



## Tabletop Session Summary

June 24, 2021

### Evaluation Models: Learning from Data

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**Presenters:** Brian Doran, [Texas Education Agency](#); Jessica Newman and Deborah Moroney, [American Institutes for Research](#)

This tabletop discussion examined several approaches to evaluation that can be used to make improvements to summer programs.

### Session Highlights

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- » The evidence base related to summer learning and enrichment has shown that summer programs can be effective, and students who attend frequently may see benefits in math and reading. Youth who attended a summer program for 20 days or more, for example, were found in a rigorous research study to have performed better on state math tests.
- » Summertime experiences also provide opportunities for belonging, relationship development, to develop new interests, and to simply have fun.
- » There are specific design and implementation principles with proven effectiveness for summer programming including comprehensive planning (e.g., ensuring programming is well-designed), using trained educators, and offering a combination of academic and enrichment activities. Related factors include program duration, attendance, and group/class size.
- » Evaluation is important to help understand how things are going and where improvements are needed. It can provide evidence, for example, that what's being done is working.
- » The purpose and goals of an evaluation should drive the evaluation design. If the goal is improvement, then the evaluation would need to focus on program practice. An implementation study could be appropriate in that case. If the goal is to prove that what's being done is working, then the evaluation would need to focus on outcomes. In that case, an outcome study would be fitting. If the goal is to tell a story, then a case study could be a suitable option.
- » There are several factors to keep in mind when evaluating summer programs. Summer programs are voluntary, operate on a shorter time frame, use mixed staffing models, and vary in terms of implementation models.
- » As a first step in planning an evaluation, identify realistic questions (i.e., what do you want to know and what do you want to do with what you know). Next, make sure the desired evaluation is not duplicating an existing effort. (Use existing data when possible.) Finally, only collect data that you can analyze and use.
- » Also important for evaluation efforts is prioritizing and sharing power with the many stakeholders contributing to the research.



- » In Texas, funding was allocated prior to the pandemic to add up to 30 additional days to the school year under the Additional Days School Year (ADSY) incentive program. In addition, ADSY Planning and Execution Program grants were made available, through support from the Wallace Foundation, to plan for and implement research-based summer programs. (This work shifted a bit during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, as there was a sense of urgency around providing open access summer learning tools to the field.)
- » The ADSY Planning and Execution Program is being evaluated under the Texas Summer Learning Study, which will provide formative feedback and insight into the impact of the program. Important questions for the study are who is being served; how are evidence-based practices being used to support student outcomes; and how is policy guidance and technical assistance shifting based on implementation results.

### Shared Resources

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- » [Are You Ready to Assess Social and Emotional Learning and Development?](#)
- » [Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success](#)
- » [NCEE Blog: An open letter to Superintendents, as summer begins](#)
- » [Summer Learning Framework](#)
- » [Why am I Always Being Researched?](#)

### Questions and Answers on Evaluation Models: Learning from Data

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#### **Are districts, states, and service providers considering including evaluation metrics and data needs in RFPs and contracts prior to the start of programs to make vendors aware of the expectations?**

For the TEA grant program, the RFP transpired through a partner organization, The Wallace Foundation. There was a lot of collaboration, however, between TEA and The Wallace Foundation in order to secure desired outcomes.

#### **How can Regional Centers assist districts with planning for evaluation?**

Plans for ESSER funds are being made, but districts may not be thinking about the evaluation piece at this time. The Regional Centers could think about how to collaborate with states and districts to help elevate this piece and to ultimately maximize the use of funds.

#### **What are some of the plans for connections to long term outcomes?**

Engagement and relationships are important things to consider to get to outcomes. It is important to have well-rounded measurement that factors in quality, implementation, and the outcomes.

States recognize that one variable alone is not necessarily responsible for increases in state testing results, so they are looking at student outcomes across a suite of initiatives and components. Using the ADSY program as an example, the TEA is looking at measures for student growth. For the first cycle of ADSY, the district is using their assessment of choice due to time constraints. (Future cycles may differ.) Depending on the size of the cohort and funds available, plans may include comparing demographic outcomes of students who are not doing ADSY with those who are.



**Partnerships are important for implementing summer programs. How important are partnerships for implementing evaluations?**

The TEA started collaborating early in the initiative with several organizations interested in expanding summer learning, including community foundations and advocacy groups. Through this network, all partners have been involved in the development and ongoing success of the ADSY program. Metrics were identified early on that met the expectations of all the partners, and regular touchpoints have been scheduled to assess how things are going.

