

# BEST PRACTICES FOR COMPREHENSIVE SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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In the following report, Hanover Research discusses best practices for summer learning programs and describes how districts across the country structure summer enrichment, acceleration, and transition programs.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

## INTRODUCTION

During summer vacation, many students across the country return to school to participate in summer learning programs, ranging from elementary enrichment programs to high school calculus courses. A growing number of school districts across the country offer summer learning programs to combat the documented “summer slide” in cognitive skills (especially reading)<sup>1</sup> and allow motivated students the opportunity to explore new subjects or make room in their schedule for more classes during the school year.

The following report explores best practices in comprehensive summer programs. **Section I** reviews literature on best practices and expert recommendations for the design and administration of an effective summer learning. The remainder of the report presents findings of Hanover’s scan of summer learning programs across the country. **Section II** describes enrichment programs that offer fun learning opportunities for students, particularly elementary-aged children. **Section III** describes acceleration programs, which offer students the opportunity to complete courses for credit during the summer. **Section IV** describes transition programs that are designed to support students as they move from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school to high school.

## KEY FINDINGS

- **Districts offer a variety of themed enrichment programs, typically to elementary and middle school students.** Enrichment programs typically last one or two weeks and feature themes ranging from robotics to music to career exploration. Some districts offer multiple themed enrichment programs over the course of the summer so that students can explore a variety subjects. Reviewed programs typically charge between \$8 and \$17 per hour of instruction, plus additional fees for early drop-off, aftercare, and transportation.
  - *Examples of enrichment program themes include:* creative writing, LEGO engineering, mental math through card games, ocean exploration, culinary arts, drag racing, careers in healthcare, hip hop dance, piano lessons, and automotive technology.
- **Districts most commonly offer credit-bearing acceleration programs to high school students.** Mathematics acceleration courses are particularly popular, as they offer motivated students the opportunity to complete coursework over the summer and then take higher-level courses (e.g., AP Calculus) later in their high school career. Some districts also offer acceleration courses online. Whether or not districts charge tuition for the acceleration courses varies, according to available resources and state

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<sup>1</sup> McCombs, J. et al. “Making Summer Count.” RAND Corporation, 2011. pp. 17–18.  
[http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND\\_MG1120.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1120.pdf)

law. Experts recommend that acceleration programs last five to six weeks and meet for a minimum of four hours per day.

- *Examples of acceleration program courses include:* Geometry, Transition to Precalculus Ideas, Integrated Math Topics for Gifted Students, Elements of Composition, Special Topics in History: Vietnam, Drawing, Consumer Economics, and Driver's Education.

- **While most districts typically offer transition programs to incoming Grade 9 students who are “at risk,” some districts offer transition programs for all students, including incoming middle school students.** Transition programs typically feature orientation activities, such as meeting teachers, an introduction to school technology, and mock classes. Some districts also include sessions that focus on bullying and study skills (for middle school students) and academic preparation (e.g., a mathematics refresher for high school students).
- **Planning for an effective summer learning program must start early.** Researchers say the most effective programs begin planning no later than January, and appoint a district-wide coordinator to oversee recruitment and training of staff, marketing, and program evaluation. Programs should hire high-quality educators to teach in the program, and consider how they can use volunteers to provide additional staffing support. Districts should also consider how they can use federal and state funds creatively to fund summer learning programs, and pursue partnerships with community-based organizations to secure funding and arrange unique learning activities for students.

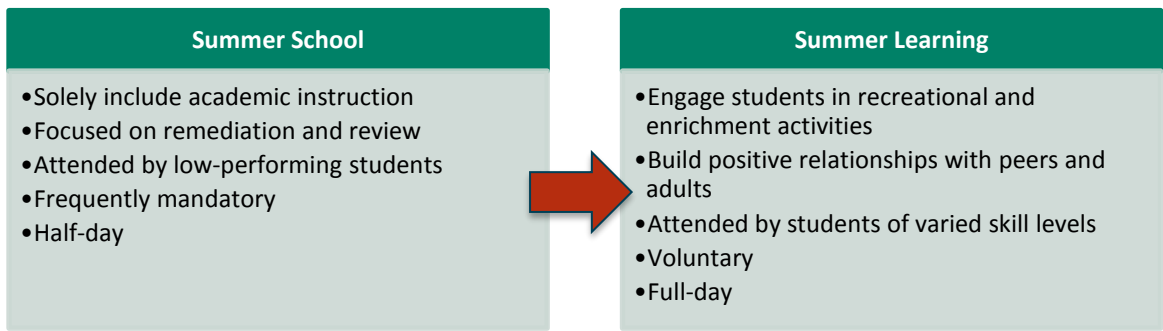
# SECTION I: BEST PRACTICES FOR SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAMS

As district-operated summer learning programs become more common, several research organizations have published reviews and guides that district leaders can use as they plan fun and enriching programs for their students. Much of the available literature focuses on specific types of summer programs, such as programs to support at-risk youth, academically-oriented programs, and summer “camps” for elementary students. In general, the literature does not address *simultaneous* operation of multiple types of summer programs. This section synthesizes best practices from the wide body of available resources for summer learning, which may apply to most or all summer learning programs, regardless of program type or students served.

## PROGRAM DESIGN

**Summer learning programs should provide engaging and enriching learning experiences for students.** In a 2009 review of effective summer learning programs, The Wallace Foundation describes how traditionally, summer school programs were simply extensions of the school year, targeting low-achieving students. However, districts increasingly offer summer programming for students with “wide-ranging interests and needs,” which the Wallace Foundation describes as “summer learning programs.”<sup>2</sup> Today’s summer learning programs may include educational programming, arts activities, career development, sports, and other opportunities to support student development during the summer months. In addition, the review’s authors observe that these programs are more likely to be voluntary and full-day. Figure 1.1 describes the contrast between traditional summer school and enriching summer learning programming.

Figure 1.1: Summer School Vs. Summer Learning



Source: The Wallace Foundation<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Terzian, M., K.A. Moore, and K. Hamilton. “Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically Disadvantaged Children and Youth.” The Wallace Foundation, July 2009. p. 10.  
<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/documents/effective-and-promising-summer-learning-programs.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Figure content adapted from: Ibid.

**Effective summer learning programs provide structured learning opportunities that are linked to standards.** The district may use curriculum standards and self-developed standards, where appropriate. The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) describes how organizers of summer programming should establish program standards that “[provide] structure and clear expectations” for program staff and participants.<sup>4</sup> The NSLA describes how effective programs outline clear behavioral expectations for program participants and learning outcomes that can be measured following the conclusion of the program.<sup>5</sup>

The Wallace Foundation adds that districts should consider how to integrate curriculum standards into summer programming, particularly programs that teach academic content. The programs should engage students in active learning and provide opportunities for out-of-classroom learning. Program activities should be hands-on, with opportunities for real-world application and physical activity. Figure 1.2 lists The Wallace Foundation’s recommendations for summer program activities.

**Figure 1.2: Features of Effective Summer Learning Activities**

- **Make learning fun.** Successful summer learning programs supplement academic instruction with enrichment activities that are relevant and engaging to children and youth. Some examples include a debate on current events, use of technology, field trips, hip-hop dance, rap and spoken word, improvisational comedy, art, drama, and storytelling. They also include time for sports and recreational activities to offer students a chance to participate in the physical activities they enjoy.
- **Ground learning in a real-world context.** Consistent with an accelerated learning approach, academic concepts are best learned when applying them in a real-world context, for example, by teaching students about the difference between deciduous and coniferous trees by taking them on a hike through the forest.
- **Integrate hands-on activities.** Didactic lectures may increase knowledge but are not very effective at changing behavior. Interactive forms of instruction such as immersion and experiential learning help to keep students engaged in the material. Engaging children in games, group projects, field trips to historic sites, nature expeditions, and science experiments are all ways in which to make learning more interesting and applied.
- **Content should complement curricular standards.** Successful educational programs integrate learning activities that complement what children are learning during the school year. Therefore, academic content is aligned with statewide, grade-level curricular standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.

Source: The Wallace Foundation<sup>6</sup>

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

### PLANNING

**Planning for a summer learning program must start early.** The RAND Corporation, which has published several reviews of summer learning programs, recommends that districts begin

<sup>4</sup> “Best Practices in Summer Learning Programs for Middle and High School Youth.” The National Summer Learning Association. p. 12. [http://www.smartersummers.org/bestpractices/NSLA\\_BestPractices2012-Stream.pdf](http://www.smartersummers.org/bestpractices/NSLA_BestPractices2012-Stream.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 12–17.

