

SUMMER LEARNING RECRUITMENT GUIDE



Commissioned by:



Summer Learning Recruitment Guide

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MARKETING SUMMER LEARNING TO PARENTS AND STUDENTS: LESSONS FROM THE NATIONAL SUMMER LEARNING PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

Many public school districts are seeking to expand or launch voluntary summer learning programs, especially for children from low-income families. These children experience setbacks over the summer compared to their more affluent peers. Most studies have found that students from low-income families learn less during the summer than do students from higher-income families. Plus, if students do experience summer learning loss, those from low-income neighborhoods experience larger losses over the summer compared to students from wealthier neighborhoods.

Students from low-income communities also face an opportunity gap—they are less likely to have access to enriching, nonacademic experiences than students from higher-income communities. For example, 59 percent of school-aged children from low-income families take part in sports, compared to 84 percent of children from wealthier families.¹

Voluntary summer learning programs that offer a mix of academics and fun enrichment activities can help address these disparities, potentially helping students from low-income families achieve better academic and social-emotional outcomes.

¹Augustine, C.H., McCombs, J.S., Pane, J.F., Schwartz, H.L., Schweig, J., McEachin, A, & Siler-Evans, K. (2016) Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Urban Youth. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

A recruitment program is crucial

Getting enough students to register for your summer learning program—most importantly those who can most benefit—requires designing and implementing a recruitment program. Districts should not assume that sending a single flyer home or advertising once in the local newspaper will be enough to reach busy parents and motivate them to sign up their children. First of all, these are voluntary programs, unlike other programs offered by public school districts that are mandatory. Many parents and students are not used to thinking of summer as an opportunity for learning. Second, many district summer learning programs seek to target and recruit specific groups of students. This may include prioritizing students at risk of grade retention or serving specific proportions of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Third, districts need to overcome negative perceptions that many parents have of traditional “summer school.” And finally, district programs compete with many other programs and activities in the community for the attention of parents and students.

The National Summer Learning Project

The National Summer Learning Project (NSLP) is the largest study ever to look at whether and how large-scale, voluntary summer learning programs offered by public school districts can help improve educational outcomes for children. Supported by The Wallace Foundation, the partnership included the RAND Corporation; Boston Public Schools (with the community-based organization Boston After School and Beyond); Dallas Independent School District (with the community-based organization Big Thought); Duval County Public Schools in Jacksonville, FL; Pittsburgh Public Schools; and the Rochester (NY) City School District.

The research component of the project included a randomized controlled trial, or RCT, along with studies examining how summer learning programs were implemented. Conducted by RAND, the RCT focused on students who were in 3rd grade in spring, 2013. Students who signed up to take part in the districts’ summer learning programs were randomly selected to participate or not participate in the program for two summers (2013 and 2014). RAND continued to gather a wide range of data from both groups of

students through the 7th grade, including school year grades and attendance, student performance on standardized tests of math and reading, and measures of social-emotional skills. To learn more about the study and the results published to date, visit the [summer learning](#) section of The Wallace Foundation’s Knowledge Center.

To support the study, districts had to recruit a total of more than 5,600 children who were in the 3rd grade in 2013. For each of the districts and their partners, this meant attracting more than twice the number of students they recruited in the past. The significant increase was necessary because enough students need to be part of the study for the study to offer generalizable results. All the recruited students were part of the study but only half of the students recruited were randomly selected to take part in the summer learning programs (made possible by the fact that there was limited funding for slots)—thus the reason for doubling the number of students recruited in previous summers. It also meant recruiting children most likely to benefit from the summer learning programs. This required targeted and intentional approaches to outreach, engagement and recruitment.

What support was provided to each of the school districts?

The five public school districts that participated in the NSLP were selected because of their commitment to and experience operating summer learning programs. Yet even for these districts and their partners, recruitment was not a core competency. The Wallace Foundation engaged Crosby Marketing Communications, a communications firm with a



strong background in social marketing (applying the principles of marketing to efforts to promote the common good or encourage positive, healthy behaviors), to collaborate with and support the districts.

Crosby provided technical assistance to the districts, helping each of the districts and their partners develop written recruitment plans, including identifying approaches and tactics; creating messaging to inform outreach to parents and students; developing protocols for tracking recruitment activities and registrations; and identifying potential solutions when recruitment numbers lagged. Crosby’s role was, to a large degree, that of “coach.” Implementation of the recruitment programs was completed by each district. This ranged from writing, producing and distributing materials to coordinating outreach by individual schools to planning and holding events to tracking and reporting registration data.

How information was gathered for this guide

The guidance and lessons presented in this guide are based primarily on the experiences of the districts that participated in the NSLP and their partners. The observations and lessons learned by Crosby and the Wallace team, both gained from working closely with each of the districts and monitoring progress of the districts’ recruitment efforts, form the foundation for this guide. In addition, focus groups conducted with parents inform much of the discussion about effective messaging presented in this guide.

While the lessons learned and the guidance we provide here relate directly to public school districts, much of what we offer in this guide may be applicable to other settings, such as community-based organizations that need to effectively engage parents, youth and children to meet their goals and objectives.

How this guide is organized

This guide is divided into four chapters. The first two chapters focus on specific lessons learned through our work with the five districts and their partners. Chapter One shares what we learned about parents’

attitudes toward summer and summer learning, while Chapter Two articulates eight keys to successful outreach and recruitment. For each key, we seek to provide specific guidance, such as how to learn about your target audiences, create messaging that is motivating, and get students themselves excited about summer learning. Chapter Three offers a range of tactics you may want to employ in your recruitment effort—we’ve included recommendations about which tactics you may find most effective and how much effort each will require. Finally, Chapter Four gives you a range of samples and templates for recruitment tools and materials that you can tailor or use as is.

