

# 2023

## SUMMER LEARNING REFINEMENT GUIDE

MAXIMIZING STUDENT SUCCESS





## INTRODUCTION

Over the last two years, districts across the state have implemented summer learning camps for rising first through eighth graders. While leaders and teachers did not have much time to prepare for summer 2021 camps, they were able to use the lessons learned from the first year of implementation to improve their programming for the subsequent summer.

This summer, districts have another opportunity to refine and improve their summer learning camps to address learning gaps and prepare students to tackle rigorous grade-level content during the upcoming school year. This guide is intended to support districts' efforts to use research and learnings from the past two years of implementation to refine planning for this summer's learning camps.

The third-grade retention policy that takes effect this spring raises the stakes for ensuring summer learning camps are as effective as possible. This new policy requires third-grade students who are not proficient on the ELA portion of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) to receive additional supports as part of a pathway to promotion to the fourth grade.

Students scoring "below expectations" on TCAP must attend the district-run summer learning camp at a 90 percent attendance rate and participate in tutoring for their entire fourth-grade year. Students scoring "approaching expectations" on the ELA portion of TCAP may pursue one of two options as part of their pathway to promotion to fourth grade: participate in tutoring for the entirety of the upcoming school year and score proficient or above on the fourth-grade TCAP assessment or attend a district-run summer learning camp at 90 percent attendance and demonstrate adequate growth on the end-of-summer assessment. (See SCORE's [Promotion & Retention Pathways Flowchart](#) for a visual overview of key milestones and pathways for Tennessee's 2022-23 third-grade students.)

[Research](#) suggests that summer learning camps can be an effective strategy for addressing literacy and math learning gaps. As with any intervention, the success of summer learning camps depends on how they are designed and implemented. Programs that incorporate the following design principles tend to be the most effective.

# SUMMER LEARNING DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**DURATION:** Programs demonstrating the most positive impact on student achievement last at least five weeks and include at least three hours of academic instruction per day.

**ATTENDANCE:** Communicating the importance of consistent attendance to families, setting an enrollment deadline, and providing transportation are ways to ensure strong attendance.

**ACADEMIC CURRICULUM:** High-quality, standards-aligned curriculum materials and lesson plans can minimize teacher planning time while still maximizing the quality of instruction that students receive.

**ACADEMIC TEACHERS:** Certified teachers with strong content knowledge and support staff help provide a rigorous academic experience for all students.

**CLASS SIZE:** Capping class sizes at 15 students fosters the development of strong relationships and helps teachers offer individualized supports to students.

**ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES:** Providing enrichment courses and activities to supplement the core academic program is an important way to build engagement and motivate students to attend each day.

[Additional research](#) from the [Tennessee Education Research Alliance \(TERA\)](#) confirms that summer learning can be an effective strategy for addressing learning gaps and also emphasizes the importance of consistent program attendance to achieving positive academic outcomes. TERA's analyses of enrollment, attendance, and achievement trends from the 2022 summer learning camps of 10 Tennessee districts produced these key findings:

- 1) **Lower-performing students were more likely to enroll** in summer learning camps, meaning districts did a good job targeting the audience with the greatest need.
- 2) Enrolled students **attended** an average of two-thirds of days offered, with only 1-in-8 students hitting the 90 percent attendance mark that will be required for third graders facing retention.
- 3) Summer learning camps appear to have **improved student achievement in math but not ELA**.
- 4) The gains in math performance in the fall were **particularly notable for elementary, non-White, and economically disadvantaged students**.

This guide is focused on key areas that are most essential to implementing effective programming: program duration, attendance, curriculum and instruction, and data collection. The end of the guide includes a Summer Learning Design and Implementation Checklist and Summary of Resources to support your planning process.





## PROGRAM DURATION

National research on the effectiveness of summer learning programs suggests students need a minimum of **25 hours of math** instruction and **34 hours of literacy** instruction to show improvement on subsequent state assessments. Therefore, five- to six-week summer programs offering at least three to four hours of academic programming per day will be most effective.