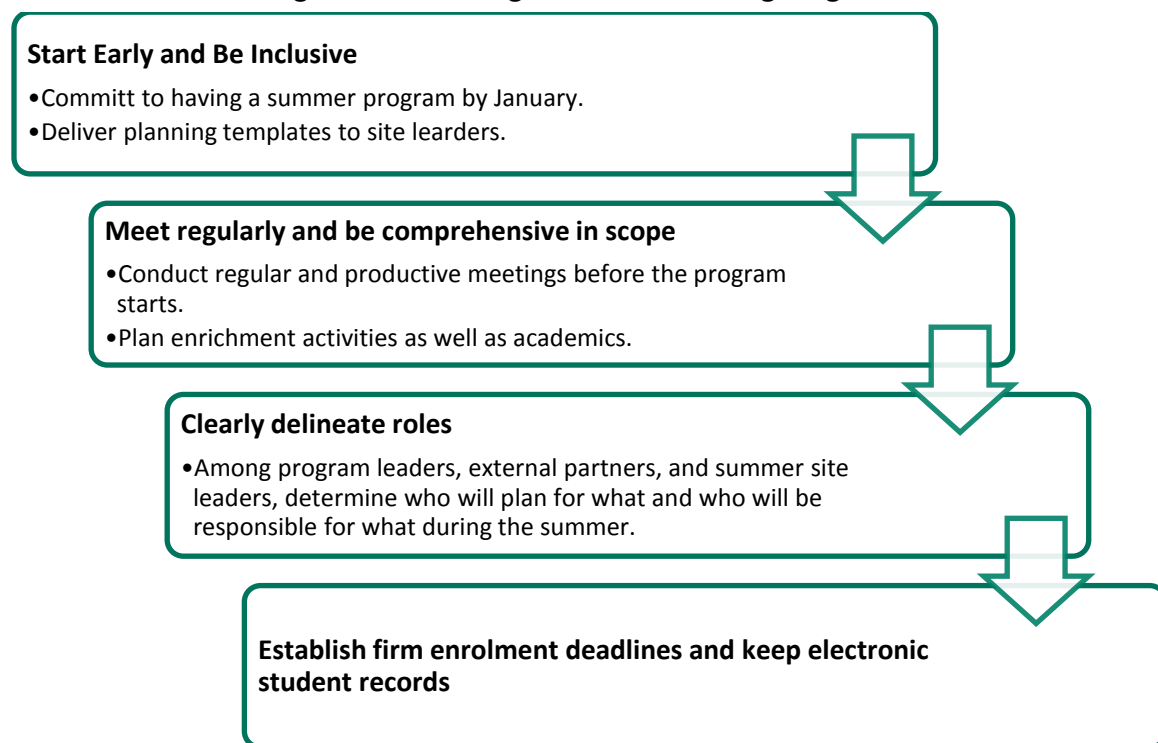
<sup>6</sup> Terzian, Moore, and Hamilton, Op. cit., p. 17.

planning summer learning programs no later than January.<sup>7</sup> RAND researchers recommend that district leaders involve school site leaders in the planning process, but should centralize decision making:<sup>8</sup>

Developing high-quality summer programs can be challenging. We found that providers that succeeded in developing a well-structured program that attracted students to enroll and attend had high-quality, dedicated year-round administrators with time devoted to planning and programming. Planning began early in the school year. Early planning allowed programs to conduct early hiring (thereby maximizing their teacher recruiting pool) and early recruiting (thereby maximizing student enrollment).

Districts reviewed for this report often centralized organization of their summer learning programs in the community education offices, or in similar departments that are responsible for extended learning.<sup>9</sup> Figure 1.3 presents the RAND Corporation’s recommendations for planning a summer learning program.

**Figure 1.3: Planning a Summer Learning Program**



Source: RAND Corporation<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Augustine, C. et al. “Getting to Work on Summer Learning: Recommended Practices for Success.” RAND Corporation, 2013. p. xiv. [http://bostonbeyond.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Getting-to-Work-on-Summer-Learning-Recommended-Practices-for-Success\\_0.pdf](http://bostonbeyond.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Getting-to-Work-on-Summer-Learning-Recommended-Practices-for-Success_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> McCombs et al., Op. cit., pp. xvii–xviii.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see: “Youth Programs.” Edina Public Schools, 2017.

<https://www.edinaschools.org/cms/lib/MN01909547/Centricity/Domain/17/YouthCatalogFinal.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Figure content adapted from: Augustine et al., Op. cit., p. xii.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Through partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs), districts can both provide students with unique out-of-school learning opportunities and potentially secure external funding for the summer program. The RAND Corporation's review found that CBO partnerships contribute to program sustainability:<sup>11</sup>

[The review] found benefits from partnerships between school districts and CBOs that included a wider variety of programming options, and more varied funding sources. However, a number of other partnerships may be beneficial, as several types of organizations have an interest in promoting summer learning experiences for youth—districts, CBOs, private summer learning providers, cities, and local funders. Each of these organizations has a set of resources and skills that can help build sustainable summer learning programs. [The RAND Corporation] encourage leaders to consider all local resources and build appropriate partnerships when developing these programs.

For example, summer learning programs described in this report partnered with local foundations to secure funding, with area businesses to find mentors for youth,<sup>12</sup> and with area nature and gardening organizations to arrange expert staff and field trip opportunities for elementary students.<sup>13</sup>

## FUNDING

**Districts should think creatively to identify funding for summer learning programs.** The NSLA, in its *Funding Resource Guide*, encourages districts to consider how they can use federal and state funding, grant awards, and community sponsors to fund their summer program. The guide lists dozens of potential sources of funding available to districts to use for summer learning programs.<sup>14</sup> The RAND Corporation outlines additional recommendations for districts as they develop the budget for their summer learning program:<sup>15</sup>

- *Design the summer program with costs in mind.*
  - To control fixed costs, avoid assigning small numbers of students to many sites.
  - Use enrichment providers to help leverage additional funds and provide a full-day program.
  - Hire staff to achieve desired student-to-adult ratios based on projected daily attendance, not the initial number of enrollees.
- *Put resources into tracking and boosting attendance.*

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<sup>11</sup> McCombs et al., Op. cit., p. xviii.

<sup>12</sup> "CTE Summer STEM Robotics Camp 2015." Renton School District, 2015.

<http://www.friendsofrentonschools.org/uploads/images/CTE%20Summer%20Stem%20Robotics%20Camp%20Report%202015.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> "Youth Programs," Op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> "2016 Funding Resource Guide." National Summer Learning Association, 2016.

<http://www.summerlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/FundingResourceGuide.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Augustine et al., Op. cit., p. xv.

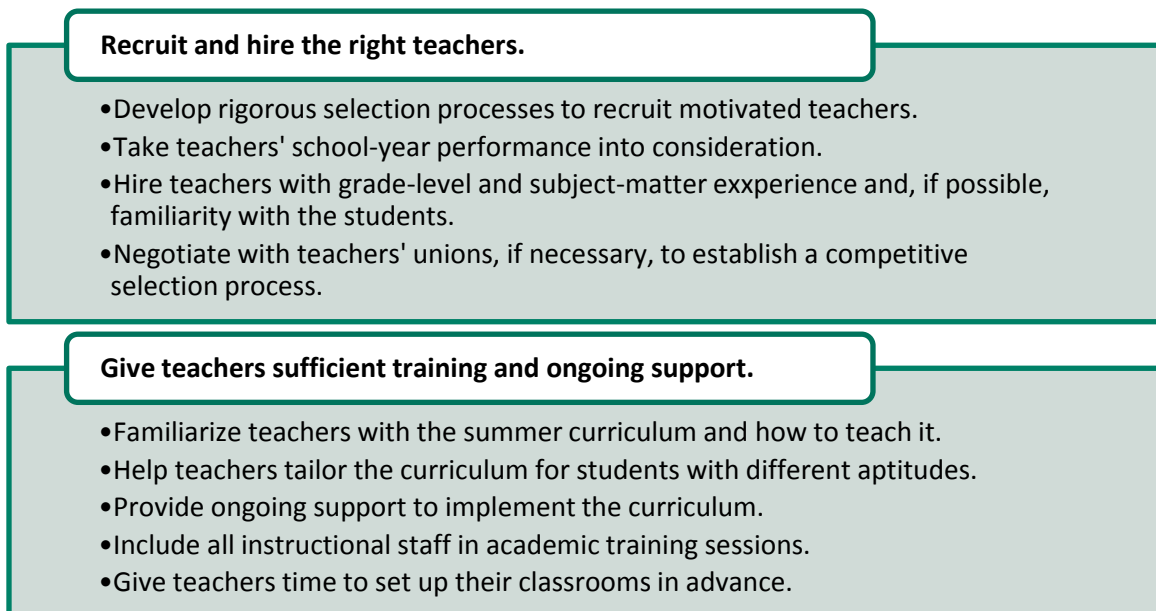


- *Use effective cost-accounting practices.*
  - To understand costs per student served, express costs on not just a per-enrollee basis, but also on a per-attendee, per-hour basis.
  - Set up data procedures to enable cost tracking on a per-attendee, per-hour basis.