The five districts’ success in recruitment

The five school districts and their partners participating in the NSLP each successfully designed and implemented a recruitment program. While we learned numerous lessons—including, as shared on the following pages, some of what does not work—each district did exceed their recruitment goals, ensuring the ultimate success of the study.²

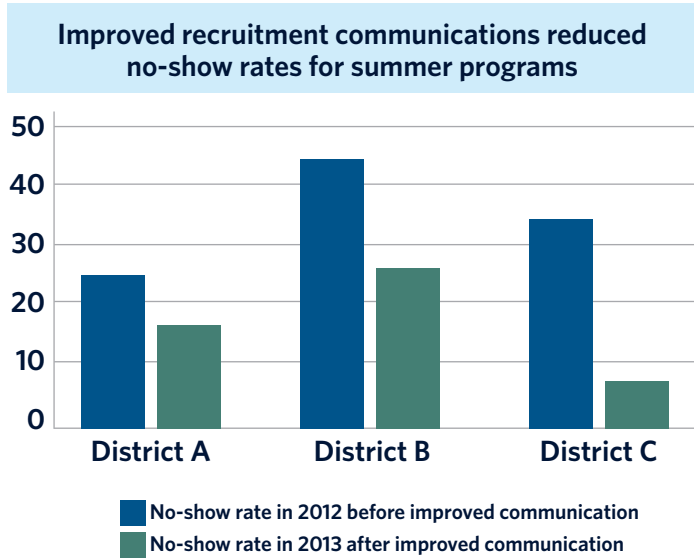
Number of rising fourth-graders recruited to summer programs		
	2012	2013
District 1	514	957
District 2	608	2,056
District 3	302	656
District 4	640	1,080
District 5	NA	888

Of course, getting parents to register their children and apply for summer learning programs was but one step, albeit a very important step. The districts and their partners also needed to get the children to show up when the summer learning programs’ doors opened. Indeed, no-show rates—the percentage of children who registered but never attended the program—was a problem in past years. No-show rates in the summer of 2012 were as high as 45 percent. In the summer of 2013, the districts and their partners significantly reduced these percentages by

² In year two of the RCT, 2014, the goal for each district was to re-register (or retain) the same children who had applied for and were randomly accepted into the program and to get as many of these children to attend as possible. Some of the districts struggled to achieve this goal. It is only a hypothesis, but we think that this may be due to two factors. One, getting the same children to attend the same program two years running may be particularly challenging, especially when these children have aged from rising 4th graders to rising 5th graders. Second, implementation challenges that large, urban districts must contend with when implementing a large-scale outreach program may be particularly salient and impactful when seeking to bring the same children back for a second consecutive year; challenges included maintaining correct contact information for parents.

improving outreach to parents and students between acceptance and the start of classes, as is discussed later in this guide. In the three districts where comparable data existed in the summers of 2012 and 2013, the no-show rates decreased.

There is a third component of parent and student engagement when it comes to a voluntary summer

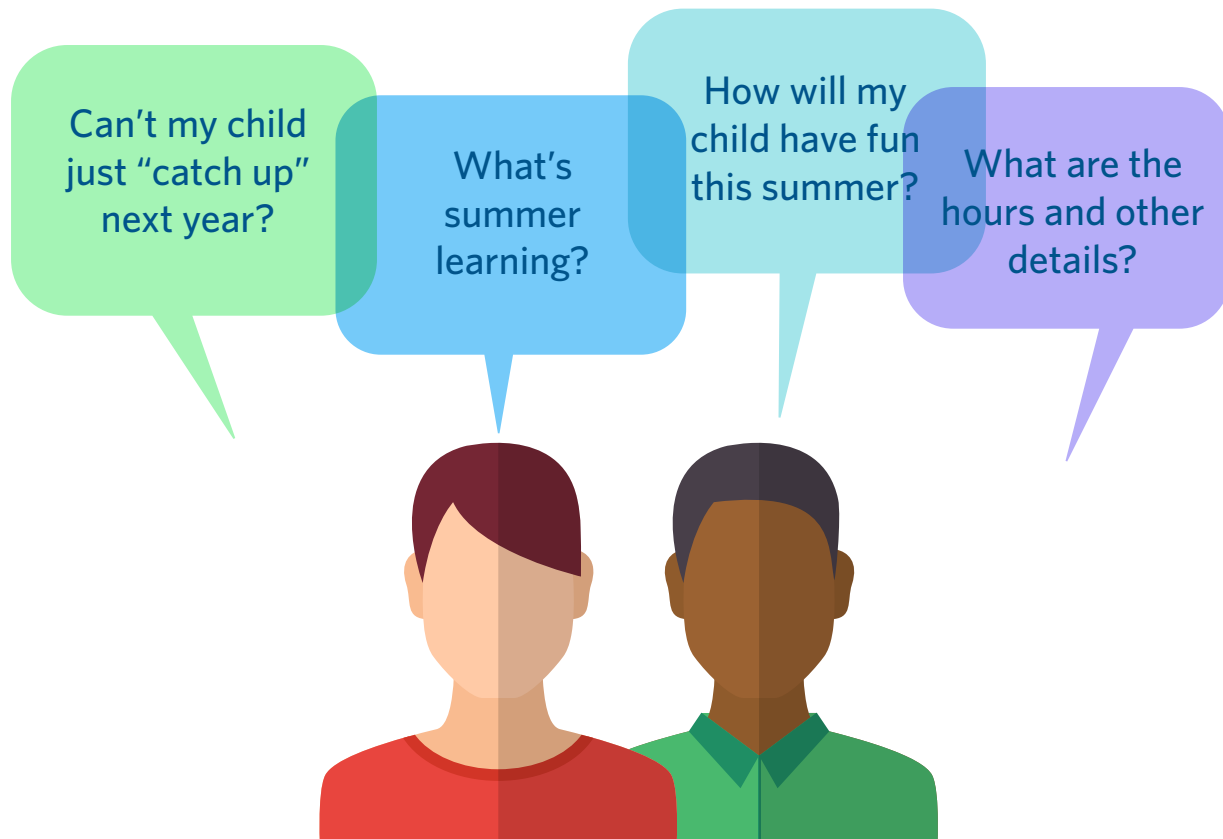


learning program—ongoing attendance. This guide does not delve into the efforts the districts and their partners made to promote ongoing attendance. Maintaining high attendance over the course of the summer program remained a consistent challenge for the districts, though some districts have seen improvement utilizing a variety of strategies and tactics. These include a strong focus on building a warm and welcoming culture and helping students develop relationships with staff and friendships with other students; this is similar to a key this guide discusses on page 17. For further discussion of attendance and summer learning, we refer you to RAND’s publication, *Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Urban Youth*.