Additionally, TERA's research on summer learning camps in Tennessee found that districts, on average, offered only **18 days** of programming and students attended an **average of 12 of these days**. Of the districts included in this study, those offering the most days of programming had the highest average number of days attended while those offering the fewest days had the lowest average number of days attended. TERA's research also indicates that summer learning camps were less likely to positively impact students' literacy achievement compared to math.

Given this research, as well as the third-grade retention policy that requires students to attend 90 percent of total days offered by the summer learning camp, **districts should ensure their summer learning camps last at least 20 full days**. Offering fewer than 20 days of programming puts students at risk of not receiving the minimum dosage of math and literacy instruction needed to see positive gains.

## ATTENDANCE

Consistent attendance is key to ensuring students benefit from summer learning camps. Given the requirements of the third-grade retention policy, it is also an important part of the new promotion pathways for students at risk of being retained in third grade. Research from TERA on last summer's learning camps shows that, on average, students across the 10 districts studied attended about two-thirds, or **12 out of the 18 days**, offered.

District teams should focus on several practices to drive consistent attendance, including:

- Establishing an enrollment deadline
- Communicating clear attendance expectations to students and families
- Sending frequent and targeted follow-up communication to parents or guardians of students who are not meeting attendance expectations
- Creating an engaging and positive site climate

The third-grade retention policy raises the stakes for ensuring communication to families of rising fourth graders who are at risk of retention receive clear and timely information about the new retention policy and the importance of attending a summer learning camp. As your district continues to refine its communication plan for third-grade retention and summer learning, it is important to emphasize the following:



**Attendance expectations:** Consistent attendance is key to students maximizing the benefits of summer learning programming. Ninety percent attendance at a summer learning camp is required as part of a pathway to promotion for students scoring below proficient on the ELA portion of the TCAP.

**Make-up policy:** Per [TDOE](#), districts should formulate and communicate a make-up day policy that includes the following components:

- The number of days a student can make up
- The documentation that must be provided for a student to be eligible to make up days
- The procedure and timeline for making up days



## TROUSDALE COUNTY SCHOOLS

Since the summer of 2021, Trousdale County Schools (TCS) has successfully implemented several practices to ensure high enrollment and attendance rates at their summer learning camps. Leaders established a March enrollment deadline for priority students. Teachers discussed the summer learning camp opportunity with priority families during parent-teacher conferences. Letters and phone calls were also used to communicate with parents. A secondary application window for nonpriority students was used April through May.

TCS communicated attendance expectations to families during the enrollment process. If a student and their family could not commit to attending the entire program, then a spot was not held for that student. As one of Trousdale's leaders explains, "We knew what we were doing. In order to help the students achieve as much as they could, they needed to be here."

Leaders and staff also worked to establish a positive school climate during the summer. As part of a schoolwide incentive program, teachers gave students tickets for successes during the day, which they could redeem for small prizes. Students with no more than two absences over the course of the program were eligible to attend a trip to the Nashville Zoo at the end of the summer.

## CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

While the logistics of summer learning coordination and student attendance strategies are critical, making sure students benefit academically is at the core of this work. Staff, too, are making an investment of time beyond the school year to push students even closer to grade-level achievement. Following are some guiding principles and key steps schools can take this spring to create an effective experience for students.



### Create Instructional Coherence

TNTP defines instructional coherence as an instructional approach that ensures “every element of an instructional program and its strategies — from core instruction to interventions to extended time — works together to advance the same set of grade-level student experiences.” Where student experiences are more coherent across Tier I and intervention settings, researchers have found that increases in student achievement are greater than in schools where students experience a wider variety of programming.