## STAFFING

**Effective summer learning programs hire experienced, trained teachers.** In addition, experts recommend that academically-oriented courses have low student-teacher ratios and small class sizes.<sup>16</sup> The RAND Corporation adds that teachers should have experience in behavior management. To select impactful teachers to participate in the summer program, RAND offers the recommendations listed in Figure 1.4.

**Figure 1.4: Staffing Summer Learning Programs**



Source: RAND Corporation<sup>17</sup>

Districts may also consider using high school volunteers or hiring AmeriCorps volunteers to support summer learning programs. Teachers who want administrative experience may be willing to serve as summer site coordinators.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Terzian, Moore, and Hamilton, Op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Augustine et al., Op. cit., p. xiv.

<sup>18</sup> McCombs et al., Op. cit., p. xvii.

## SECTION II: ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

This section describes enrichment programs that provide fun learning experiences for students, but typically do not offer academic credit. Hanover’s scan reviewed summer learning programs in districts identified by research organizations that focus on summer learning,<sup>19</sup> high-achieving districts,<sup>20</sup> and other districts that offer innovative summer programs for students.

### PROGRAM THEMES

Many districts offer enrichment programs to students, particularly elementary and middle school students. These programs may be offered as a series of separate classes, or as a comprehensive “camp” that offers a variety of activities for students. For example, Penn-Delco School District in suburban Philadelphia offers a series of short (one to two week) courses for elementary students, ranging from “Experimental Art Making” to “Intro to Coding.”<sup>21</sup> Peoria Unified School District in suburban Phoenix offers a “Summer EdCamp” for students in Grades K-8 that extends throughout the summer months and includes themed weeks and field trips.<sup>22</sup>

**Summer enrichment programs offer thematic program in academics, STEM, the arts, and other areas.** For example, Edina Public Schools, in suburban Minneapolis, offers one-week programs that invite students to explore nature, chemistry, LEGO engineering, sports, and other topics.<sup>23</sup> Shrewsbury Public Schools in Massachusetts offers more than a dozen one-week, half-day classes as part of its elementary enrichment program that allow students to explore drama, science, and travel.<sup>24</sup> Figure 2.1, on the following page, presents an excerpt from the district’s 2017 Elementary Summer Enrichment Program catalog.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see: [1] “What Constitutes and Effective Summer Program?” California School Boards Association, 2013. <https://www.csba.org/productsandservices/allservices/~media/f5f07e67c1e94e6fb8f0c323922bb66e.ashx>

[2] “Summer Learning Opportunities in High-Poverty Schools.” Council of Chief State School Officers, 2005. [http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2005/Summer\\_Learning\\_2005.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2005/Summer_Learning_2005.pdf)

[3] “Summer Program Planning.” Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2016. <http://www.k12.wa.us/SSEO/pubdocs/SummerProgramsSLIDES.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> For example, Hanover reviewed summer programs offered by districts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Consortium, “a prestigious and small group of high performing school districts” convened by AASA. [1] “About the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Consortium.” AASA. <http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdministratorArticle.aspx?id=19132>

[2] “Superintendent’s Report on This Weeks 21<sup>st</sup> Century Consortium Meeting in Austin, TX.” Manhattan Beach Unified School District. <https://www.mbusd.org/apps/news/article/331128>

<sup>21</sup> “2017 Summer Enrichment Program.” Penn-Delco School District, 2017. pp. 5–6.

<https://www.pdsd.org/cms/lib/PA01000989/Centricity/Domain/30/Enrichmentbrochure2017finalWITHCANCELAT ION.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> “Summer EdCamp.” Peoria Unified School District, 2017. <https://www.peoriaunified.org/Page/4014>

<sup>23</sup> “Youth Programs,” Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> “Elementary Summer Enrichment Courses.” Shrewsbury Public Schools, 2017.

<https://www.shrewsbury.k12.ma.us/schools/Surveys/Sumenrich/catalogelem.asp>

**Figure 2.1: Shrewsbury Public Schools Elementary Summer Enrichment Program**

CLASS	GRADES
<b>Dragons and Beyond</b> Explore the fascinating world of dragons through literature, art, and geography. Learn the origins of these magical beasts and locate the countries around our world where they lived. Listen to stories with dragons roaming the countryside and create your own stories, poems, puppets, and skits, you will build a miniature dragon's lair for your personal dragon.	2-4
<b>Great Gardening Gems</b> Discover the art of planting different types of gardens while using your imagination and math skills to create unique projects. Learn about different types of herbs used for cooking and plant your own basil. Explore the science of how the ecosystem works while creating an indoor terrarium using a recycled bottle. Design a mosaic garden stone, plant a flower garden and create your own "lucky" bamboo rock garden while learning about the history of bamboo. Bring garden gloves!	2-4
<b>Lights, Camera, Action through Reader's Theater</b> Do you love to read? Well, if you love to read and perform, come and join Lights, Camera, Action through Reader's Theater. In this enrichment class we will practice our reading fluency through reading Reader's Theater plays. Some of the titles include Frog and Toad, Henry and Mudge, Anansi and the Talking Melon, Coyote Steals the Blanket, Aesop's Fables and more!	2-3
<b>Snack Well, Be Well</b> Snack well and be healthy! Healthy snacks boost energy and allows us to focus better in school and at home. Eating healthy builds a foundation for a lifetime of smart choices. In this class we will explore and prepare fun and delicious options for snacks.	2-4
<b>Star Wars</b> Come travel to a galaxy far, far away, to learn about all your favorite and not so favorite characters from the Star War movies. You will be the master of your universe, create and imagine your own version of the Star Wars sagas. Write a story book with illustrations, make daily crafts such as light sabers. Experiment with different material and see how you can make galaxy goop!	1-3
<b>Beach Combers, Surf's Up</b> Explore the fascinating ocean world. Learn about sea horses, dolphins, manatees and more through National Geographic Kids and technology. Explore oceans, coastlines, and habitats of these sea creatures. Design your own t-shirts, treasure boxes, sea urchin slippers, and write a special message in a bottle! Cool off with our "funtastic" water games!	2-4
<b>Biology and the World Around Us</b> See how our world works! We spend a large part of our day outside getting hands on with nature! We create habitats for insects, learn about the ecosystems local to us, explore the food chain, and more. Explore a world you've never seen before!	2-4
<b>Build Mental Math Through Card Games</b> Would you like to grow your math brain by playing games? Cribbage uses mental math strategies to find combinations of points. Learn to play cribbage and other games in this exciting camp. You will build math skills and have fun doing it!	4
<b>Creative Writing: Let the Page Rip</b> This is no ordinary writing course! Loosen up and find your creative side in writing. Students will find inspiration in everyday things, access exciting vocabulary, practice planning, take risks with writing ideas, and share. Inspiration is drawn from indoors, outdoors, and from group activities. This is not a sit in a chair course.	2-4

CLASS	GRADES
<b>Exploring Italy</b> Ciao! Are you ready to take a trip to Italy? We will become magnificent artists like Michelangelo and DaVinci as we explore the Renaissance. We will even learn about architecture and play some Italian games. The passports we create will take us on a journey through the cities of Rome, Florence, and Venice!	2-4
<b>Medieval Magic</b> Step back in time and explore a week of Kings, Queens, Knights, and castles. We will investigate some castles that still exist in Europe. Children will use their creativity to create crafts and imagine what it would be like to live in a real live castle as well as what to do with a dragon.	PK-K

