



WHAT DO HIGH-QUALITY SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS LOOK LIKE?

High-quality summer learning programs are designed to engage youth through fun activities that develop their academic and social-emotional skills, and increase health and wellness. When the programs are high quality and youth participate consistently over weeks or months, improvements in youth skills and outcomes are likely, according to research from the RAND Corp.

High-quality summer learning programs share the following key features. These standards are adapted from the Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs and the Youth Development Resource Center Standards for Quality Youth Development Programs.

Michigan summer program providers should also refer to the Michigan Out-Of-School Time Standards and The Michigan School-Age Youth Development (MiSAYD) Certificate and the Core Knowledge and Competencies for guidance on staff training, licensing and management. LARA and Great Start to Quality can assist with guidance on licensing.

ATTENDANCE / DOSAGE

- Youth attend consistently (attend 85 percent of sessions on average).
- Programs run a minimum of 150 hours (or 5 weeks).*
- Programs include at least 25 hours of on-task mathematics or 35 hours of language arts instruction to produce academic outcomes.**

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- There are mutually respectful and caring relationships between staff, volunteers and youth.
- Staff, volunteers and youth know each other's names and spend considerable time getting to know each other but maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Individuals and the group learn through conflict resolution.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

- Safety and security procedures are in place (e.g. emergency procedures, fire extinguisher, first aid kit, check-in/check-out procedure, etc.).
- Youth are supervised at arrival, throughout indoor and outdoor activities, and as they leave the program.
- The physical environment is clean and has adequate facilities for basic needs (water, restrooms) and needed equipment for the planned activities.
- There are clear expectations so that the program has order. Youth and adults jointly design a community conduct agreement, and define positive behavior and consequences.
- Community spirit is present (e.g. daily shared traditions, awards for positive actions or attitudes).

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* NSLA Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs. Retrieved from: www.summer-learning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CASP-Quick_Reference_Guide.pdf ** Augustine, McCombs, Pane, Schwartz, Schweig, McEachin & Siler-Evans. (2016). Kids Who Attend More Benefit More: Voluntary Summer Learning Programs. Retrieved from: www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB9924.html

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ACTIVE, ENGAGED LEARNING AND SKILL BUILDING

- Learning is thematic or project-based with an explicit learning and skill-building focus connected to the real world.
- The program has knowledgeable instructors.
- A certified teacher is consulted on curriculum development.
- The program accommodates different learning styles and encourages youth to try out new skills and learn from mistakes.
- Activities or field trips expose youth to places they have never been or activities they have never done.
- Throughout the day, youth are given opportunities to make plans, reflect and strengthen their critical thinking.

YOUTH VOICE, CHOICE AND LEADERSHIP

- Youth have a voice in shaping the program activities, a choice of activities and opportunities to develop their leadership skills.
- Youth feel ownership of the program and a sense of pride.
- Adults share facilitation with youth.
- Youth have a chance to mentor or teach skills with others in the program.

QUALITY STAFF AND SUPPORT

- The adult to youth ratio is 1:12 or lower.
- Seasonal staff are hired at least three months before the program begins and are hired against a set of articulated competencies for each position.
- The program requires staff training, and training includes time for activity planning, practice facilitating activities and classroom/behavior management.
- Site coordinators have a role in hiring and supervising staff, have information to make day-to-day decisions and lead at least weekly staff meetings to celebrate successes and make adjustments.
- Staff are observed, coached and given feedback to improve throughout the summer.
- Staff are paid a living wage that is adequate to retain staff and reduce turnover.

INTENTIONAL PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENT

- Activities are intentionally planned.
- A detailed hourly, daily and weekly schedule is available for youth, parents and staff.
- Predictable routines are incorporated.
- The program has goals and learning objectives that are developmentally appropriate for the ages and stages of the youth involved.
- Program staff engage program partners in joint training and planning prior to the summer, communicate regularly, co-facilitate activities and have clearly articulated roles and responsibilities.

DIVERSITY, ACCESS AND INCLUSION

- Youth from different backgrounds are included and their unique needs are served.
- The program has an anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policy. Staff ensures the program is inviting, safe and inclusive to all.
- Program staff reflect the diversity of the youth and community being served.
- The physical environment is barrier free, and activities are adapted to allow participation by youth with varying physical, intellectual and social abilities.

FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Parents are the primary stakeholders of the program and have multiple opportunities to participate, including volunteering or through activities that stimulate family learning.
- Developmentally appropriate but multi-age programs encourage regular attendance and full family participation.
- The program staff communicate with parents through multiple methods at regular intervals before and during the program.
- Program hours meet the needs of families and are flexible.
- Youth produce meaningful, tangible work and showcase new skills in a culminating event or performance for families or invited guests.
- Staff plan and collaborate with school and community leaders and communicate regularly. There are common goals between school curricula and program activities.

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