In terms of summer programming, leaders can create instructional coherence through the following steps:

- Focus on learning acceleration by implementing the same **high-quality instructional materials** that are used during the regular school year. As TERA's research findings indicate, teachers prefer using these materials versus state-provided materials.
- Ensure students identified with gaps in foundational skills receive **an hour of targeted foundational skills instruction during core instruction** or intervention time. Make sure to use the same materials and explicit foundational skills sequence from the Tier I content.
- For math and reading, provide **small-group instruction during high-dosage tutoring and intervention** that provides support on the same core content from the day or additional support on upcoming work for next year.



## Focus On Learning Acceleration

Given the limited duration of summer learning, it is critical that curriculum and instruction are targeted as much as possible to ensure students can confidently engage with grade-level learning when they reenter classrooms in the fall. This principle of learning acceleration applies both to math and reading comprehension.

- **To accelerate student learning in math, instruction should leverage the same high-quality instructional materials students will experience in the fall and should focus students on material they will encounter during the first few weeks of school.** Where possible, schools and districts who have adopted new high-quality instructional math materials for the fall may want to try to access early training on materials to work toward use of those materials in summer learning settings. Taking this approach during the summer would support acceleration of student learning while also giving students early experiences with any new systems and routines they may encounter in the new materials. Likewise, teachers would have an opportunity to internalize materials and understand how to support student learning. Where this is not possible or teachers do not have enough early training or exposure to the new materials themselves, districts should use the grade-level math materials with which they are already comfortable to accelerate student learning for the new school year.
- **To accelerate student learning in reading comprehension, teachers and leaders should also leverage the adopted ELA materials schools already have in place to expose students to the topics, texts, discussions, and writing opportunities they will experience in the fall.** For example, instructors should prepare exiting third graders for fourth grade by using fourth-grade quarter 1 materials as an anchor to preview early fourth-grade content and build background knowledge and vocabulary for early fourth-grade units. Building vocabulary and front-loading knowledge through the supplemental texts included with high-quality instructional materials can help ensure students go into the year with exposure to the array of content they will need to be successful with the central texts they will encounter. Students should spend time in summer building the knowledge they will need to support reading comprehension the following year and be asked to respond to those texts in grade-appropriate ways using the questions, discussion prompts, and writing tasks from the adopted materials for the upcoming year.

## Prepare For Data-Driven Foundational Skills

We know that for students to be successful readers, instruction must address both reading comprehension and mastery of foundational skills. From the SCORE report, [The Science Of Reading](#): “Strength in one area cannot compensate for a deficit in the other area, particularly for young readers. In other words, a young reader with excellent decoding skills will not understand a text if she does not also have knowledge of the topic. The opposite is also true. A beginning reader with a great deal of knowledge of the topic will struggle to understand the text if he cannot read the words on the page.” To work toward grade-level mastery of foundational skills during summer programming, **systems should quickly turn their attention this spring to assessing students with HQIM-based foundational skills placement assessments and plan for strategic grouping.**





- **Foundational Skills Placement Assessments.** Effective data-driven foundational skills instruction begins with a detailed, aligned assessment. While universal screeners such as AIMSweb are helpful to identify students for intervention and tutoring supports before summer programming begins, they cannot pinpoint students' unique skills gaps or provide instructors the detailed information they need to determine the highest leverage instructional supports for students. To ensure students begin next school year with grade-level foundational skills for grades 1-3, schools should allocate time late this spring to administer the foundational skills placement assessments that are likely included in their Tier I high-quality instructional materials. If they are not included in adopted materials, schools should use the placement assessments from the [Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement \(TNFSCS\)](#) to understand any specific foundational skills gaps students may have. For third grade specifically, students identified for summer school who have low oral reading fluency on the universal reading screener or other benchmark assessments should be given the second-grade HQIM-based placement assessment to determine any specific foundational skills gaps. Placement assessments should be given prior to the end of the school year so that groupings can be determined and organized before summer learning begins. For students who demonstrate gaps in reading foundational skills, teachers and leaders can craft a scope and sequence for summer learning that is driven by data and work to quickly close student gaps in this area.