Source: Shrewsbury Public Schools<sup>25</sup>

## WRITING

### **School districts offer creative writing opportunities to students as young as Kindergarten.**

For example, Eanes Independent School District in Texas offers a one-week Young Writers' Camp to elementary students in Grades 2-5.<sup>26</sup> The program is led by district teachers who have received training from the Central Texas Writing Project at Texas State University, a local site of the National Writing Project. During the camp, students engage in imaginative story writing and work on "passion projects" that give students happiness and satisfaction.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, summer writing enrichment at Tempe Elementary School District in Arizona follows a more traditional curriculum: students in Grades K-3 "practice the Writing Process and incorporate the Six Traits of Writing to produce a variety of writing applications including opinion pieces, informative/explanatory text, functional text, and narratives."<sup>28</sup>

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM)

**STEM programs give students the opportunities to explore contemporary topics and learn technical skills.** For example, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), in suburban Washington, D.C., offers STEM programming for students in Grades 3-9. The elementary program includes activities that explore aerospace and renewable energy, and opportunities to learn Autodesk Inventor design software and programming. At the middle school level, students entering Grades 5-7 can participate in a two-week "Tech Adventure Camp."<sup>29</sup> Students at the camp explore careers and technology as they rotate through multiple themed courses over the course of the program, including:<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Figure content taken verbatim from: Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> "EISD Young Writers' Camp." Eanes Independent School District.

<https://www.eanesisd.net/parents/summer/young-writers-camp>

<sup>27</sup> "Elementary Young Writers' Camp 2017." Eanes Independent School District.

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZWFuZXNpc2QubmV0fGJjZXxneDo5MzBiMjU3OGZmMDgwYmI>

<sup>28</sup> "Summer Enrichment Program." Tempe Elementary School District, 2017. pp. 12-13.

<http://www.tempeschools.org/home/showdocument?id=24331>


<sup>29</sup> "Camps and Institutes: STEM Camp." Fairfax County Public Schools. <https://www.fcps.edu/academics/summer-learning-programs/summer-enrichment-opportunities/camps-and-institutes-stem-camp>

<sup>30</sup> "Tech Adventure Camp." Fairfax County Public Schools, 2016. <https://www.fcps.edu/academics/summer-learning-programs/summer-enrichment-opportunities/camps-and-institutes-tech>

- *Arduino Programming*: computer programming, constructing basic circuits, and writing code.
- *Automotive Technology*: basics of automotive technology, repairs, and use of power tools and electronic test equipment.
- *Culinary Arts*: basic nutrition concepts and why breakfast fuels academic, social, and physical performance.
- *Drag Racing*: design and engineering of dragsters.
- *Electrical Engineering*: basic electronic principles, build a take-home electronics projects.
- *Parametric 3D Modeling & Assemblies*: 3D modeling using Autodesk Inventor
- *Young Entrepreneurs*: business plan development, marketing, use of Microsoft Office suite

FCPS's STEM program for high school students features opportunities to further develop their Arduino computer programming skills through projects that seek to address real-world challenges."<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, Renton School District (RSD) in Washington partnered with nearby businesses to find expert mentors for middle and high school students in its two-week STEM robotics camp, described below in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Renton School District STEM Robotics Program**



**Renton School District** in Washington offered a two-week STEM robotics camp to middle and high school students in the summer of 2015. The program targeted student populations that are underrepresented in STEM fields, especially females and minorities. Students had the opportunity to learn technical skills associated with STEM career pathways, including 3D printing, shop skills, CAD Sketchup, and computer programming (e.g., JavaScript). In particular, a goal of the program was to promote collaboration among students of different grades. Student groups worked together to build and program robots to compete in a final challenge.

The STEM robotics camp received financial support from the Friends of Renton Schools, a community foundation, and staffing support from adult mentors who are STEM specialists, such as professionals from Microsoft, Boeing, Amazon, and Google. The program was free for Renton residents and included transportation and meals.

Source: Renton School District, *Renton Reporter*<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> "Camps and Institutes: STEM Camp," Op. cit.

<sup>32</sup> [1] "CTE Summer STEM Robotics Camp 2015." Renton School District, 2015.

<http://www.friendsofrentonschools.org/uploads/images/CTE%20Summer%20Stem%20Robotics%20Camp%20Report%202015.pdf>

[2] Compton, T. "Renton Schools Hosts Summer Robotics Camp." *Renton Reporter*, July 2, 2015.

<http://www.rentonreporter.com/news/renton-schools-hosts-summer-robotics-camp-slide-show/>

### CAREER EXPLORATION

New Trier Township School District, a high-achieving district outside of Chicago, offers career exploration courses as part of its summer enrichment program offerings for high school students. The district offers four career exploration courses:<sup>33</sup>

- Careers in Business and Law
- Careers in Engineering and Nanotechnology
- Careers in Healthcare
- Environmental and Horticulture Careers

The courses, which convene on the campus of nearby Oakton Community College, offer students the opportunity to learn career-related skills and take field trips to area businesses.<sup>34</sup>

### ARTS

Districts offer students of all ages opportunities to explore the visual arts. For instance, York Suburban District in Pennsylvania offers an art camp called “Pop Art!” to students in Grades 1-6 centered around the work of artist Andy Warhol. Middle and high school students in the district can participate in a portfolio development program that employs a variety of media to capture landscapes, nature, still life, perspective, and figures.<sup>35</sup> Wilton School District in Connecticut offers an Arts Lab for students in Grades 1-3, where students make clay sculptures, marbelized paper, and lava lamps. Students in Grades 4-6 can take a jewelry making class.<sup>36</sup>

Districts offer a variety of creative music and dance enrichment courses as well. For example, Edina Public Schools offers the following music courses as part of its extensive summer youth program:<sup>37</sup>

- Summer Piano Lessons (Grades 1-12)
- Hip Hop Dance Camp (Grades 1-5)
- *Moana* Musical Theater Camp (Grades 1-5)
- *Beauty and the Beast* Musical Theater Camp (Grades 1-5)

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<sup>33</sup> “2017 Summer School.” New Trier Township School District, 2017. p. 10.

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiJw72IwonVAhUGPD4KHRgOA9oQFggvMAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.newtrier.k12.il.us%2FAdministration%2FNew\\_Trier\\_Publications%2FDocuments%2FSchool\\_Publications%2FSummer\\_School\\_Brochure%2F&usg=AFQjCNFle4nYJl\\_WeJP4PKcHMRzPAS9iew](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiJw72IwonVAhUGPD4KHRgOA9oQFggvMAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.newtrier.k12.il.us%2FAdministration%2FNew_Trier_Publications%2FDocuments%2FSchool_Publications%2FSummer_School_Brochure%2F&usg=AFQjCNFle4nYJl_WeJP4PKcHMRzPAS9iew)

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> “2017 Summer Enrichment.” York Suburban School District, 2017.

<http://www.yshs.k12.pa.us/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=S7L0eDUplM4%3d&tabid=5738>

<sup>36</sup> “Independent Summer Programs 2017.” Wilton Public Schools, 2017.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nI\\_vKKuiZyG8LC7e0onzn0nIITBAItxi4VaUIJ\\_Elgl/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nI_vKKuiZyG8LC7e0onzn0nIITBAItxi4VaUIJ_Elgl/edit)

<sup>37</sup> “Youth Programs,” Op. cit.

