios, medical screenings, sanitization, etc. The Vermont Department of Health offers guidelines for school-age child care programs (including summer programs and camps) here: https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/your-community/child-care-programs

- Overcommunicate with parents about safety; pictures and videos are particularly useful.

- The Field Guide for Camps from the American Camp Association is designed to provide camp directors and staff with a practical guide and tool kit to implement specific recommendations provided by the CDC in relation to risk reduction at camps. https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/field-guide-camps

Programming for MS/HS Youth

➤ Successful summer programs for middle and high school youth must be interest-based and youth-driven, allowing for young people to develop greater skill and mastery in areas of interest to them.

➤ Many middle school and high school summer programs in Vermont allow for youth to take on leadership roles. Some programs support youth as counselors-in-training, connect youth with volunteer opportunities in their community, or help them with job training.

➤ Especially in some rural areas, working as staff in a summer program may be the only opportunity that some teens have to build job skills and gain work-based learning experience. Programs planning to hire youth as staff in their program should check out our guidebook on Youth Workforce Development.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Family Engagement

➤ Connecting with families is an important aspect of operating a successful summer program. Program staff will see parents, guardians, caregivers, and families each day for pick up and this is an opportunity to build relationships of trust. If you do not have daily contact with your students' families, there are still ways to facilitate involvement including:
- Producing bi-monthly or weekly newsletters targeted to families
- Provide virtual orientations at different times to meet the needs of working families
- End of summer celebrations either in-person or virtually
- Phone calls to check-in or problem-solve
- Scheduling individual meetings offsite
- Offer a survey to families to get feedback on how the program has been for their child
- Consider the use of an interpreter service for families who don't speak English or speak English as a second language and that promotes practices that support inclusiveness for all families by making modifications as appropriate for services to be accessible to families with differing backgrounds.

Staffing and Professional Development

➤ Staff will be one of the most critical pieces of the starting and implementing of your program. Hiring staff who have a genuine interest in working with youth, understanding the philosophy of youth development, and advocating for youth interests and needs are basic attributes of good afterschool programming staff. The following are some potential tasks you'll undertake to hire and support staff:
- Recruit and hire staff: Hire staff that has prior experience, child-related training, and a commitment to school-age children. Don't forget clear job descriptions that define the roles and responsibilities of staff members.
- Be sure to do a thorough orientation with new staff. Topics you need to include in your new employee orientation include specific job responsibilities and expectations, as well as a general overview of the program. Include the program missions, goals, philosophy, and history in the new staff training as well as review licensing regulations (if applicable) and review your staff handbook policies.
- Staff should also have the opportunity to engage in ongoing training based upon their individual goals and needs of the program. Timely and frequent supervision, staff meetings, and formal and informal feedback/evaluation is recommended.
- Encourage staff looking to further their education to consider the Afterschool and Youth Work Certificate, offered by the Community College of Vermont (CCV).
- The Resource Advisors at Northern Lights at CCV can also support your staff in accessing professional development. northernlightsccv.org/about-us/contact-us/#our-resource-team

We offer virtual professional development for summer and out-of-school time staff of all levels: www.vermontafterschool.org/summer-training

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

State and National Quality Standards

➤ Quality programs should be aware of all quality standards in their state and nationally. This includes:
- Vermont's Afterschool Core Competency Knowledge Areas
- Afterschool Career Pathways for Professionals
- Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) which is a quality ratings system for Vermont's licensed afterschool and early childhood programs
- National AfterSchool Association's Health and Physical Activity Standards for Out-of-School Time

Evaluation and Assessment

➤ Program evaluation and assessment processes help programs improve over time and provide a snapshot of program effectiveness. Program evaluation is usually focused on outcome or impact measures and looks at progress towards stated goals over time. Program assessment is focused more on how you are operating and focuses on program practices and staff interactions with the children and youth in the program.

➤ The most important consideration is to create a process that will result in information that can be used to improve the program. These should be living documents that are created annually, referred to frequently, and adapted over time as the program changes and grows.

➤ We recommend that programs consider using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) process developed by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. This particular assessment and improvement process is used in many states to support youth programs. It focuses on the point of practice and includes opportunities for staff to learn together, observe one another, discuss important components of quality, and develop program improvement plans.