- **Grouping.** For skills instruction, districts should use placement assessment results to organize groups of students by general area of need. By grouping students with similar needs in foundational skills, teachers are better able to target the earliest point of code weakness identified for a majority of students in their group using district-adopted high-quality instructional materials. For example, if the placement assessment shows a group of third-grade students are on a second-grade skills level, the teacher should use the second-grade skills scope and sequence and work toward mastery of those skills to support acceleration. Students with low oral reading fluency but few to no foundational skills gaps should be provided with the core summer school instruction focused on acceleration for reading comprehension. However, intervention for these students, if provided, should focus on giving students opportunities to practice oral reading fluency.

### Leverage Strategic Staffing

As schools begin to understand the student-level results from universal screeners and foundational skills placement assessments, they have an opportunity to organize summer school staffing assignments to maximize student learning. Even with perfectly sequenced assessments and materials and meticulous attention to student grouping, if students do not have access to educators with the expertise to bring the content to life and deepen their learning around grade-level mathematics, grade-level texts, and reading foundational skills, we will not see the results we want for students ahead of next school year.

For math and reading comprehension instruction, **students would most ideally be assigned to teachers of record for the grade level they will be entering in the fall.** For example, third-grade students should be assigned to fourth-grade teachers who are already familiar with the grade-level content students will encounter in August. Students may even have the opportunity through summer school experiences to build a relationship with their future classroom teacher. For foundational skills instruction, schools should place students with teachers whose experience most closely aligns with the grade level where students are experiencing the most gaps. This could be for the majority of their day in summer school or for a high-dosage tutoring or intervention setting.

Finally, class sizes should be capped at 15 students to promote positive teacher-student relationships and enhance teachers' ability to provide students with individualized support.

### TNTP RESOURCES

- [Learning Acceleration For All 2021](#)
- [Instructional Coherence 2022](#)
- [Third-Grade Tennessee Summer School Guidance](#)

## DATA COLLECTION

As you prepare for this summer's learning camps, it is important to identify the different types of data your team will need to collect to evaluate the impact of your programming. TERA has identified a set of [best practices](#) for collecting and analyzing data about summer learning camps. Your team should plan on collecting and analyzing data from four key areas:

- Demographics of enrollment
- Attendance patterns
- Student, family, and teacher experiences
- Academic outcomes

The following chart provides an overview of the summer learning camp data your team should plan to collect, the questions you can answer with the data, and follow-up actions you can take because of your analysis of the data.

KEY AREA	QUESTIONS YOU CAN ANSWER	DATA TO COLLECT	FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS
<b>Demographics of enrollment</b>	<p>Are students who are enrolling in the program the ones who would benefit most from additional academic support and school engagement opportunities?</p> <p>Which students should we target for additional recruiting efforts?</p>	Maintain a list for each program or site of all students who sign up, even if some of them never actually attend any days of the program.	<p>Communicate with students and families who may have enrolled in programming but never attended to find out more about barriers that may be preventing them from participating.</p> <p>Design supports to help ensure specific groups of students participate in summer programming.</p>
<b>Attendance patterns</b>	<p>What are the broad attendance trends over the course of the program?</p> <p>Which groups of students are attending more regularly and attending more days?</p> <p>Which students are not attending regularly and might benefit from support plans?</p>	<p>Document which program or site students attended, the program dates, and the specific dates students attended.</p> <p>Link attendance data to the district's Student Information System (SIS) so that enrollment is connected to student-level characteristics.</p>	Develop a plan for supporting consistent attendance for students who would benefit from the connections and academic support in the program.
<b>Student, family, and teacher experiences</b>	<p>Did students have positive experiences in the program?</p> <p>Do students report higher levels of nonacademic outcomes (self-efficacy, connection, etc.) at the end of the program?</p> <p>What do parents and teachers see as strengths and areas for growth for the program?</p>	<p>Administer pre- and post-program surveys to see changes over time or administer post-program surveys to see retrospective insight on the program.</p> <p>Administer survey after the program to get feedback on teacher and family experiences; ensure that the survey is accessible for families, which may mean administering it via text message.</p>	Adjust plans for future programming based on specific feedback from different stakeholder groups.
<b>Academic outcomes</b>	<p>Did students attending the program improve on targeted academic skills?</p> <p>Did students who attended the program longer see more academic improvement?</p> <p>Did summer program participants perform better on benchmark exams compared with nonparticipants?</p>	<p>Leverage available data sources, including current benchmark exams, pre- and post-testing, and prior achievement data.</p> <p>Link achievement data to attendance data, and student-level characteristics to analyze achievement in more detail.</p>	Use analysis of academic outcomes to inform future student supports and adjustments to future summer programming.



