



Tabletop Session Summary

August 12, 2021

Vacation Academies: High Power Learning in Short Time Blocks

Presenters: Dr. Beth Schueler, [University of Virginia](#); Sarah Robb and Matt Matera, [Empower Schools](#)

This tabletop discussion explored vacation academies as a strategy for learning acceleration during school breaks.

Session Highlights

- » Advancement Academies provide intensive instruction to students in small groups during vacation breaks. They are typically weeklong programs held during the equivalent of a full school day. In the end, students will have received a month's worth of instruction in a week. Academic data informs selection for and grouping within programs, typically having a student-teacher ratio of 8:1 or 10:1. Teachers are also selected through a rigorous process.
- » There is strong research on the effectiveness of Advancement Academies. They not only provide meaningful academic experiences for students, but students also tend to be excited about learning. Likewise, teachers feel honored to be selected.
- » Advancement Academies are cost effective (\$600/student on average) and are customizable based on the context and need. While it varies, meals (e.g., breakfast and lunch) and transportation may be provided.
- » Advancement Academies have been successful in diverse Title I school districts in Springfield, Massachusetts; Lawrence, Massachusetts; and Waco, Texas. Students in these cities saw gains in both math and English Language Arts. Further research is needed on different adaptations of the model (e.g., when delivered virtually, when implemented with more diverse groups of students, or when provided over multiple weeks).
- » There are other options for accelerating learning including high-dosage tutoring, afterschool learning, technology-based interventions, and many others. Advancement Academies don't preclude utilizing these other options but can work in concert with them.

Shared Resource

- » [Academies for Learning Advancement: Research and Practitioner Perspectives - Planning Checklist](#)
- » [Academies for Learning Advancement: Research and Practitioner Perspectives - Presentation Slides](#)



Questions and Answers on Vacation Academies: High Power Learning in Short Time Blocks

What content areas are the focus of Advancement Academies? Is science included?

While the programming in Lawrence, Massachusetts focused on other areas including science, historically the focus has been mostly on math and literacy.

What type of organization is Empower Schools?

Empower Schools is a non-profit organization. Their core work is partnering with districts and helping them to give decision-making power to teachers and leaders in school buildings.

Is there a template for implementing an Advancement Academy?

There is not a packaged template that can be easily implemented; there is a PowerPoint presentation available that provides considerations for planning. The Empower Schools team is also available to provide information and tips on how they have approached implementing an Advancement Academy.