CHAPTER ONE

WHAT PARENTS THINK ABOUT SUMMER AND SUMMER LEARNING



Crosby conducted focus groups with parents prior to planning and launching recruitment efforts. These 11 groups, conducted in three cities with approximately 100 parents, proved invaluable in guiding the work with the five school districts and their partners, both in terms of developing messages that motivated parents and determining what approaches to take to reach parents and students. It should be noted that the parents participating in these focus groups were parents of 3rd and 4th graders enrolled in public school, living in large urban communities. However, based on our conversations with others working in the field of summer learning, we believe the insights gained from these focus groups will likely prove valuable to any district running or planning a summer learning program:

Definition of summer learning utilized in focus groups: "A summer learning program is run by the public schools. It is free. It is a nice mix of school subjects, like reading and math, fun activities and field trips. The program helps children keep learning during the summer so they don't forget what they learned during the school year, and it helps them get ready to do better in the new school year."



- Parents revealed that they were not readily familiar with the term “summer learning.” However, once a description was shared with them, the reaction was very positive (see box on page 8). They liked that it emphasized a mix of fun and academics and thought it clearly marked a difference between traditional summer school and summer camp.
 - Parents are very protective of their children’s summers—they want their children to have fun during the summer and a break from what they perceive to be the hard work of the school year.
 - “Summer school” elicits a negative reaction.
 - The idea of helping their child get ready to succeed in the next grade is very motivating to parents.
 - Parents believe that summer learning loss is real but they don’t see the urgency of addressing it. Only when parents were told that their child may fall behind over time, did parents recognize the need to take action. However, many parents feel that they can address it themselves during the summer by giving their children workbooks or connecting them to online programs. Other parents believe that teachers can just play a bit of “catch up” in the fall.
 - While parents may be motivated to register their children in a summer learning program, it is the details that will drive the decision—How long does the program run? What are the hours each day? What is the cost? Is there convenient transportation? Who is supervising and teaching their children?
 - Parents specifically mentioned these potential barriers to having their children take part: transportation, hours of operation, cost, location and proximity to home, and the perceived safety of the site.
 - While not a barrier per se, parents routinely mentioned the importance of giving their children a say in their summer activity planning. For parents to sign up their children for the summer learning program, they need to be convinced that they will like it.
 - The word “free” was not popular among parents. It seemed to suggest a lack of quality in the summer learning program. “No-cost” seemed to be a better term. The term “apply” was also unpopular. It seemed to suggest that somebody was judging them and their child. “Register” or “sign-up” were terms that parents found more emotionally neutral.
 - Many of the parents in these focus groups don’t make summer plans until late in the school year. Most said they make plans in mid- to late-April and into May. Some reported making them earlier, while others said they wait as late as June.
- As you will see, much of what we learned from these focus groups informed the approaches and messaging that the participating school districts employed when reaching out to parents about their summer learning programs.

8

KEYS TO SUCCESS

For Summer Learning Recruitment



Engage Directly with Students

Students are your most important "customers." Parents are more likely to sign their child up, if he or she wants to go. And, of course, students are more likely to attend regularly if they enjoy the experience.



Understand Your Audience

Learn what parents think about summer learning and your summer learning program. The more you know about what's important to them, the more successful you'll be getting them to register.



Create Engaging Messaging

Clearly and simply communicate the value of your summer learning program to parents and stakeholders. Parents will be more likely to register their children, stakeholders more likely to support your work.



Make Registration as Easy as Possible

Give parents as many options as possible to register their child for your summer learning program. This can range from mailing in completed forms, to taking them to their child's school, to registering online.



Build a Relationship with Parents and Students

Help parents and students feel they are part of something special—your summer learning "family." Engage with them throughout the school year, not just when it's time to register.



Use Trusted Messengers

Principals, guidance counselors, and teachers are some of the most trusted messengers when it comes to engaging parents and students. Create an outreach program that helps them promote your program.



Make Your Outreach Consistent and Assertive

Don't expect a single registration flyer to get enough parents to register their children for your summer learning program. Use more than one approach and try to reach parents at least three times.



Create a Written Plan

A written plan is a must-have guide for your team's recruitment work. It will define what steps you will take to implement your recruitment effort. It will also help you track progress.

CHAPTER TWO

KEYS TO SUCCESS

When it comes to recruitment, we have identified eight Keys to Success. They are based both on our observations of what worked and what did not in each of the five participating districts and the direct technical assistance that Crosby provided to each district. The capacity of every public school district to fully implement each of these keys will vary—the success of a recruitment effort will be maximized by incorporating these keys to the extent practicable.



Key Number 1: Understand your audience

The districts that are part of the NSLP have found that creating engaging messaging is crucial (see Key Number 2). You will be much more likely to achieve this if you can put some time and effort into understanding what your audiences think about summer and summer learning, about your summer learning programs, and what they would like to see a summer learning program offer.

There are many approaches you can take to gather these insights from parents, from engaging a research firm to conduct focus groups or one-on-one interviews with parents, to guided discussions you and your team have with parents. Some of the districts in the NSLP have also explored partnering with local university research programs to conduct focus groups.