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

### PROGRAM COSTS

The amount that districts charge for a summer enrichment program can vary and may include additional costs for materials, field trips, and staff. Figure 2.3, below, shows the total costs for the enrichment programs discussed earlier in this section. The data show that districts charge between \$8 and \$17 per hour of instruction. The fees for piano lessons offered through Edina Public Schools are much higher, likely because the district contracts with an outside provider, and the lessons may be provided one-to-one.<sup>38</sup> Some districts, such as Wilton Public Schools and Fairfax County Public Schools, charge slightly higher rates for students who are not residents of the district.<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 2.3: Enrichment Program Costs**

DISTRICT	COURSE	TOTAL COST	COURSE LENGTH	INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS	COST PER HOUR
Penn-Delco Public Schools (PA)	Experimental Art Making	\$80	4 days, 2.5 hrs per day	10	\$8.00
	Ukulele	\$70	4 days, 2.5 hrs per day	10	\$7.00
New Trier Township School District (IL)	Career Exploration Courses	\$225	10 days, 4.5 hrs per day	45	\$5.00
York Suburban School District (PA)	Pop Art!	\$89	4 days, 2 hrs per day	8	\$11.13
	Portfolio Development	\$90	4 days, 2 hrs per day	8	\$11.25
Wilton Public Schools (CT)	Art Lab	\$250	5 days, 3 hrs per day	15	\$16.67
	Jazz Jewelry Making	\$250	5 days, 3 hrs per day	15	\$16.67
Fairfax County Public Schools (VA)	STEM Camp	\$275	5 days, 5.5 hrs per day	27.5	\$10.00
	Tech Adventure Camp	\$425	10 days, 5.5 hrs per day	55	\$7.76
Edina Public Schools (MN)	Piano Lessons	\$159	30 mins per week for 6 weeks	3	\$53
	Moana Musical Theater Camp	\$139	4 days, 3hrs per day	12	\$11.58

Source: District documents and websites<sup>40</sup>

Some programs also charge application or registration fees and offer extended day programs. For example, the Shrewsbury Public Schools summer enrichment program is available to families as a half-day, full-day, or extended day program, at the rates in Figure 2.4, on the following page.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> [1] "Independent Summer Programs 2017," Op. cit.

[2] "Important Information for Summer Enrichment Camps and Institutes." Fairfax County Public Schools. <https://www.fcps.edu/node/33184>

<sup>40</sup> Please see the citations presented earlier in this section.

<sup>41</sup> "Elementary Enrichment Program." Shrewsbury Public Schools, 2017.

<http://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/extendedlearning/elementary-summer-enrichment.cfm>



**Figure 2.4: Shrewsbury Public Schools Program Fees**

PROGRAM	TIME	COST PER CLASS
<b>AM or PM Session</b>	Morning Sessions 8:30-11:30 Afternoon Sessions 12:00-3:00	\$70 + \$10 registration fee
<b>Full Day Session</b>	8:30-3:00	\$150 + \$10 registration fee
<b>Early Drop Off</b>	7:00-8:30	\$25 + \$10 registration fee
<b>Extended Day</b>	3:00-6:00	\$60 + \$10 registration fee

Source: Shrewsbury Public Schools<sup>42</sup>

The largest expense for an enrichment program is often staff salaries. Other costs may include equipment and supplies, transportation, and meals. For instance, the Renton School District STEM Robotics Camp served 119 students in 2015 and cost approximately \$50,000 for the full-day program. Figure 2.5, below, shows the STEM Robotics Camp budget for 2015. The district notes that costs were almost twice as great in 2014, the first year it offered the program, because it needed to purchase equipment that was later re-used in 2015.<sup>43</sup>

**Figure 2.5: Renton School District STEM Robotics Camp Budget**

CATEGORY	COST
Robot Equipment/Supplies	\$10,741.87
Transportation	\$7,764
Teacher Meeting & Instructional Supplies	\$396.16
Camp Meals (Breakfast/Lunch/Snack)	\$7,349.50
Salaries & Benefits	\$22,901.67
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$49,126.20</b>

Source: Renton School District<sup>44</sup>

## SCHEDULING

Many districts offer summer enrichment programs as half-day programs, though some districts offer programs that extend the length of a typical school day. In addition, many districts appear to schedule their summer enrichment programs within a specified period of the summer, rather than the full summer.

For example, Wilmette Public Schools and Avoca School District in Illinois offer a joint summer enrichment program for students in Grades K-7. The program includes several dozen courses that are scheduled within a four-week period during the first half of the summer (June 14 to July 18). Each class is 50 minutes long and organized into three periods (e.g., Period 1: 8:30 – 9:20 am, Period 2: 9:30 – 10:20 am, and Period 3: 10:30 – 11:20 am). Parents may enroll their students in one, two, or three classes per day. Some courses are offered during multiple periods so that students may build schedules that meet their personal interests and family schedule.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.<sup>43</sup> "CTE Summer STEM Robotics Camp 2015," Op. cit., p. 9.<sup>44</sup> Ibid.<sup>45</sup> "Summer Enrichment Program 2017." Wilmette Public Schools, 2017.

[http://www.wilmette39.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_360846/File/Academics/Student%20Services/SEP/SEP2017.pdf](http://www.wilmette39.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_360846/File/Academics/Student%20Services/SEP/SEP2017.pdf)

## SECTION III: ACCELERATION PROGRAMS

This section describes summer acceleration programs, which offer students the opportunity to complete advanced coursework during the summer and possibly earn credit. Acceleration courses differ from remediation courses, which are designed to provide additional support to struggling students or offer students who have failed a course the chance to recover academic credit.

### ACCELERATION COURSE SUBJECTS

#### *STUDENTS SERVED*

**Acceleration programs are typically designed for students at the middle and high school level, though students across all grades can participate in summer acceleration programs.** In particular, districts can offer summer acceleration courses to elementary-level gifted and talented students. However, secondary-level programs are more likely to offer academic credit. For example, Fresno Unified School District in California offers two acceleration programs:

- **Young Scholars:** A program focusing on STEM education and verbal explanation for exiting Grade 2 students identified as having gifted and talented potential.
- **Original Credit:** Courses offered to exiting Grade 8-11 “on track” students, to accelerate and/or create room in their schedule during the traditional school year to take additional Advanced Placement classes, visual performing arts courses, and/or CTE courses.

In the following section, Hanover reviews the academic content and delivery methods of these acceleration courses.

#### *CORE ACADEMICS*

**Many districts offer acceleration courses in mathematics.** As mathematics courses are typically offered as a cumulative sequence, the summer period offers time for students to take extra classes and therefore complete higher-level coursework (e.g., Calculus) that otherwise would not be possible in a traditional four-year schedule. For example, Palo Alto Unified School District (USD) in California encourages students to determine whether they wish to pursue acceleration in math by the end of Grade 9. The summer school course catalog says that its summer Geometry course is available to rising Grade 10 students who “have the goal of completing five years of math in four years” and want to take AP Calculus later in their high school career.<sup>46</sup> The catalog explains that the summer course explores concepts “at a deeper level than the grade-level Geometry course, using both deductive reasoning (2-3

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<sup>46</sup> “Summer School Program.” Palo Alto Unified School District, 2017. p. 9.  
<http://gunn.pausd.org/sites/default/files/PAUSD%20Summer%20School%20Catalog%202017.pdf>

column proofs) and proofs by contradiction.”<sup>47</sup> The district also offers summer courses in algebra and calculus, as described in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: PAUSD Summer Acceleration Courses - Math**

COURSE	GRADE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Geometry</b>	Rising Grade 10 students who have completed Algebra 1 and <i>seek to complete five years of math in four years</i>	The fundamental objective of this advanced Common Core aligned high school course is to formalize and extend the Geometric concepts students learned in middle school and expand their knowledge of Geometry. Students will deepen their understanding of geometric relationships and explore geometric situations as they construct formal mathematical arguments. Topics covered include: inductive and deductive reasoning, congruence, similarity, right triangle trigonometry, transformations, polygons, circles, geometric measurement and dimension, solids, modeling with geometry, and an introduction to probability.
<b>Algebra 2</b>	Prerequisite course: Geometry	Topics covered include: polynomial/rational expressions and equations, equations with: radicals, absolute value, exponents and logarithms, circles and parabolas, interpreting quantitative and categorical data, making inferences/decisions, and justifying conclusions.
<b>Transition to Calculus Ideas</b>	Prerequisite course: Pre-Calculus or Analysis	The objective of this transition to calculus course is to introduce the students to the ideas and vocabulary of calculus and to solidify the Precalculus concepts needed to be successful in the AB Calculus course. The course will include but is not limited to limit theory about, differentiation of, and integration of polynomial functions and some of their applications. It meets the needs of students who wish to preview or build confidence with the ideas of calculus in a group setting.