# SUMMER LEARNING DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

This checklist is intended to support school and district leaders in designing and implementing a summer learning program aligned with research and best practices.

## PROGRAM DESIGN

Effective program design ensures all participating students and families are well-informed about summer learning opportunities and can successfully enroll, attend, and receive at least five weeks of high-quality instruction.

- ☐ Facilitate teacher to parent/guardian communication
- ☐ Establish a student enrollment deadline
- ☐ Provide transportation for students attending camps
- ☐ Coordinate weekly schedule for students and parents
- ☐ Develop a five-week program scope with at least 34 hours of literacy and 25 hours of math instruction
- ☐ Adopt student grouping strategies based on foundational skills
- ☐ Create an engaging and positive site climate



## ENROLLMENT & ATTENDANCE

Frequently engaging families through parent-teacher conferences, informational meetings, and weekly contact can help promote consistent student attendance, which is necessary for adequate growth.

- ☐ Consult teachers and assessment data to identify students who would benefit most from summer learning
- ☐ Notify parents/guardians of student summer learning status
- ☐ Host informational meetings for parents/guardians regarding enrollment deadlines
- ☐ Communicate clear attendance expectations to students and families
- ☐ Record participating students' attendance patterns
- ☐ Send frequent and targeted follow-up communication to parents or guardians of students who are not meeting attendance expectations
- ☐ Provide a variety of incentives throughout the summer to encourage and celebrate consistent attendance





## CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Providing students with standards-aligned instructionally coherent lessons that are grounded in high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and administered by certified staff can accelerate learning and create a meaningful experience.

- ☐ Implement HQIM aligned with state standards
- ☐ Create instructional coherence within small learning groups to accelerate learning
- ☐ Provide enrichment opportunities to supplement core academic program
- ☐ Provide six hours of academic instruction per day, including four hours of reading and math, one hour of intervention, and one hour of physical activity
- ☐ Leverage certified teachers and staff
- ☐ Aim for 15:1 student-to-teacher ratio to support teachers' ability to provide students with individualized support