As mentioned earlier, we conducted a series of focus groups with parents. Some things surprised us. We learned something unique about the worldview of parents. Overwhelmingly, parents we spoke to communicated a sense of having little, if any, ability to influence institutions, including school boards and schools. They felt they have relatively little ability to affect what happens to their child's education. As you'll read shortly, this discovery ended up contributing greatly to the creation of messaging for the NSLP districts. The marketing research we conducted for the NSLP can be a useful starting point for you. However, it's likely that there are

also particular features of your existing or planned summer learning program that you will want to explore in order to better understand how they apply to your local context—that is, what works and what does not work for parents in your community.

Whatever approach you take—from discussion groups you convene with parents to one-on-one discussions with parents to more formal focus groups conducted by a research university or firm—there are really five “buckets” of information you'll want to get. Create a discussion guide that covers each:

Need Tools to Jumpstart Your Recruitment Effort?

Check out our templates in chapter 4.

- What do parents think of your summer learning program—positive and negative?
- What do they want your program to offer their children? What would the perfect summer learning experience look like for their child?
- What do their children think of your program?
- What are the key details that parents need to know to make a decision about signing their child up for your program? This may include program hours, who will teach and supervise students, transportation, site selection, meals, etc.
- What are the barriers that could get in the way of parents registering their child? These could include not only logistics—hours, transportation, etc.—but also your program's “brand.” In other words, what do parents know and think about your program? What do other parents say about your program?

Here’s a “may-not-work” advisory: Surveying parents—that is, asking them to fill out a paper or electronic form as opposed to speaking to them in person—may not be the most effective route to take. Our experience is that, when surveying parents about their experience with a summer learning program, even when done shortly after the program ends, response rates can be very low. Surveys may not yield the kind of useful information you will need to help with messaging and outreach approaches.

Do take the time to learn what parents think. You’ll have to make decisions about resources—how and when to do this, and who in your district will oversee or do the research. But our experience shows that it’s worth the investment of time and effort. Remember, voluntary summer learning programs are not mandatory and parents have choices about what their children will do during the summer—including, staying at home doing nothing that resembles learning. The more you know about what parents in your district think and feel about summer learning, the more successful you will be at getting them to choose your program.



Key Number 2: Create engaging messaging

Good messaging—it is one of the most important and challenging steps that the districts taking part in the NSLP wrestle with. It’s not only crucial for recruitment, but the NSLP districts found it’s just as important for engaging decision-makers both inside and outside the district who are important in making summer learning a priority.

We applied much of what we learned from the focus groups with parents to the messaging that the districts used in recruitment. For example,

- Hearing from parents how **motivated they are by aspirational messaging**, turned into this phrase, a version of which appeared in many of the district outreach and recruitment materials: “Your child will sharpen the math, reading and writing skills needed to succeed in 4th grade and beyond.”
- Reflecting upon the fact that many parents in our focus groups felt they could address any summer learning

deficits, we decided it was important to remind parents that the district **summer learning programs offered something they could not find at home**. This, from Rochester City School District: “A select group of teachers has been chosen and trained to provide the most effective instructional strategies for your child’s success.”

- And the districts never strayed away from stressing that the summer learning program offers students **a mix of academics and fun**, keeping in mind that academic achievement matters to parents but so does “protecting” the fun in their children’s summer experience.

Just as important, we used what we learned from the focus groups to create the main messaging point. We tested several different message concepts in our focus groups. One was consistently the favorite. It grew directly out of one insight prevalent in all the focus groups: parents feel they have relatively little influence over what happens in their children’s lives, whether that is keeping them safe from street violence or shaping how the school system educates their children. It was this insight that led us to a bold message, directly addressing parents’ desire to be able to influence their children’s lives in a positive way: “Looking for an opportunity to take charge of your child’s future? The [name of summer learning program] is a smart choice.” (This message did test very well, and many of the districts and their partners in the NSLP used it, or a version of it. At the same time, some districts and their partners developed their own main message that reflected their summer





