

**April 14, 2022**

**Webinar Summary**

**Moderator: Brenda McLaughlin, National Comprehensive Center**

**Panelists: Dr. Allison Crean Davis, Westat**

**Dr. Leslie Goodyear, EDC**

**Patricia Lewis, Grand Prairie ISD**

**James Lane, U.S. Department of Education**

**Webinar Highlights**

**>>**The “National Center Presents” series is a new approach to universal capacity-building from the National Center. This series will allow the National Center to build awareness and knowledge among states and districts around high-leverage challenges, common needs, and evidence-based strategies and solutions related to the focus topic. These interactive webinars are designed to respond to time-sensitive field needs, integrate purposeful linking of research, policy and practice, elevate actionable knowledge, examples, and practical resources available through the National Center, the Comprehensive Center Network, the U.S. Department of Education, and partner organizations.

Summer learning and enrichment is an evidence-based approach to academic growth and social-emotional development and a critical post-pandemic educational strategy. Yet launching or expanding summer programming requires districts to possess certain resources, knowledge, and skills that may be new to them or not fully developed. This session featured a robust conversation with national summer researchers and local practitioners around what it looks like to design, execute, and sustain summer learning and enrichment programming over time.

Pulling off a high-quality and impactful summer program isn’t easy - it requires thoughtful planning and the engagement of a diverse group of educators and community partners. As the authors stated in RAND’s pivotal publication Getting to Work on Summer Learning, “Launching a summer learning program is akin to starting a new school year, but with less time for planning and execution. A good planning process might be the most important characteristic of a strong program.” This discussion is intended to elevate what we know from existing research about the practices, capacity, resources and supports needed for successful summer programs and add to our knowledge with two new research studies by Westat and EDC and practical guidance

from educators who are implementing evidence-based approaches.

[*Getting to Work on Summer Learning, 2nd ed*](https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/pages/getting-to-work-on-summer-learning-2nd-ed.aspx)*.* identified a number of practices in creating success programs that foster engagement and achievement. The practices are as follows:

* Early robust planning
* Qualified staff with content knowledge and grade level experience
* Sufficient time on task
* Targeted recruitment and focus on attendance
* Written curricula aligned to student needs and interests
* Fun and engaging enrichment
* Positive culture and climate with small class/group sizes
* Opportunities for cost savings through partnerships, centralized planning
* Program leader with knowledge and influence.

While all of these best practices remain true, the data for this study was collected from 2011 through 2014 and we know our world and the context surrounding summer programs has shifted dramatically over the past several years as we were first halted by and then learned to live with the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these practices have become even more important, while others may have become more challenging to pull off.

The Westat and EDC studies bring new knowledge to the table about the summer learning landscape from just prior to and during the pandemic.

The EDC study showed that:

* Prior to the pandemic, summer programs were more likely to be focused on literacy and the needs of special populations.
* By contrast, in summers 2020 and 2021, districts are more likely to focus their summer programs on social-emotional learning, hybrid instruction, and racial equity.

>>Patricia Lewis, Associate Superintendent at Grand Prairie ISD, Grand Prairie, Texas, provided her expertise and insight around her district’s collaborative effort to create, implement and sustain the successful MY CAMP summer program that not only created growth opportunities for staff, students and parents, but reinvigorated excitement surrounding summer learning in her district. Key components to her summer learning program involved innovative program design, creating excitement and enthusiasm around camp culture in a location that otherwise might not experience it, and involving her district colleagues, paved the way for success.

>>What are ways that district colleagues can be brought together to plan for summer learning? Who can be involved?

It’s important for everyone to have a seat at the table. Rather than working in silos, representation throughout the district was critical to the collaborative implementation of the program.

* Forming a steering committee that meets monthly, examples of whom include:

principals, principal supervisors, members of the curriculum team, instructional technology, operations, professional development leader, parent liaison and counseling leader, director of food service, director of facilities, STEM director, the fine arts director as well as human resources;

* Engaging principals throughout the planning and implementation process;
* Having strong leadership and support from the superintendent down; and
* Partnering with technical assistance partners.

>>With regard to sustainability, what are some ways to think about projected funding in the coming years?

ESSER funds weren’t used in Grand Prairie’s strategy as one of their intents was on sustainability. Once the funding amount was known, the budget was created from that number. They were able to leverage pulling funds from various departments, in part by the ability of having department representation on the steering committee. Some examples of the buckets of where funds were allocated are as follows:

* Title 1 funds
* District funds for summer school
* Bi-lingual department
* SPED department

>>What are some strategies that can be used surrounding challenges in lack of interest for summer programs?

It is important to create engaging and exciting messaging. Using trusted messengers such as principals, family engagement staff or community partners for example, are strategies to build and main interest. For example, for parents or caregivers, ensuring that there is simplicity with accessing information, or registering for the program are other ways to remove barriers for attendance.

**Shared Resources**

>>[RAND Summer Learning Series, Getting to Work on Summer Learning, 2nd Ed.](https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Getting-to-Work-on-Summer-Learning-2nd-ed.pdf)

>>[Wallace Foundation Summer Learning Toolkit](https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-learning/toolkit/pages/default.aspx)

**[Place here additional shared resources that might be applicable.]**