Source: Palo Alto Unified School District<sup>48</sup>

**Summer math acceleration options can be offered to middle school students as well.** For example, Bellevue School District offers an Accelerated Math Summer Program to rising Grade 5-8 students. The Accelerated Math courses are designed to condense “a year’s worth of content into four weeks.” Incoming middle school students can take Integrated Math Topics (IMT) or Algebra if they earned a grade of 80 percent or higher in their previous math course and have the recommendation of their teacher and counselor. Students in the district’s gifted and talented education program, which is designed to accelerate mathematics by one year, can take specialized gifted courses beginning in Grade 5.<sup>49</sup> Figure 3.2, on the following page, lists the middle school acceleration courses available to students in Bellevue.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> “Summer School Program,” Op. cit.

<sup>49</sup> [1] “Accelerated Math Summer Program.” Bellevue School District, 2017.

<http://www.bsd405.org/programs/summer-programs/accelerated-math-summer-program/>

[2] “Gifted Program Math Placement.” Bellevue School District. <http://www.bsd405.org/programs/gifted/gifted-math-placement/>

**Figure 3.2: Bellevue School District Middle School Acceleration Program**

GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES		GIFTED PROGRAM COURSES	
COURSE	ELIGIBLE STUDENTS	COURSE	ELIGIBLE STUDENTS
IMT1	Rising Grade 6 Students	Gifted IMT1	Rising Gifted Grade 5 Students
IMT2	Rising Grade 7 Students	Gifted IMT2	Rising Gifted Grade 6 Students
Algebra	Rising Grade 8 Students	Gifted Algebra	Rising Gifted Grade 7 Students

Source: Bellevue School District<sup>50</sup>

In addition, districts offer summer acceleration courses in other core subjects. For example, Palo Alto USD offers two acceleration courses in writing, described in Figure 3.3, below. The course catalog notes that the two courses are equivalent to a semester-long course and do not satisfy California's A-G requirements for public university admission, which suggests that these courses are not required elements of the district's high school curriculum.<sup>51</sup> As shown in Figure 3.4, on the following page, Naperville Community Unit School District (CUSD) 203 in suburban Chicago offers three acceleration courses in social studies, including a specialized course focused on the Vietnam War.<sup>52</sup>

**Figure 3.3: PAUSD Acceleration Courses - Writing**

COURSE	GRADE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Analysis of the Writer's Craft</b>	Priority for rising Grade 11 and 12 students	This course offers students who are serious about writing an opportunity to read and write in such genres as short fiction, poetry, short drama, and personal essay. Students are required to share their writing regularly with other students in the class. Students are encouraged to enter at least one writing competition or submit writing to a journal or newspaper
<b>Elements of Composition</b>	Priority for rising Grade 9 and 10 students	This course is designed to review the fundamental process of writing, including prewriting, writing a draft, evaluating and revising, and proofreading and publishing. Building skills in the following areas will be emphasized: ideas and content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, standard writing conventions, and presentation. Students will have daily in-class writing assignments to increase fluency and will utilize peer and self-evaluation strategies to assess their work.

Source: Palo Alto Unified School District<sup>53</sup><sup>50</sup> Ibid.<sup>51</sup> "Summer School Program," Op. cit., p. 7.<sup>52</sup> "High School Summer School 2017." Naperville Community Unit School District 203, 2017.  
<https://www.naperville203.org/cms/lib/IL01904881/Centricity/Domain/1054/2017%20Summer%20School%20Registration%20Packet%204%2018%2017.pdf><sup>53</sup> "Summer School Program," Op. cit.

**Figure 3.4: Naperville CUSD 203 Acceleration Courses – Social Studies**

COURSE	GRADES	DESCRIPTION	CREDIT
<b>American Government</b>	10-12	How is Democracy reflected in the three branches of the American system of government? In this course, students will study the fundamental concepts of the American political system, including its foundations, structures, and political behavior.	1.0
<b>United States History</b>	10-12	What is an American? The United States History course provides an investigation of the political, social, economic, and diplomatic trends involved with the development of the American nation.	1.0
<b>Special Topics in History: Vietnam</b>	11-12	Few episodes in contemporary history have had a more profound impact on American Society or compelled a more searching examination of America's role in the world. This course will seek to stimulate critical thinking about the Vietnam War and its meaning for Americans.	1.0

Source: Naperville CUSD 203<sup>54</sup>*ELECTIVE SUBJECTS*

**Districts offer acceleration opportunities in elective subjects, ranging from the arts to economics.** Naperville CUSD 203 offers credit-bearing acceleration courses in arts and computer science, in addition to core academic subjects. The district also offers a very popular driver's education class during the summer, but students cannot receive credit for the course. High school students can earn up to one credit (equivalent to two semesters) over the course of the summer. Figure 3.5, below, describes acceleration courses available to students in the district.<sup>55</sup>

**Figure 3.5: Naperville CUSD 203 Summer Acceleration Courses**

COURSE	GRADES	DESCRIPTION	CREDIT
<b>Design Concepts</b>	9-12	This course is an introduction to the elements and principles of art through the study of three-dimensional forms. This studio course explores basic sculptural processes, materials, and tools, and is designed to be of interest to the beginning as well as the more advanced art student.	0.5
<b>Drawing 1</b>	9-12	Drawing 1 is a beginning course to instill confidence in students who wish to draw realistically. Using media such as pencil, pen, crayon, and colored pencil, students will explore the elements of line, value, color, shapes, and one point perspective.	0.5
<b>Acting</b>	9-12	This course is a laboratory study of the basic principles and techniques of acting.	0.5

<sup>54</sup> "High School Summer School 2017," Op. cit.<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

COURSE	GRADES	DESCRIPTION	CREDIT
<b>Literary Themes</b>	12	This course allows readers to design, with the advice and consent of the instructor, their individual course of literature study. The instructor evaluates students' reading skills and literary analysis in a variety of assessments, both written and oral. Students who take this course should be prepared to work independently in a self-directed manner	0.5
<b>Computer Applications I</b>	9-12	In this course, students will improve in the ability to use the Internet as a research tool. Students will learn how to incorporate Excel graphs into work and take PowerPoint skills to a higher level. Students will improve in speed and accuracy by learning the touch method. Additionally, students will learn how to format MLA reports, letters, memorandums, resumes, and tables.	0.5
<b>Online Computer Applications II</b>	9-12	This online computer class provides skills that students will need in college, along with skills that will be used throughout the four years of high school. Students will build upon the skills taught in Microsoft Office by learning more efficient ways to use Word, along with new features that will enhance the look of documents. Microsoft Excel will be used to create spreadsheets that allow students to enter and format data, calculate data using a variety of methods, and generate and format charts.	0.5
<b>Consumer Economics</b>	11-12	The areas of consumer concerns to be addressed in this course involve a study of contracts and consumer protection, personal income taxes, banking and finance, budgeting, insurance, auto, housing, and the wise use of credit.	0.5
<b>Driver Education</b>	9-12	No description provided.	0.0

Source: Naperville CUSD 203<sup>56</sup>

### ONLINE ACCELERATION COURSES

High-achieving, self-directed students may benefit from acceleration courses offered online. For example, Lower Merion School District (LMSD) in suburban Philadelphia allows high school students to take acceleration courses both in the “face-to-face” format and through Montgomery Virtual Program (MVP), an online learning program operated by Montgomery County Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania.<sup>57</sup> The district also allows students who need to make up credits to complete classes through MVP as well. Some courses are available in MVP format for credit recovery students only, and vice versa, which suggests that the district may provide separate courses to acceleration and credit recovery students in the same subject.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> “Montgomery Virtual Program.” Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. <https://mvp.mciu.org/>

<sup>58</sup> “2017 Summer School.” Lower Merion School District, 2017. p. 6.

[https://www.lmsd.org/uploaded/documents/Academics/Summer\\_Programs/updated/2017\\_Summer\\_School\\_Courses\\_Updated\\_6.1.17.pdf](https://www.lmsd.org/uploaded/documents/Academics/Summer_Programs/updated/2017_Summer_School_Courses_Updated_6.1.17.pdf)

Figure 3.6 lists the acceleration courses available to Lower Merion School District students in summer 2017.