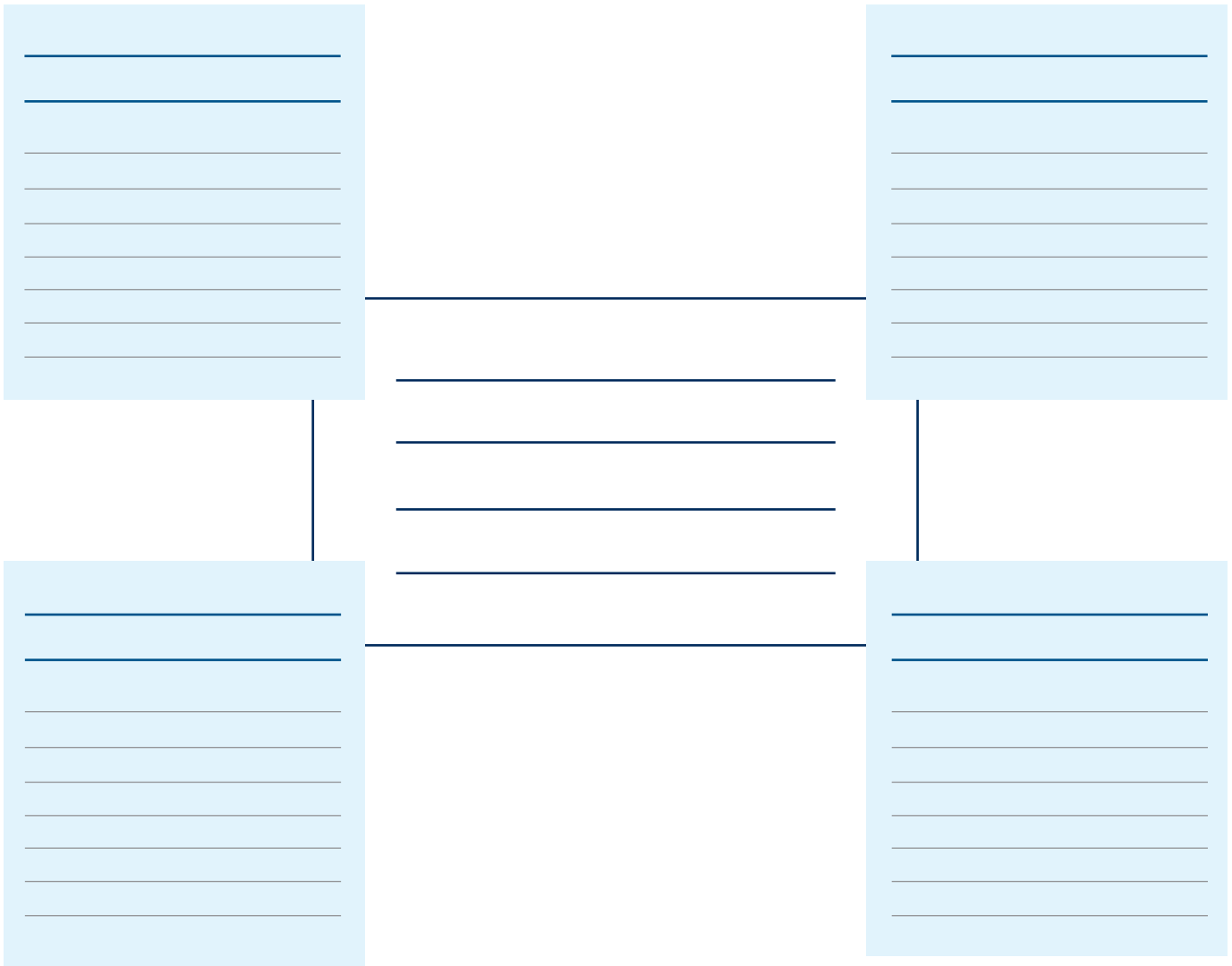
learning offerings and their knowledge of what local parents are seeking from a summer learning program.)

Above, you will see we put that message in the middle of a visual tool we provided to all of the districts: it's called a message map. It's a tool designed to help ensure that messaging is consistent in all communications.

As you see, the main message is supported by four supporting messages. Underneath each supporting messages are proof points—brief factual statements

needed to make the case. You may find these same supporting messages useful to you and your team.

We recommend that you do create a message map. It's not meant to be shared publicly. It's a guide that you and your team can refer to when writing a recruitment flyer, for example, or preparing to speak to a group of parents about your summer learning program. On the next page you will find a template and some tips for creating your messaging and message map.



First, you and your team should wrestle with these three questions:

- What specific **need** does your program fill for parents and students?
- What is the most important **benefit** your program offers to parents and students?
- What makes your summer learning program **different** from all of the other summer offerings in your community?

Use your answers to these questions to come up with that key message, the message that goes in the center box of your message map. Work on it, edit it, and make that message as brief as possible while still communicating the value of your summer learning program to parents and students. If, in plain and simple language, a parent reading that key message will easily grasp the most important value of your

Tips for effective summer messaging:

- Emphasize that district teachers lead academics, trained professionals lead enrichment activities
- Stress mix of academics and fun
- Make it clear your program helps students get ready for the next grade
- Emphasize the safe environment, and details like transportation and meals
- Say “no-cost,” rather than free

summer learning program, then you have succeeded. If not, or your language is long-winded and complex, you’ve still got work to do. Once you’re done, write it in the center box.

The next step is to fill in the boxes for the supporting messages. (If you need to, add another box, but we would not go beyond five supporting messages.) To get there, answer this question: What are the three or four most **important things parents need to know** about your summer learning program? Take that list, turn each into a concise and clear statement—you have created your supporting messages. Put each at the top of a box in the template. Next, list the **facts that bolster** each supporting message in each box. These are your proof points.

It's important that your messages must be credible, based on fact. There are several reasons for this: It builds a relationship of trust between your program and the parents who are entrusting their children to your program; your school or community-based organization likely needs to sustain the bonds of trust with parents and students; and, if parents or students experience a large gap between how the program is described and the actual experience, they may leave and will likely tell their friends.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of really working at getting your messaging right. If it's bureaucratic, stressing organizational objectives, such as filling out medical forms, it won't help you sell your summer learning program. If, on the other hand, your messaging speaks to the aspirations parents have for their children, it will achieve the goal of good messaging: Helping your audience **quickly understand what your program is and why they should care**.



Key Number 3: Create a written plan

A written plan is a cannot-do-without guide for you and your team's recruitment work. It will define what steps you will take to implement your recruitment effort. A plan can help keep you and your team focused.

Your recruitment plan should not be lengthy. It should consist of:

- Target audiences
- Goals
- What you need to achieve
- Tactics and timeframes
- How you will measure progress

Target audiences: Identifying exactly who you need to reach

List your target audiences as specifically as possible. Broad descriptions of audiences can make it very difficult to keep a recruitment effort focused. It can make it difficult to communicate to key stakeholders, such as principals, which children the program serves and why they should attend. "Children who will benefit from a summer learning program" is, for example, a very broad audience description. Here are three examples of target audiences that are much more specific:

- children at risk of retention
- children at lowest level of reading proficiency
- children who have IEPs

Goals: Make sure you can measure

Your plan should then specify goals. In this context, goals are numeric. They can be measured. Here is an example:

- 500 students register for summer learning program
 - 100 students from each grade, 1st through 5th
 - 90 percent of registered students are eligible for free or reduced school lunches
- 80 percent of registered students attend on day one of the program

This example is simply meant to be illustrative. Your goals will be informed by numerous factors, your budget chief among them.

