



# Summer Planning Guide

CONSIDERATIONS, QUICK TIPS, AND ACTIONABLE STEPS  
TO PLAN EFFECTIVE SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

## Introduction:

Summer can be a powerful time to prepare students for success in the coming school year. Strong summer programs accelerate readiness, prevent regression, address learning gaps, provide enrichment, and generate momentum for the joy of learning. A well-planned summer program can set a district up for student success during the coming academic year.

The following resource provides guidance for educators as they develop successful summer programs.

### Quick Tip

Look broadly for inspiring summer models of innovation or success. Consider looking at neighboring districts or districts with similar demographics.

## Planning

Many district leaders begin to plan their summer programs in the early winter to ensure they have ample time to build the most effective programs.

### Top Considerations

- What are the purpose and goals of the summer programming?
- Will we offer remediation, preview/preparation of pre-season content, acceleration, and/or enrichment?
- Which student sub-populations will be participating in the summer programs?
- What instructional materials address the needs of the variety of participating students?
- What funding will be used?
- How will success be measured?

### Take Action

- ✓ Identify a lead and planning team (curriculum, transportation, human resources, procurement, information technology, and facilities leaders).
- ✓ Start planning early. Create a timeline to provide a framework for the broader team and as a mechanism for accountability to ensure essential decision points and tasks get done on time.
- ✓ Determine the sites for summer programming. Will all schools offer summer school or only specific school sites? Ensure that the sites are available and conducive to summer learning and do not have any major simultaneous events or construction.
- ✓ Determine funding/budget and how many students can be accommodated.
- ✓ Be intentional about the start date, duration, and end date of the summer programming to maximize instructional hours and provide some breaks for students and staff.
- ✓ Build ways to collect data or track implementation in order to align planning, metrics, and goals.



## Leadership, Staffing, and Training

Summer programs can be a great opportunity for staff to explore new instructional areas beyond the scope of their role during the academic school year. Be sure staff have the training and tools to make these new experiences positive and effective.

### Top Considerations

- How will we identify and hire site leads who can foster a positive summer learning culture?
- How will we ensure we can sufficiently staff summer programming with high-quality teachers?
- What professional learning or training will summer staff need to be successful?

### Take Action

- ✓ Ask questions during hiring to ensure that all summer school staff share a belief in the purpose and goals of the programming (climate, culture, goals, belief in student potential).
- ✓ Develop training opportunities with the goal of creating consistent expectations and routines for students.
- ✓ Be strategic about the training modality and consider how to be efficient with professional learning time and requirements.



### Quick Tip

Think creatively and strategically when filling key roles. Summer school can be a great training ground. For example, an elementary school teacher may want to explore working with a different grade, or an assistant principal interested in becoming a principal may be able to lead summer school in the principal role. These growth opportunities are good for individuals as well as the district by creating a leadership development pipeline.



## Resources, Curriculum, and Engagement

Teachers may be asked to provide instruction for an area outside of their expertise. By prioritizing tools that offer research-based independent learning, leaders can ensure that students are getting the instruction and support they need.

### Top Considerations

- How do we choose resources that align with our student population and goals?
- Can we identify instructional resources that allow for remediation, acceleration, and enrichment to accommodate the unique needs of each student? Which resources will be effective for all student populations?
- How can we maximize the time we have with students to accelerate learning?

### Take Action

- ✓ Identify resources early and prioritize ease of implementation.
- ✓ Select resources and materials that allow for personalization.
- ✓ Make strategic decisions about student groupings.
- ✓ Find ways to keep class sizes small.
- ✓ Create a master schedule that includes a variety of activities and types of instruction, including opportunities for hands-on learning, social and emotional development, and enrichment.
- ✓ Make decisions to ensure that the student experience is engaging.
- ✓ Consider using summer as an opportunity to pilot new programs and kick start the academic year with solutions in place.

### Quick Tip

Powerful resources that leverage technology to create adaptive learning experiences for students can help educators make the most out of the limited time they have with students.

## Student Recruitment, Attendance, and Communication

Just like the regular academic school year, student engagement will be critical for developing successful summer school programs. Students may be more likely to attend summer school if they have access to engaging, gamified instruction, technology, and programs that prioritize intrinsic motivation.

### Quick Tip

Utilize a student's classroom teacher to identify students and communicate key information about summer school registration. Teachers will have a nuanced understanding of who will benefit beyond a standard formula and they often have the deepest relationships with families as trusted sources.

### Top Considerations

- Are students required to attend, and how will that be communicated to families?
- How will attendance be encouraged and tracked?
- How can we make the invitation feel like an opportunity rather than a requirement?
- What barriers might get in the way of student participation & attendance (access to resources, linguistic barriers, negative connotations around summer school)?
- How will we ensure that transportation, food service, custodial, security, and other logistical support will be efficient, effective, and meet the needs of students and staff?

### Take Action

Communicate with clarity and transparency. Share clear timelines and deadlines for action items and provide background and reasoning for summer school.

Remove barriers for attendance. By providing transportation support, food, fees, and language support to students and families, you can make the process as seamless as possible.

Prioritize a student-centered approach to communication and decision-making. Messaging can go far when it focuses on the partnership between school and family. Send personal outreach to families letting them know: *We are here to support your child.*

Have an ongoing plan throughout the summer to increase attendance. This may be reminders to attend via text or incentivizing participation with field trips.



## Climate & Community Buy-In

A positive climate requires intention and deliberate action, and it must be part of the planning process. When building summer school programs, it can be beneficial to provide a warm tone and focus on being clear about the purpose – student learning.

### Top Considerations

- How can we structure programming and schedules to match the needs of our students and community?
- What steps can we take to build community among staff, students, and families?
- How do we sustain momentum throughout the summer?
- How can we share markers of growth and progress with the community?

### Quick Tip

When summer programs focus only on credit recovery, students can feel ashamed or unmotivated. Positioning the program as a good opportunity to get ahead for next year can help students feel excited about what they will accomplish.

### Take Action

- ✓ Find ways to create cohesion and collective goals among staff. This can be tricky when staff can come from several different school locations, but online forums or groups may be helpful.
- ✓ Focus on relationships. Team building activities are a great way to connect students and teachers.
- ✓ Be consistent and clear with student expectations that will lead to success. This includes defining behavior expectations, as well as academic goals.
- ✓ Empower teachers and students with data. This time is precious, and it is critical that teachers can easily track progress by utilizing instructional tools that can deliver rapid results and actionable insights.
- ✓ Celebrate summer programming opportunities on social media and other forms of communication for students and staff.

### Conclusion

Summer programs provide a valuable opportunity for students to catch up on academic needs or delve into subjects of interest. With careful planning these programs can help students bridge gaps in their knowledge and stay on track with educational goals. To learn how DreamBox Math and Reading programs help support these efforts, visit [dreambox.com/summer](https://dreambox.com/summer).