➤ There are several versions of the assessment tool available: School Age (K-6 grades), Youth (6-12 grades), and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). For more information on the YPQA, visit the Weikart Center site: forumfyi.org/work/the-weikart-center/.

➤ We are happy to work with you to create a continuous quality improvement process that will really work for your program. Contact us at info@vermontafterschool.org or 802-448-3464.

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Similar to high-quality afterschool programs, summer programs can reduce learning loss, provide opportunities for youth to gain literacy and math skills, and support social-emotional growth. But attendance at a summer program alone doesn't guarantee these benefits for youth: quantity and quality matter. Below are highlights from some of the most comprehensive research on developing and implementing high-quality summer programs.

Quality Matters

Quality is well-defined in summer programs – whether in-person or virtual. The Wallace Foundation, in partnership with the RAND Corporation and others, has published a wealth of evaluations, research, and tools that dive deep into the core elements of impactful summer programs. Over the last decade, they have found the strongest results from the following practices:

• **Offering voluntary, no-cost summer programs over multiple summers with free transportation and meals**

• **Providing at least five weeks of academic and enrichment programming with three hours of daily high-quality academic instruction embedded in regular "fun" options**

• **Ensuring strong attendance (75%), small class sizes, and curricula aligned with the school year to impact the level and longevity of positive student outcomes**

• **Implementing summer youth employment programs that have a range of positive outcomes**

The Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality has spent decades researching key program quality elements in out-of-school-time programs. Many summer learning programs across the country use this framework to design and assess program quality. These elements include:

• **Youth engagement (youth voice in planning and reflection)**
• **Peer interaction (building community, cooperative learning, homework help)**
• **Supportive environment (active learning, ask-listen-encourage, reframing conflict)**
• **Safe environment (structure and clear limits)**
• **Youth voice in governance**

Sources: 2021 California Summer Learning Guide: Investing in Resilience and Relationships
https://www.jstor.org/stable/3181549?seq=1
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1557.html
https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/investing-in-successful-summer-programs-essa-review.aspx

COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

Fiscal Management

➤ Developing a long-term financial plan is essential for a successful and sustainable summer program. Effectively budgeting and tracking expenses and revenues coming into the organization is essential.

➤ Before starting up your program, you will need to consider how much funding it will take to both start up and operate daily. Use your needs assessment to approximate how much the parents can afford to pay for afterschool to develop a budget.

➤ Components of the budget may include:
- Start up costs including space, legal fees, licensing fees, equipment, and supplies.
- Operating expenses including staff salaries, benefits, professional development, supplies, utilities, insurance, maintenance, and food.

➤ Use the Wallace Foundation's cost calculator to determine reasonable costs for operating a program: www.wallacefoundation.org/cost-of-quality/pages/default.aspx

Possible Funding Sources

➤ The Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC grant program has been funding high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs since 1998 (see p. 5). For more information: education.vermont.gov/student-support/federal-programs/after-school-programs

➤ The Vermont Children's Trust Foundation awards grants to Vermont 501(c)3 nonprofits, municipalities, or schools that provide primary prevention programs for children and their families. Grants are not given to individuals or for-profit organizations. For more information visit: www.vtchildrenstrust.org

➤ The Building Bright Spaces for Bright Futures Fund, created in 2002 by the Vermont Legislature, provides grants for child care and youth programs to expand the supply and improve the quality of care available to Vermont families. For more information please visit: www.investinvermont.org/borrowers/early-care-and-learning/building-bright-spaces-for-bright-futures.html

➤ The Vermont Community Foundation awards Spark community grants and place-based grants to tax-exempt organizations in Vermont. For more information please visit: www.vermontcf.org/NonprofitsGrants/AvailableGrants.aspx

➤ The Children's Literacy Foundation offers at-risk youth and summer reading grants to out-of-school time programs in the form of book donations and literacy events for youth. Please visit: clifonline.org

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

By focusing on positive youth development, summer programs can support young people in developing the skills and confidence they need to create long-term goals and explore new interests. Summer programs can encourage positive youth development by providing key learning opportunities in literacy and test preparation, life skill development, college admissions, career awareness, and workforce opportunities.