What you need to achieve

To reach these goals, what do you need to achieve? Simply put, what do you need to get done in order to have a successful recruitment program? Often, these are referred to as objectives. Writing these down as part of your plan will help you determine the tactics to use in your recruitment effort.

Here are some examples:

- **Promote** awareness among parents of the advantages and benefits they can provide their children by signing them up for our summer learning program.
- **Create** excitement about attending summer learning programs among children who are part of our target group.

- **Generate** understanding among school principals of the eligibility criteria for children targeted for recruitment and the benefits the summer learning program can provide to their children.

Note that each of these statements starts with an action verb—promote, create, and generate. These are the actions you need to take in order to achieve your recruitment goals.

Build a schedule and measure for success

Every successful outreach program has two common elements:

- A timetable laying out specific activities (tactics) and when they will take place; and
- Metrics for determining success and identifying any potential problems along the way.

Put your tactics down in a calendar or on a timeline. It's the only way you and your team will be able to plan accordingly, to identify the steps that need to take place and when they need to take place (for example, to hold an open house for parents or to get registration flyers and forms out to students before spring break). (See page 20 for a discussion of the various tactics that were utilized by the districts in the NSLP, along with implementation guidance.)

Determine, and write down, how you will measure progress of your recruitment effort. The better you can measure whether you are getting done what needs to get done, the better you can focus your efforts. This is extremely important in any situation where resources are limited, such as in a public school district.

Certainly, the total number of students who register is a key metric. But we found it's often important to get more specific. Do you have, for example, specific target numbers by school? The districts in the NSLP did—these were tracked and reported to each school principal on a weekly basis. Does your plan call for meeting with individual principals, briefing them on the goals and objectives for the summer learning program, as well as providing materials to help school staff conduct outreach? Then track the number of principal meetings that take place. Does your plan include direct engagement with students, through in-school events or contact by teachers or other

summer staff? At least one district tracked these contacts, seeking to reach every target student directly three times.

The point is to find effective ways of measuring each step. Not only will it tell you how the recruitment program is going, it will also alert you to any problems. Data can be a motivating tool by itself. More than one district in the NSLP sent emails on a weekly basis to all of the principals at “feeder” schools. These emails listed the number of eligible children at each school, how many students had registered at each school, and the percentage of success at each school. Because this email report went out on a weekly basis to all principals, as well as the principals' supervisors, it became a valuable tool for motivating support for recruitment and registration.



Key Number 4: Make your outreach consistent and assertive

The parents in our focus groups did not express any preference for how they want to receive information from schools. They mentioned mailings, flyers brought home by their children, phone calls (both personal and robocalls), emails and text messages. Thus, it's important to utilize as many different ways of reaching parents as possible.

It is also clear that one communication about your summer learning program—such as a one-time “backpack express” transmission of registration materials—will not do the trick. Some parents conscientiously review every piece of paper their child brings home from school. Others get overwhelmed by the sheer volume of materials their child brings home and may overlook the registration materials. And then, of course, with many children, “backpack express” gets derailed, as students forget and leave papers at the bottom of their backpack, never getting them to their parents.

The watchwords for your recruitment effort must be “consistent and assertive.” At a minimum, the NSLP districts sought to reach every parent at least three times over the course of the recruitment program. And they looked to ensure that at least two different approaches were used. As you develop your plan, seek to set similar minimal requirements for parent outreach.



Key Number 5: Use trusted messengers

It can be very meaningful to parents and students alike to hear a recommendation for your summer learning program directly from the messengers who matter to them. Not surprisingly, when Crosby asked parents in the focus groups who these messengers are, they mentioned teachers and school administrators (principals, assistant principals, guidance counselors).

Engaging messaging is crucial. Having that messaging amplified by trusted messengers can go a long way toward helping parents choose your summer learning program. It can be very motivating to hear that a teacher, principal or guidance counselor thinks that summer learning would be fun and beneficial for a student. This can be done through phone calls home, sending personal notes home, or talking to parents at school events.

Making this sort of outreach happen in a structured fashion, so that as many parents are reached as possible, is not easy. Indeed, as we discuss in more detail in the next chapter exploring and recommending specific tactics, it is one of the more labor-intensive tactics you could implement. But based on our observations throughout the NSLP, it is one of the most effective. We do provide some tools that can help and some tips for implementing this tactic in the next two chapters.

One other observation worth noting: Getting principals involved in your recruitment effort can be crucial. Time and time again, we found that in the case of a school where registration numbers were lagging, once the principal made it a priority, registration numbers started to climb.



Key Number 6: Build a relationship between parents and students and your summer learning program

There are two aspects of relationship-building that we're talking about here. One, the districts and their partners in the NSLP sought to make parents and students feel that, by registering for the summer learning program, they have become part of something special. They wanted parents and students to feel they were part of the summer learning "family."

Second, we and the NSLP districts recognized that building a relationship happens over time. When Crosby first started to explore how public school districts tend to approach summer learning registration, the team was struck by how this was usually a one-time contact: School districts would receive the registration material and then have no more interaction with the parents and student about the summer learning program until the student showed up, or did not show up, for day one of the program. Almost certainly, this time of silence was contributing to high no-show rates.

The NSLP districts took a different approach, seeking to create among parents and students a sense of being part of the summer learning "family." This meant, as discussed more deeply in the next chapter about tactics, doing things like sending home a confirmation letter as soon as a registration form was received, putting on an event in the spring for parents and students who had registered, or communicating directly with registered students as the school year wound down and summer approached. It is likely a large part of the reason that no-show rates in the NSLP districts decreased from the first summer, when little relationship building was done prior to day one of the program, to the second summer, when the districts put in a good bit of effort.

In short, do not neglect the time between the end of registration and the first day of your summer learning program. It's a crucial time to build a connection with parents and students.

