



## Tabletop Session Summary

June 24, 2021

### Applying the NSLA Community Indicator Framework

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**Presenters:** Mashona Council, [National Summer Learning Association](#); Alex Wan, [Horizons Atlanta, Inc.](#)

This tabletop discussion provided guidance on how to use the National Summer Learning Association Community Indicator Framework to improve program delivery.

### Session Highlights

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- » Horizons Atlanta (an affiliate of Horizons National) provides a free summer enrichment program for six weeks to public school students (grades K-8) in Atlanta. It operates at local independent schools, colleges, and universities. The core programming includes literacy, mathematics, and swimming instruction. Swimming not only provides students a life skill but also helps to build their confidence. Participants also engage in social and emotional learning, art activities, and field trips. They are offered breakfast, lunch, and snacks each day.
- » The Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council (of which Horizons Atlanta is a part) is comprised of representatives from state and local education agencies, policymakers, service providers, and funding organizations. The group established its values from the beginning (e.g., equity, innovation, sustainability, etc.). The values helped the group to find common ground when there were disagreements.
- » The Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council's work is based on a 2019 landscape report that was commissioned by the United Way of Greater Atlanta and the Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network. The report assessed 228 summer programs in 13 counties that served 51,073 students combined. Key findings that came out of the report were that summer programs most often offered academic enrichment, STEM, or literacy content. The report also found that high school students in need of college/career readiness programming were only served by a quarter of programs. Finally, the report identified transportation as a common barrier to participation.
- » There are several initial recommendations based on the report. Partnerships between stakeholders can help expand capacity. Having a summer learning fund and a system of continuous improvement can help support program improvement and sustainability. Creating a network of summer learning providers that offer comprehensive programming in at least one critical content area is important, as well as having a regional communications campaign to build awareness about provider offerings. Lastly, establishing a summer learning intermediary can help in terms of having a champion for this work.
- » The findings informing the work of the Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council are consistent with the National Summer Learning Association's indicators for effective summer learning systems.



- » The indicators start with having a shared vision and statewide coordination. It is important to develop a statewide action plan with dates, deadlines, and objectives. Having a memorandum of understanding with partners can also help to clarify what partners are to be held accountable for and are ultimately supposed to do.
- » The engaged leadership indicator involves having champions for summer learning, including elected officials.
- » Data management systems are another indicator and are essential for consistently collecting data across programs. Consistency is imperative for analyzing outcomes statewide at the end of summer and from year-to-year.
- » Having a plan for continuous improvement enables stakeholders to have a shared understanding about what quality looks like and to make data-driven decisions.
- » Examining comprehensive resources statewide can help with the management and coordination of resources necessary to sustain results.
- » Finally, coordinated marketing and communications can help with building program awareness and could be the foundation for creating a more streamlined recruitment and enrollment process for summer program participants.

### Shared Resources

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- » [Community Indicators of Effective Summer Learning Systems: Quick Reference Guide](#)
- » [NSLA City Assessment Reports](#)

### Questions and Answers on Applying the NSLA Community Indicator Framework

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**In terms of expanding capacity, how is the quality of programs considered (e.g., licensed versus non-licensed programs)?**

Currently in Georgia, the quality standards are not a mandate. Summer programs are encouraged to use the standards as guidance. For the Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council, the focus on expanding capacity was balanced with addressing issues of access, as this was identified as an area of need in the NSLA's Landscape Assessment Report. The Summer Learning Council used the indicators as a framework to prioritize their efforts.

**Recognizing that it takes time to implement this work, how did the Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council decide to tackle each priority?**

The Greater Atlanta Summer Learning Council started by identifying their overall objectives, goals, and priorities. Once they were defined, it divided into subgroups based on the indicators. The larger group still convenes, and there are opportunities for each member to chime in and voice their perspective regardless of their subgroup. However, breaking up into subgroups allowed them to dive more deeply into each indicator.

**What piece of advice would you offer to those who might be starting the work of implementing effective summer learning systems or establishing partnerships?**

The advice is two-fold. The indicators form a great framework for this work and ensure that any program is hitting all the right notes and thinking through all the key points. The second piece of advice is to welcome the dissonance and embrace the fact that not everyone will be on the same page on every



issue. This allows you to develop a solid plan going forward, understand the push back, and identify the language and approach to take on this work.