**Figure 3.6: LMSD Summer Acceleration Courses**

COURSE	FACE-TO-FACE	MVP
Global Studies 2	✓	
U.S. History	✓	✓
U.S. Government	✓	
Biology	✓	
Chemistry	✓	✓
Physics	✓	✓
Algebra 1 Part 2	✓	
Geometry		✓
High School Health		✓

Source: Lower Merion School District<sup>59</sup>

Fairfax County Public Schools, meanwhile, allows students to take Economics and Personal Finance online. The district notes that as the course is self-directed, “the student must be self-motivated and able to fulfill the requirements without a teacher to direct and assist with studies.”<sup>60</sup> The course, which fulfills a Virginia state graduation requirement, is offered twice during the summer, during which students access an online portal called FCPS 24-7 to complete 160 modules, take four tests, and pass a final exam. Students are provided a suggested schedule but expected to manage their own time.<sup>61</sup>

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

### PROGRAM COSTS

**Many districts do not charge tuition for credit-bearing summer school courses.** For example, under California state law, districts in the state may not charge tuition for credit-bearing summer school courses. In fact, Palo Alto USD refunded summer school tuition it had charged to parents in 2013, following criticism that the practice violated state law.<sup>62</sup> In 2017, the district funded its summer school program through a combination of district and state funding.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Naperville CUSD 203 appears to only charge tuition for its driver education course (\$300). The district also charges \$25 per three-week session if students require transportation.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> “Economics and Personal Finance - High School.” Fairfax County Public Schools.  
<https://www.fcps.edu/academics/high-school-academics-9-12/economics-and-personal-finance>

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> “PAUSD to Refund Illegal Summer School Tuition Charges.” Palo Alto Online, May 30, 2013.  
<https://paloaltoonline.com/square/index.php?i=3&t=20992>

<sup>63</sup> “2016-17 Budget.” Palo Alto Unified School District, 2016. p. 173. <https://www.pausd.org/sites/default/files/pdf-faqs/attachments/BudgetBook2016-17.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> “High School Summer School 2017,” Op. cit.



Bellevue charges tuition for its four week accelerated math courses based on free or reduced meal eligibility:<sup>65</sup>

- **Full Price Meal:** \$820
- **Reduced Price Meal:** \$480
- **Free Meal:** \$280

In Lower Merion School District, tuition for online acceleration courses is approximately one-third of the cost of face-to-face courses. As shown below in Figure 3.7, the district charges a \$75 registration fee, and charges higher fees for out-of-district residents. The tuition for online acceleration courses is higher than the tuition charged for online credit recovery courses.<sup>66</sup>

**Figure 3.7: Lower Merion School District High School Summer School Fees**

COURSE	COST
Registration – all students	\$75
Face-to-Face Course - resident	\$915
Face-to-Face – non-resident	\$1,850
Online Credit Recovery Course – residents only	\$275
Online Acceleration Course – residents only	\$350

Source: Lower Merion School District<sup>67</sup>

### SCHEDULING

**Credit-bearing acceleration courses typically last six weeks and meet for four to five hours per day.** The acceleration programs discussed in this section align with the RAND Corporation’s recommendation that academically-oriented summer learning programs should:<sup>68</sup>

- Operate the program for five to six weeks; and
- Schedule three to four hours a day for academics and focus on academic content during those hours.

Of the four in-person acceleration programs described in this section, three offer approximately 130 hours of instruction, as shown in Figure 3.8 on the following page. Please note that these times may include midday breaks and time for lunch.

<sup>65</sup> “Accelerated Math Summer Program,” Op. cit.

<sup>66</sup> “2017 Summer School,” Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Augustine et al., Op. cit., p. xv.

**Figure 3.8: High School Acceleration Program Schedules**

DISTRICT	DATES	TIME	INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS*
Palo Alto Unified School District (CA)	Session I: June 12-June 30 Session II: July 3-July 21	8:30 am- 2:00 pm	1 session (semester equivalent): 77-82.5 hours 2 sessions (full-year equivalent): 159.5 hours
Bellevue School District (WA)	July 10 – August 4	7:45 am – 2:15 pm	130 hours
Naperville CUSD 203 (IL)	June 5 – July 14	7:30 am – 12:20 pm	135.25 hours
Lower Merion School District (PA)	Face-to-Face Program: June 26 – August 4	8:00 am – 12:30 pm	130.5 hours

\* Includes lunch and midday breaks, if applicable; excludes days off for the July 4 holiday when noted.

Source: District web sites and documents

## SECTION IV: TRANSITION PROGRAMS

This section describes summer programs that are designed to provide students with additional support during two key transitions during their academic career: the transition from elementary school to middle school (the “middle school transition”), and the transition from middle school to high school (the “high school transition”). Often called “summer bridge” programs, these programs may include orientation activities, academic instruction, and team building activities.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAMS

The transition from elementary school to middle school may present overwhelming environmental, social, psychological, and academic changes to students. In many districts, the transition involves a shift from nurturing, self-contained classrooms led by a single teacher to a less personalized system where students rotate across multiple subject-specific classes over the course of the school day.<sup>69</sup> Experts recommend that districts introduce middle school transition activities in the year or two before middle school entry. These comprehensive programs may include school visits, opportunities for elementary students to meet middle school students, parent awareness activities, and meetings among elementary and middle school teachers to discuss student needs and interests.<sup>70</sup>

Some districts offer summer transition programs for incoming middle school students, though such programs appear to be much less common than comparable programs for rising Grade 9 students. However, some experts encourage districts to consider a summer transition program as a part of comprehensive programming to support incoming middle school students.<sup>71</sup>

**Middle school transition programs include orientation activities and instruction in strategies to address the challenges associated with starting at a new school.** A guide on middle school transitions published by the Georgia Department of Education (DOE) recommends that districts consider implementing middle school transition camps in the summer that “provide students with opportunities to socialize with other incoming students as well as learn from sessions that will aid them in academic success.”<sup>72</sup> The Georgia DOE suggests that the transition camp include opportunities for students to orient themselves to school, including a tour of the school, learning how the lockers work, and practice changing classes. In addition, the Georgia DOE recommends that the program offer sessions that focus

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<sup>69</sup> “Middle School Matters.” Georgia Department of Education. p. 5. <https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Federal-Programs/Documents/Parent%20Engagement/Final%20Middle%20School%20Transition%20Toolkit.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> [1] Lorain, P. “Transition to Middle School.” National Education Association. <http://www.nea.org/tools/16657.htm>

[2] “Middle School Matters,” Op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> “Middle School Matters,” Op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

on bullying, peer pressure, staying organized, and study skills. Figure 4.1, below, presents a sample schedule for a three-day middle school transition program.<sup>73</sup>

**Figure 4.1: Sample Middle School Transition Camp Schedule**

Day 1	
8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Middle School Welcome, Overview, and Student Panel
9:45 – 10:30	Student Team Building Activities in Small Groups
10:30 – 10:35	Travel to Assigned Workshop
10:35 – 11:15	Assigned Workshop
11:15 – 11:20	Travel to Assigned School Tour Group
11:20 – 12:00	School Tour and Locker Discussion/Practice
12:00	Dismissal
Day 2	
8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Welcome and Orientation to Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Student Organizations (Interactive Session)
9:45 – 11:05	Mini Class Sessions (students participate in mock schedule visiting five classes that are 10 minutes each with a set amount of time to transition to each class)
11:05 – 11:10	Travel to Assigned Workshop
11:10 – 12:00	Assigned Workshop
12:00	Dismissal
Day 3	
8:30 – 9:00	Registration
9:00 – 10:00	Welcome, Student Team Building Exercise, and Student Q&A
10:00 -10:05	Travel to Assigned Workshops
10:05 – 10:55	Assigned Workshop
10:55 – 11:00	Travel to Lunch
11:00 – 12:00	Celebration Lunch or School Picnic (Students, Parents, and Family Invited)
12:00	Dismissal

Source: Georgia Department of Education<sup>74</sup>

One example of a summer program is at Mendez Middle School in Santa Ana Unified School District in California, where incoming Grade 6 students are required to attend a week-long summer bridge program before the start of the school year. The program includes orientation to the school and opportunities for students to meet members of the school community. The district informs parents that their children are already enrolled in the program, and that they will not receive their school-issued Chromebooks and email addresses if they do not attend.<sup>75</sup>

Students will familiarize themselves with the campus, check out their Chromebook computer, receive their school email address, learn to navigate Aeries and Canvas (our school's grading and Learning Management System), and meet some stellar teachers! Students who go through our Summer Bridge Program feel more prepared, confident, and ready to be successful scholars at Mendez!