The districts in the NSLP have taken this approach to relationship building even further. They are working to make the connection with parents and students a year-round relationship, seeing it as an invaluable tactic for promoting the return of students from summer to summer. Here's an example of a holiday card that Boston Public Schools and Boston After School and Beyond produced, this one sent out before winter break by Boys & Girls Clubs, one of the summer program providers.





Key Number 7: Make registration as easy as possible

Offer parents as many ways as possible to register their children. The NSLP districts provided a range of options that included mailing completed registrations into the central office, taking the registration form back to their child’s school, completing an online registration form, registering on-site at events and even registering over the phone. (Of course, we recognize you may be limited in the ways you allow parents to register. Not all districts allow for online registration, for example.)

One thing to note: the more options you offer parents, the more important it is to have a well-thought-out approach to keeping track of registration data. Some of the districts taking part in the NSLP found it difficult, at times, to know how many registration forms had been returned to schools as opposed to being mailed in to central office. It proved necessary to create clear protocols regarding who the individual is at each school responsible for collecting registration forms, reporting to the summer learning program team how many have been received, and transmitting completed forms to the central office in a timely manner.

There is one other point to be made about this key. It’s not unusual to find registration materials that public school districts send home written at 11th-grade, 12th-grade, or even higher reading levels. Strive to make sure your materials are written at the 6th to 8th grade reading levels, leaning closer to 6th grade, to the extent you can. Clear and simple writing is the goal. Given how much material gets sent home and is competing for parents’ attention, a flyer that is written at too high of a reading level and requires effort to understand may be set aside. A handy tool for testing readability is found in Microsoft Word. Just go to

The federal government has a website all about accessible language, or plain language:

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/index.cfm>

File/Options/Proofing and select Show Readability Statistics. From now on, you will be able to highlight any text in a Word document, select Spelling & Grammar on the Review toolbar, and it will find out the reading grade level for the sentence, paragraph or document you selected.



Key Number 8: Engage directly with students

Remember what we learned from the focus groups Crosby conducted: Parents say their children need to be “sold” on the summer learning program. It’s a voluntary program. Many parents are much less likely to register if their child is not excited about the prospect. And once they are registered, we found that many parents are much less likely to enforce regular attendance if their child is not enjoying the experience. Always remember that the students are, for lack of a better word, your customers.

What’s an Easy Way to Market to Students? Consider a pizza party.

The NSLP districts and their partners marketed directly to students. All of the districts created events at school, such as an ice cream social, pizza party or a lunch for a small group with a teacher. Some districts created postcards designed just for children and mailed them home, addressed to the student not the parent—keep in mind how much children enjoy receiving something in the mail addressed to them. At least one district identified teachers at school who were planning to teach at the summer learning program, and encouraged them to start or build relationships with students at their school who were eligible for the summer learning program. This way, students knew they would be going to a summer learning program with at least one important adult relationship in place.

Starting on page 25, we’ve provided a number of examples and templates to help with outreach to students.

Build a Registration Event and They Will Come— a Dallas Case Study

When Dallas ISD and their partner Big Thought engaged a research firm to conduct surveys and focus groups with parents whose children participated in the district’s summer learning program, they uncovered some interesting insights. First, they found that parents clearly respond to communications directly from school—almost 80 percent of students registered because of information sent home from school. And they heard from many parents that they want more details about the summer learning program, details like what the curriculum will cover.

The Dallas summer learning team also learned that students who registered were more likely to be from relatively affluent families than the students from the low-income families the district and their partner hoped to attract. The reason? Online registration, which the district relied on heavily in the past, discouraged many parents because they didn’t have ready access to computers.

As a result, for summer 2017, the district and their partner took a different approach, seeking to make registration as easy as possible for parents and for principals and staff alike. Students at elementary schools where the summer programs were being held could return their registration forms to the school—at these schools, paid staff were available to provide support. And all parents throughout the district were invited to the Discover Summer PREP U Super Saturday and Resource Fair. The event, held at a centrally located elementary school with plenty of parking and access to public transportation, was a one-stop shop for families to explore a variety of summer learning opportunities and talk directly to program staff. Parents could register at the event and immediately get a confirmation that their child was in the program.

To publicize the fair, postcards were sent to parents throughout the district. Flyers were delivered in bulk to each school. So were posters and yard signs advertising the fair. The mayor attended. And the district and their partner engaged local media in publicizing the fair.

Dallas ISD and Big Thought also strove to make the entire process appealing to and easy for principals. “We encourage principals to promote summer learning for their students who can most benefit,” said Crystal Rentz, Director of Summer Learning & Extended Day Services at Dallas ISD. “Our principals have a rigorous evaluation heavily weighted on student achievement. We talk to the principals, helping them see that summer learning can help students at-risk get the boost they may need.”

They also made it easy for principals. For example, the exact number of promotional materials each school needed were delivered, so school staff didn’t have to make copies. And, unlike past years, parents did not send completed registration forms back to the school so there was no need for a school staff member to track registrations (except at the schools hosting the summer programs). Instead, parents were encouraged to attend the Discover Summer PREP U Saturday and Resource Fair. The result—more than 4,000 parents and students attended.



CHAPTER THREE

A MENU OF PROVEN TACTICS

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the variety of tactics that the districts taking part in the NSLP used in their recruitment programs. For each tactic, to the extent applicable, we have:

- Provided our recommendation for incorporating the tactic into your plan: Required, Recommended, or Optional
- Offered guidance on implementing the tactic; depending on the tactic, this may include frequency and tips to make implementation and management easier and more effective
- Shared insights regarding the level of effort necessary to implement a tactic
- Noted any caveats related to implementation
- Noted examples or templates that you may wish to use or adapt, which are found in the next chapter

Our hope is that these insights, based on our observations working closely with five public school districts and their partners, will give you some concrete guidance when it comes to selecting and implementing the tactics that will make up your recruitment plan. Of course, every school district differs in terms of how summer learning programs are implemented, the degree to which summer learning is integrated into overall district operations, and the level of budgetary and personnel resources. Thus, we recognize that our guidance is not prescriptive but, we hope, illuminating, providing you with insights to help you and your team make decisions when it comes to structuring and implementing a summer learning recruitment effort.

