

Resource Guide: Tools for Evaluating Summer Programs

Conducting an evaluation of summer learning programs is particularly important given their voluntary nature and the opportunity they afford for school districts to try new and innovative approaches. To get an accurate measure of how well a summer learning program is working, a district needs to think about evaluation in terms of demand for the program, quality and fidelity of implementation, and impact on student outcomes.

All of these provide important evidence for a district to use to decide if a program is working and what aspects of it can be improved. Evaluation planning needs to be incorporated into the initial program design.

Districts typically use a combination of methods for collecting evidence of program quality and success, including administrative data; traditional assessments; surveys of students, staff, and parents; and in-person observations.

Within California, a robust network of school district leaders, summer program experts and technical assistance providers can help your district develop a plan for program evaluation.

In cooperation with the National Summer Learning Association, California's Summer Matters network provides:

- » A [Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs](#) that supports evaluation of all aspects of a summer program;
- » An outline for an [End of Summer Program Reflection](#) session; and
- » An outline for a [Tools and Strategies Course](#).

ASPECTS OF SUMMER PROGRAM EVALUATION

Family and student demand for programs is an important barometer of success. Parents and students vote with their feet when it comes to summer. There are three aspects of this: initial sign ups, enrollment, and actual attendance.

The quality and fidelity of implementation in summer programs can be challenging to measure given their brevity. Experience has shown, however, that quick and straightforward support can help assure that the program is high quality.

Measuring student outcomes can be done in a variety of ways and should be aligned with the program goals that helped shape the summer program. It's important for expectations to be realistic given the short duration and voluntary nature of summer programs.