College Prep

Summer programs can support students in college prep by:
- Providing space and support for young people to develop time management habits
- Hiring staff that can support test prep and tutoring and offer it as part of your program
- Creating opportunities to explore, connect to, and visit colleges
- Building connections to local internships and volunteer opportunities
- Providing programming that supports young people in developing important life skills

Skill development that can be supported by summer programming:

- Communication
- Leadership
- Critical Thinking
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Technology Literacy
- Time Management
- Financial Literacy

Career Awareness

There are many ways to include all age groups in career pathways. Elementary students can take part in career-themed clubs such as coding and welding. Middle school students can practice mock-interviews and participate in camps such as engineering. High schoolers can earn internship credits and/or apply for jobs with local businesses. Summer programs should aim to provide innovative ways to introduce elementary, middle, and high school students to new interests and a wide range of careers. Consider providing activities and experiences such as:
- Competency-based learning
- Hands-on STEM activities
- Mentorships and job shadowing
- Work site-visits and apprenticeships
- Informational interviewing
- Career fairs

Additional Resources to Explore:
- MOST's College and Career Readiness Toolkit: www.mostnetwork.org/initiatives/ccr/
- Afterschool Alliance: Career exploration in out-of-school settings
- Vermont Agency of Education: Work Based Learning

ESSENTIAL SUMMER PROGRAM RESOURCES

General Summer Program Management Resources and Tools

Summer Learning Toolkit by The Wallace Foundation: This web-based resource provides summer program leaders with over 50 evidence-based tools and resources, including customizable tools, sample documents from actual summer programs, and tip sheets, as well as guidance documents that provide the connection to research.

Planning for an Impactful Summer: To make a positive difference in a learning recovery strategy starting in Summer 2021, state and local leaders should build from what research and best practices tell us about how to have positive impacts and engage young people.

Getting to Work on Summer Learning by The Wallace Foundation: In this edition, researchers distill lessons from a six-year study of voluntary summer programs in the five urban districts participating in the National Summer Learning Project. Topics include: planning, teacher selection and professional development, sufficient time on task, student recruitment and attendance, academic curriculum and instruction, enrichment activities, positive summer climate, summer cost and funding.

Summer Starts in September Program Planning Guide by the National Summer Learning Association: The Summer Starts in September Program Planning Guide is a comprehensive summer learning program planning guide full of research-based strategies, program examples, and tools that program leaders can use to develop an intentional and high-impact program. Cost is $95 plus shipping.

Summer Learning Program Quality Intervention by the Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality: This assessment tool was developed by the National Summer Learning Association and the Weikart Center to support summer programs in assessing their program quality based on research of youth development standards. Tools are also available to help management and staff have critical conversations about improving overall program quality.

Programming During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Guidance from the Vermont Department of Health for childcare (regulated and unregulated, center and family-based), out-of-school-time care, summer, recreational and afterschool programs: Designed to help programs maintain health and safety requirements and physical distancing directives while providing services. This page also includes information on what to do if you have a positive case in your program.

Field Guide for Camps on Implementation of CDC Guidance by the American Camp Association: This field guide provides camp leaders with recommendations to reduce risks related to COVID-19. The ACA is regularly updating this document to respond to changes and developments throughout the pandemic. This guide was designed to support various types of camps, including day, overnight, and outdoor programs.

Summer Learning: A Bridge to Student Success and America's Recovery, a COVID-19 Playbook by the National Summer Learning Association: This playbook provides a framework for school and community leaders to plan, collaborate, and execute evidence-based practices and partnerships to create high-quality summer programs. Key resources are included throughout to help programs navigate the reality and ever-changing environment of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Return to Play: COVID 19 Risk Assessment Tool by the Aspen Institute: This online resource provides guidance on COVID-19 risks related to individual youth sports and recreational activities. Program leaders can use this tool to develop strategies to mitigate risks during sports or recreational activities during summer programs.

Teacher Professional Development

The Promise of Summer as a Time for Teacher Professional Learning by the RAND Corporation: This report provides findings from the first national representative survey of teachers focused on summer professional learning experiences. Recommendations from the study include utilizing the low-pressure summer environment to support teachers' professional development and growth.