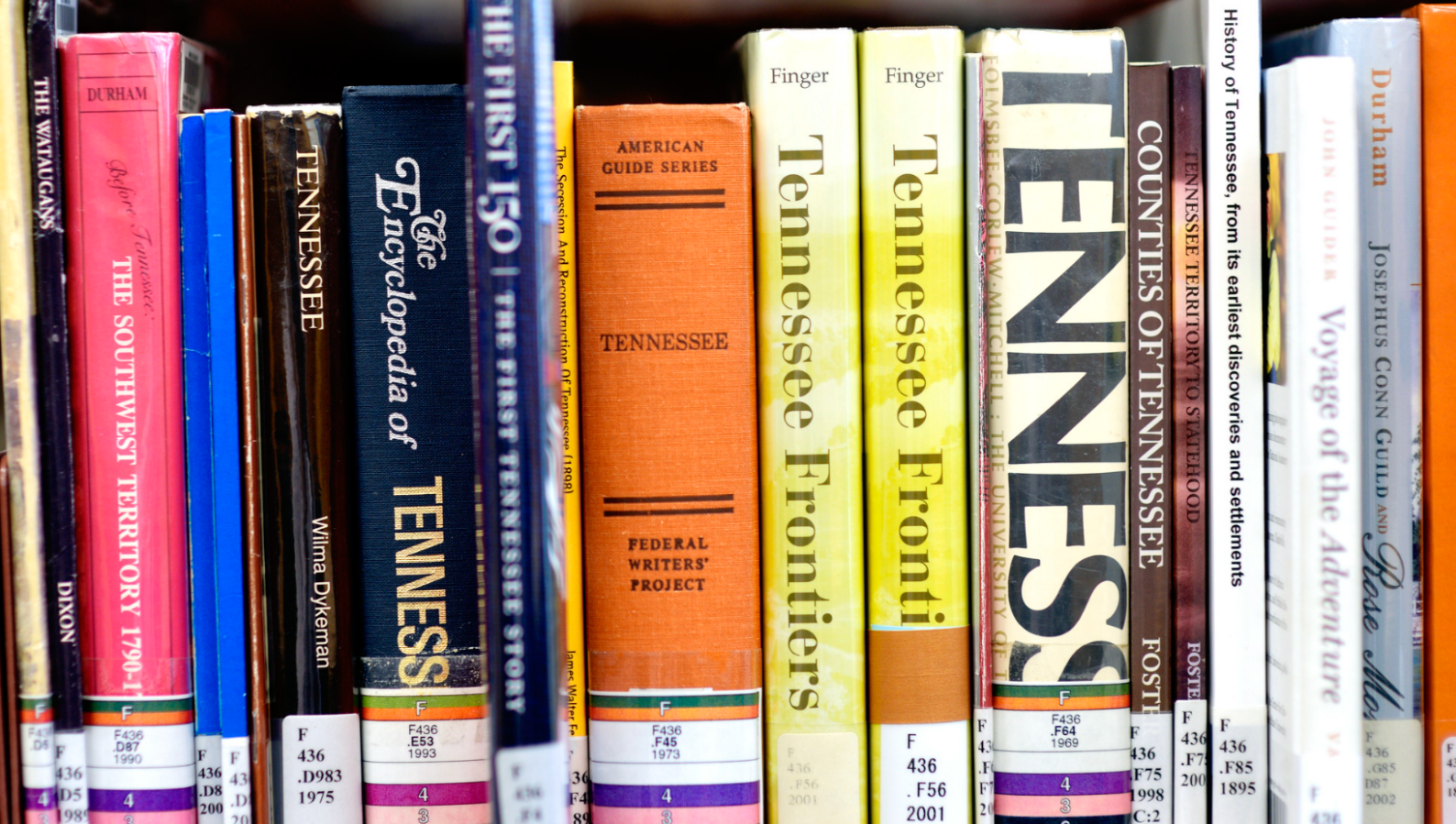
## DATA COLLECTION

Identifying and collecting relevant data is important for evaluating the impact of programming. Data should be collected from four key areas:

- ☐ Enrollment demographics
- ☐ Student attendance
- ☐ Academic outcomes
- ☐ Student, family, and teacher feedback







## SUMMARY OF RESOURCES

### FOCUS AREA

### RESOURCES

Third-Grade Retention

[Promotion & Retention Pathway Flowchart](#)  
[Third-Grade ELA TCAP Retake Guidance](#)  
[Third-Grade Promotion FAQ 2023](#)

Program Duration

[Getting To Work On Summer Learning](#)

Enrollment And Attendance

[Summer Learning 2022](#)

Curriculum And Instruction

[Learning Acceleration For All 2021](#)  
[Instructional Coherence 2022](#)  
[Third-Grade Tennessee Summer School Guidance](#)

Data Collection

[Best Practices For Summer Programs Data](#)