

RECOMMENDATIONS

In analyzing the consistent and significant academic progress seen in schools utilizing the RISE summer program, we conducted a comprehensive assessment of the distinguishing features inherent in Lavinia’s program. Our scrutiny identified four pivotal components within the Lavinia RISE summer program that we firmly attribute to the acceleration of student learning and the facilitation of substantial achievement gains. To better understand why schools using the RISE summer program have consistently demonstrated significant gains for students, we looked at the characteristics that make Lavinia’s program distinct. We’ve identified 4 key components of the Lavinia RISE summer program that we believe are responsible for accelerating student learning and enabling greater achievement gains.

4 KEY COMPONENTS

of Lavinia RISE summer program responsible for accelerated student learning:

- 1 A focus on conceptual and transferable learning

- 2 A dedicated summer curriculum

- 3 Professional development practices focused on peer learning and student work

- 4 Systematic assessment practices

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Undoubtedly, individual teachers and schools participating in school-selected summer school programs often integrate similar components and strategies found within the RISE Summer Learning Program. Drawing from extensive research, the RISE program adopts best practices commonly implemented by many educators nationwide, both during the school year and during summer sessions.

However, research affirms that these strategies can’t be applied sporadically or on an individual teacher basis and produce the same consistent results as evidenced by the RISE Summer Learning Program. Instead, data and research supports the finding that all four strategies must be applied concurrently, consistently, and at scale.

1 RECOMMENDATION #1: Move from drills, tricks, and procedures to conceptual and transferable learning

Tips, tricks, and routines are prioritized over conceptual and transferable learning frequently in year-round instruction — and especially during summer school. Too often, and for understandable reasons, educators search for the most expedient way to move students to a place of understanding. Yet, in reality, memorization and procedural methods simply don't work. Students may get the answer right in the moment, but when it comes to applying that learning at a later point in time, the learning doesn't stick.

In fact, a 2022 study analyzing more than 200-word problems from the PARCC Assessment and Smarter Balanced math tests in elementary and middle school grades found that using a keyword strategy, such as teaching kids to hunt for words like “less and more,” leads students to choose the right operation less than half the time for single-step problems and less than 10% of the time for multi-step problems.

Furthermore, research conducted by the EdWeek Research Center found that math teachers in elementary and middle grades are less comfortable with and receive less training in how to approach teaching applied mathematics, such as probability and spatial concepts, than they do with other kinds of math, like number sense or algebraic thinking. Data indicates that student performance has suffered as a result, especially among disadvantaged kids. National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores show that the average 8th grader's performance fell 16 scale points from 2011 to 2022 in probability and statistics and 9 points in geometry.

For the highest impact for your summer program, replace instruction based on drills, tricks, and procedures with instruction that focuses on conceptual and transferable learning.



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2 RECOMMENDATION #2:

Move from adapting year-round curriculum to using a dedicated summer curriculum

To make a significant impact in a short amount of time, teachers need the right tools for the job. At the top of the list sits a high-quality, evidence-based curriculum designed to meet the specific needs of summer learners. Yet, schools often reuse regular school-year units and lessons or leave it up to individual teachers to decide what to teach.

Both of these approaches can backfire. Funding constraints, HR practices, contract negotiations, and other logistical issues mean that summer school staffing often only falls into place right before the program starts. Asking teachers who already report feeling overwhelmed by the number of things on their plate and who lack formal training in curriculum development to create a meaningful and effective summer school program at the last minute – and without any data to guide their efforts – doesn't set anyone up for success.

Research conducted by RAND and The Wallace Foundation found that leaders who decide on a summer school program in the fall and begin planning no later than January run a smoother summer program with less disruption to instruction. Their research identified that when district curriculum experts develop an in-house curriculum, it should be done over the course of several months. This ensures that the curriculum is coherent, comprehensive, and aligned with school-year standards. It should focus on key grade-level standards and grade-appropriate assignments and should be accompanied by high-quality resources, like detailed lesson plans, student materials, book lists, pacing guides, assessments, and rubrics, so teachers can focus on execution rather than material preparation. All of the resources should be provided to teachers far before the start of the summer program and ample time and support should be provided to the staff before the summer session begins.

If schools decide to purchase curricula instead, it's important to ensure that the program they select can be easily adapted to the amount of instructional time available during their summer session and aligns with appropriate grade-level content. It must also align with district curriculum school-year standards and be flexible enough to meet student needs based on identifiable learning gaps through differentiation of instruction. Effective strategies for differentiation must be included in the professional development provided.



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3 RECOMMENDATION #3:

Move from just giving teachers prep time to providing intentional teacher development

An extensive body of research has found that the single greatest factor that impacts learning outcomes is the quality of instruction students receive. However, teachers often receive minimal, if any, structured support, instructional guidance, or professional development in instruction for struggling students. Research suggests that the training teachers receive prior to the start of a summer learning program typically focuses exclusively on logistics.

This is not surprising, given that research conducted by The New Teacher Project found that, in general, school systems have been largely ineffective at helping teachers understand how to improve their instructional practice. The study found that as many as half of teachers in their tenth year or beyond were rated below “effective” in core instructional practices, such as developing students’ critical thinking skills.

Shifting from only providing teachers with prep time to providing high-quality professional development during summer school programs supports teachers in building transferable instructional skills they can use to maximize the impact of instruction year-round.

During the course of a summer school program, teachers should have the opportunity to gather weekly in peer learning communities and receive coaching on how to effectively evaluate student work together to improve rigor and outcomes.



Another key component of high-quality, continuous professional development is intellectual preparation. Intellectual preparation gives teachers an opportunity to internalize and differentiate lesson plans to deliver high-quality instruction to all students. These professional development meetings should be facilitated by a content expert, such as an instructional coach, department chair, school leader, or outside partner, and should take place on a weekly basis.

4 RECOMMENDATION #4:

Move from relying on inconsistent data to systematic assessment practices

Research shows that a large number of educators still rely on conventional practices and heuristic approaches rather than adopting evidence-based tools and methods to advance student achievement. Notably, summer school teachers have rarely been provided with data collection and analysis tools. Standardized state assessment results are rarely provided prior to or even by the end of the summer term, leaving teachers with only a vague understanding of what students need and no targeted information to differentiate instruction for individual students. As a result, program leaders also lack a clear understanding of whether the program was effective.

Research from 23 studies comparing teachers who were considered to be effective and teachers who were considered to be ineffective cites the difference between these two groups as the use of systematic processes for keeping and interpreting data on student performance.

Summer learning pre-assessments have proven to be particularly valuable for teachers to identify trends within their classrooms and to pinpoint learning gaps. Post-assessments serve as a crucial tool for determining student progress and devising a plan to respond to any persistent learning gaps that remain as a student starts the new school year.

Identifying a consistent artifact of learning within the curriculum allows teachers to monitor weekly progress. This artifact can take the form of an exit ticket or independent practice. Teachers should be provided with clear guidance on how to score and track this data throughout the summer program.