A High-Impact Training Ground for Teachers by the Summer Matters Campaign: This report looks at how education leaders in pilot communities in CA used summer programs to provide powerful professional learning opportunities to support Common Core implementation and social-emotional learning goals.

ESSENTIAL SUMMER PROGRAM RESOURCES

School Community Partnerships

SPARK! Building Community Systems for Summer Learning by the National Summer Learning Association: This issue of SPARK! focuses on building community systems for summer learning through six key elements: a shared vision, engaged leadership, continuous quality improvement, data management, and marketing and communications.

Fact Sheet: A Summer for Learning and Recovery: A factsheet summarizing the benefits and research on summer programs that explains how they help accelerate learning and meet kids' needs. Emphasizes messaging about equity, highlights the role programs play in addressing hunger, and includes research-based strategies for successful summer programs.

Teaching Social-Emotional Skills in Summer Programs

Early Lessons from Schools and Out-of-School-Time Programs Implementing Social and Emotional Learning by The Wallace Foundation: This report provides highlights from a two-year study focused on teaching social and emotional skills to youth. Specifically, it shares key lessons learned from six communities that have worked to implement social-emotional learning for youth through partnerships between the school and out-of-school-time programs. This report is beneficial for those working to support SEL both inside and outside the school.

SEL Roadmap: Actions for a Successful Second Semester by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): This resource was developed by CASEL and 40 other partners to help schools support the social-emotional needs of youth as they transition from virtual to in-person learning. Key strategies are identified, including focusing on adult connections and providing a safe, nurturing environment. Tools to support these strategies are discussed and linked to provide easy implementation by schools and programs.

The Importance of Adult Skills in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) by The Wallace Foundation: Evidence-based guidance focused on the importance of adult skills in delivering social and emotional learning.

Recruitment and Retention in Summer Programs

Summer Learning Recruitment Guide by The Wallace Foundation: This report reviews key lessons learned from recruitment and retention by summer programs included in the National Summer Learning Project. It proposes and reviews eight key strategies for successful summer program recruitment: engage directly with students, understand your audience, create engaging messaging, create a written plan, make your outreach consistent and assertive, use trusted messengers, build a relationship with parents and students, and make registration as easy as possible.

What Keeps KidsEngaged in Summer Learning by the National Summer Learning Association: This research brief highlights a study that documented key program strategies leading to higher levels of youth engagement, including relevance statements, opportunities for youth to experience a sense of agency, and quality programming.

Impact of Summer Programs

Every Summer Counts by The Wallace Foundation: This report highlights the findings from the National Summer Learning Project (NSLP). The NSLP study collected and analyzed academic outcome data from five school districts implementing voluntary summer programs. Key findings include the importance of attendance at summer programs and the amount and quality of instruction.

The Summer Slide: What We Know and Can Do About Summer Learning Loss edited by Karl Alexander, Sarah Pitcock, and Matthew Boulay: This book provides a comprehensive review of summer learning loss. Contributions to the book are made by scholars and practitioners leading the field of summer learning. These contributors provide up-to-date research about summer learning loss, best practices in summer programming, and program evaluations.

Expanding Minds and Opportunities: The Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success by Expanded Learning: This book, edited by Terry Peterson, is a compendium of articles and research evidence supporting the need for afterschool and summer learning. It includes nearly 70 articles that can be accessed for free.

Resources collected and curated by:
2021 California Summer Learning Guide (March 2021)

FINAL THOUGHTS

Starting a new summer program is an exciting time as you begin to think about how to manage a high-quality program where young people will learn and have fun. There is a lot of planning that goes into starting a summer program: from getting the doors open and ready to go to assessing and evaluating annually. This guidebook is here to give you a solid start and help you build a thriving summer program that will meet the needs of children, youth, and families. We wish you the best in your endeavor to start up a summer program in your area and are available to answer any questions and provide support along the way. Providing quality summer opportunities for youth is important to all of us--kids, families, and communities. We are here for you! Please contact us at Vermont Afterschool for more information.

Stay in touch! Learn of news, grant opportunities, trainings, and more by signing up for our e-newsletter:
www.vermontafterschool.org/get-involved/subscribe/