<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>75</sup> "Mendez Summer Bridge Program." Santa Ana Unified School District. <https://www.sausd.us/Domain/7041>

**Experts recommend that districts include diverse representatives of the school staff and community in planning a middle school transition program.** For example, the Georgia DOE recommends that schools establish a transition camp planning team comprising school leaders, counselors, parent involvement coordinators, Title I coordinators, elementary and middle school teachers, and parents.<sup>76</sup> Figure 4.2, below, describes a summer middle school transition program in Redwood City Unified School District in California, which Stanford University researchers highlighted as an exemplar of community involvement in middle school transition planning.<sup>77</sup>

**Figure 4.2: Kennedy Middle School Summer Bridge Program**



**Kennedy Middle School** in Redwood City, California, runs a summer bridge program for all incoming middle school students. The program focuses on youth engagement with school by assigning students peer mentors, giving students the opportunity to plan and lead program activities, and collaborative games. The program also includes courses in mathematics and language arts, which are taught by Grade 6 teachers and integrate “fun” activities, such as computer programming and dance. The Kennedy Middle School summer bridge program also emphasizes family engagement. The school offers two workshops for parents that provide information about the school, and provides volunteer opportunities for interested parents.

In a brief about the summer bridge program, Stanford University’s Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities noted that the school leveraged in-house staff expertise in family engagement, mental health, academics, and youth development to build a robust and comprehensive program. In addition, the co-leadership roles for students made the program “more engaging, fun, and relevant for the students involved.” However, the brief further noted that achieving collaborative and shared leadership of a summer bridge can be challenging, particularly when schools leave planning and administration of the program to service providers (e.g., the parent coordinator) without significant involvement of academic staff.

Source: Stanford University<sup>78</sup>

## HIGH SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAMS

A growing number of districts implement high school transition programs as a strategy to prevent academic failure.<sup>79</sup> Grade 9 is a time when students undergo rapid personal and social-emotional growth, including development of self-regulation and self-management capacity, personal identity, and intellectual skills.<sup>80</sup> For many students, Grade 9 can be one of the most challenging years in their academic career. At the same time, research conducted in

<sup>76</sup> “Middle School Matters,” Op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>77</sup> Hofstedt, M. “Building Bridges: A Summer Program for Middle School Students Highlights a Community School in Action.” Stanford University, January 2007.  
<https://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Building%20Bridges%20Issue%20Brief.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Butrymowicz, S. and L. Shaw. “Summer-Bridge Classes Help Kids Kick-Start High School.” The Hechinger Report, September 8, 2010. <http://hechingerreport.org/summer-bridge-classes-help-kids-kick-start-high-school/>

<sup>80</sup> Bulleted content adapted from: Warren, C. e. al. “Final Report on the Study of Promising Ninth Grade Transition Strategies: A Study of Six High Schools.” March 2011. pp. 15–16.  
<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/slc/ninthgradecounts/ninthgradestudy2011.pdf>

the past two decades finds that Grade 9 course failure is highly predictive of whether a student will graduate from high school.<sup>81</sup>

Given the significance of the high school transition, **experts stress that summer transition programs should be more than just an extended orientation session.** Many high schools invite incoming Grade 9 students to summer orientation sessions, during which students visit the school, learn where their classes are located, and meet teachers. However, some experts describe such quick, universally attended programs as a “passive” strategy that does not fully support students who need transition support the most.<sup>82</sup> In a guidance document for districts that seek to implement a Grade 9 summer bridge program, the Great Schools Partnership (GSP) advises districts to design a curriculum that focuses on both the academic and social skills necessary for success in Grade 9. In particular:<sup>83</sup>

- The curriculum should be based on explicit learning goals aligned with Grade 9 academic expectations and standards.
- Students should receive intensive instruction in foundational academic skills and content, and personalized, project, and problem-based learning strategies enhance student engagement, skill acquisition, and relevance.
- The program should integrate social-emotional development into advisories and instructional time.
- Advisors and teachers should help students stay organized, plan ahead, set goals, practice communication skills, and build relationships with other students and adults.

The GSP further recommends that summer bridge teachers meet regularly with each other and with Grade 8 teachers to establish performance benchmarks and track student progress. At the end of the program, the teachers should prepare a report on the student’s progress for delivery to Grade 9 teachers.<sup>84</sup>

**Summer transition programs typically target low-achieving students, but some schools offer transition programs to all incoming Grade 9 students.** High school transition programs designed for all student groups may feature activities similar to those recommended for middle school transition programs. For example, City High School, a charter school in Tucson, invites all students to participate in its week-long summer bridge program. The program includes:<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> “Challenges of the Ninth Grade Transition.” Breakthrough Collaborative, February 2010. p. 1.  
<https://www.breakthroughcollaborative.org/sites/default/files/Feb%202011%20Research%20Brief-9th%20grade%20transition.pdf>

<sup>82</sup> [1] Warren, Op. cit., p. 18.

[2] Abbott, S. and K. Templeton. “Using Summer Bridge Programs to Strengthen the High School Transition.” Great Schools Partnership, 2013. p. 4. <http://greatschoolspartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Ninth-Grade-Counts-3.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Bulleted text taken verbatim from: Abbott and Templeton, Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.


<sup>85</sup> Brennan, C. “2012 Summer Bridge Program for Incoming 9th Graders.” City High School, April 12, 2012.  
<http://cityhighschool.org/2012/summerbridge/>

- Technology orientation
- Skill-enrichment projects
- Community building activities
- An introduction to after-school opportunities

Summer transition programs may also include prep classes for key academic classes. For example, in Prince George’s County Public Schools in Maryland, all incoming Grade 9 students are encouraged to participate in the district’s Algebra 1 and Biology Summer Bridge Programs. The four-week courses meet for four hours per day and are designed to “strengthen prerequisite knowledge for success” in these programs.<sup>86</sup>

**Effective summer transition programs for at-risk students focus on strengthening students’ connection to school.** For example, the Attleboro Public Schools transition program focuses on engaging students in academics and using team building activities to help students set goals, collaborate, and address conflict in a proactive way.<sup>87</sup> Portland Public Schools’ transition program, called “Step Up,” engages parents and community members to ensure that families understand the significance of academic failure and that students develop positive relationships with adult mentors. Figure 4.3 provides additional details about the Step Up program.

**Figure 4.3: District Spotlight: Portland Public Schools**



The **Portland Public Schools** “Step Up” program is described as an “on ramp” to high school. The district uses attendance and middle school course grades to identify “academic priority” students who are eligible for the program. The program leverages partnerships with community organizations to provide extra staffing, facilities, and to pair students with adult learning. Through a series of positive and self-affirming experiences, students in the program identify personal behaviors that may help or impede their success and discuss future educational aspirations. The program includes outreach and regular communication with the students’ families, including translation resources for non-English speaking families. In particular, Step Up communicates to parents that course failure, poor attendance, and behavior issues increase the chances that their student will not complete high school. Early data indicate that the program is effective: 70 percent of Step Up students earn all required core course credits in Grade 9 (compared to a district rate of 59 percent) and 98 percent are promoted to Grade 10.

Source: Great Schools Partnership<sup>88</sup>

Programs that target struggling students should use a combination of achievement data and teacher recommendations to identify students who will benefit from the program.<sup>89</sup> For

<sup>86</sup> “PGCPS Building a Bridge for Academic Success Through Summer Bridge Programs.” Prince George’s County Public Schools, April 25, 2014. <http://www1.pgcps.org/communications/press.aspx?id=193633>

<sup>87</sup> “Summer Bridge Program for Rising Grade 9 Students.” Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, November 12, 2013. pp. 27–28. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/news/2013/1112SummerBridge.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> Abbott and Templeton, Op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> “Summer Bridge Program for Rising Grade 9 Students,” Op. cit., pp. 19–20.



example, the Grade 9 Summer Bridge program in Attleboro Public Schools identifies students using the following sources of information:<sup>90</sup>

- **Student Data:** Students who receive a “warning” or “needs improvement” on state achievement tests
- **Staff Recommendations:** The district considers input from classroom teacher, coaches, adjustment counselor, ELL/McKinney Vento and Title I Coordinators, and the 5-8 SPED Coordinator to identify students who lack motivation, have poor attendance, and are struggling academically, socially, and/or emotionally in school.

Typically, Attleboro identifies and invites about 180 Grade 8 students to participate in the summer bridge program, of whom about 35 actually attend.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

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