Sending Materials Home—Required

Registration materials should be sent home, via mail or “backpack express,” at least two times. The first time is the beginning of the registration period. The second time is within two weeks of the registration deadline. Some tips for creating registration materials include:

- Ensure that motivating messaging remains front and center and that the details that will help parents make decisions (e.g., days and hours of operation, transportation, etc.) are prominent, as well.
- For the second distribution, we recommend adding a clear statement of the deadline, something along the lines of, “Only 2 weeks remaining. Registration closes April 30.”

On page 25, you’ll find sample copy for a recruitment flyer, and on page 26, sample copy for a recruitment postcard.



Implementation caveat: Some districts in the NSLP used incentives to encourage students to bring in completed registration forms. In most cases, these were relatively small, such as a pizza party. At one district, sending in a completed registration form entered the family into a raffle for an iPad. Our feeling is that incentives should be used judiciously. The pizza parties, for example, were a nice event for the students and helped create that relationship we discussed in Key Number 6. But our suspicion is that raffles that use completed registration forms as an entry ticket may have inadvertently motivated some parents to send in registrations without really intending to send their child to the summer learning program.

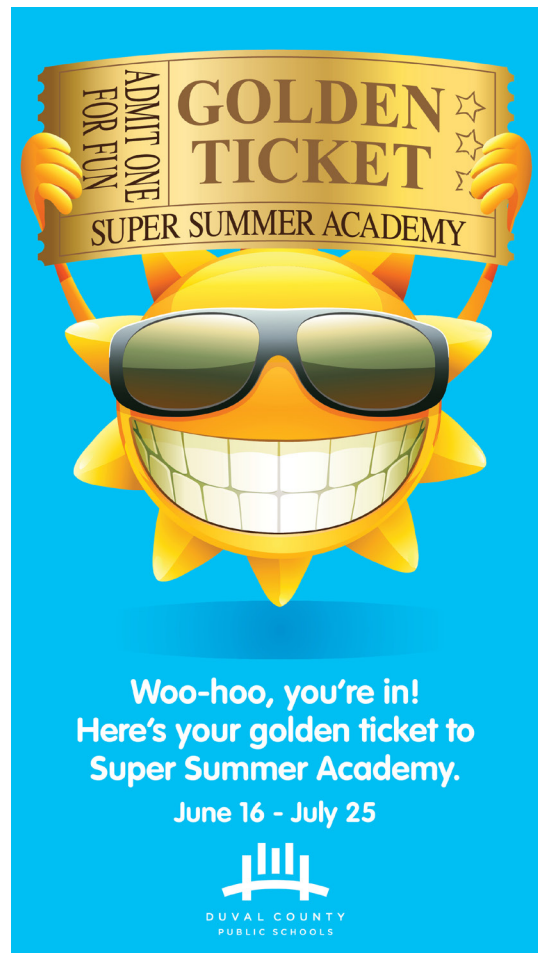
Reminder Phone Calls (Robocalls) —Required

While conventional wisdom suggests that robocalls (automated phone calls) are considered annoying, parents in the focus groups conducted by Crosby shared that robocalls are accepted, even expected, ways of hearing from their child’s school. As they require a relatively **low level of effort**, we consider them practically a required tactic. Some schools have the capacity to generate their own robocalls. In this case, the principal should be the one recording the call. In other districts that took part in the NSLP, robocalls came from the superintendent. Robocalls **can be used during at least two stages in your outreach effort**. First, they can be used **during the registration period**, probably most effectively as a reminder during the last two weeks of the registration period. Second, robocalls are a **good reminder to parents of students who are signed up** for the summer learning program that day one of the program is coming soon; these reminder robocalls can take place starting approximately one week out from day one. In both cases—promoting registration and reminding students to show up on day one—two robocalls are probably sufficient.

You will find two sample scripts for robocalls on page 26 and 31.

Confirmation Letters or Postcards —Required

All school districts running summer learning programs send materials home after registrations are completed—transportation details, request for waivers, etc. In addition, be sure to send home a confirmation letter or postcard letting parents know that their registration form has been received and their child has a reserved spot in the summer learning program. This is an important first step toward building that relationship with parents and students. Some of the NSLP districts sought to send the confirmation letter or postcard home on a rolling basis. That is, the mailing went out as soon as the registration form was received. Creating and sending these materials home requires no more than a **medium level of effort**. If possible, send them home on a rolling basis. If that is not possible, seek to get them in the mail no more than 7-10 days after the registration period closes.



Here is an example of a postcard that Duval County Public Schools sent home. And on page 31 we include a template for a confirmation letter.

Use Personalized Outreach —Recommended

Personalized outreach includes personal phone calls home (as opposed to robocalls) from principals or teachers, sending individualized notes home to parents, and speaking to parents at school events or during pick-up and drop-off times. Personalized outreach is one of the most impactful tactics. Parents in focus groups told us that they do consider teachers and principals to be trusted messengers. It is, however, labor intensive and requires a **high level of effort**, perhaps the most labor-intensive of all the tactics. Making this work requires a significant amount of management of and guidance and support for your messengers. However, to the extent possible, we do **recommend** incorporating this tactic.

Here is some guidance for implementation:

- It is practically mandatory to get principals on board. They will want to know how the summer learning program will help their students. And they will need to know that you and your team will make the outreach program as easy as possible.
- Provide the list of parents and children to each messenger, including contact information.
- Develop and provide a suite of materials, such as talking points, drafts of emails or notes home, scripts for phone calls, and frequently asked questions.
- Be sure to track the students from each school who register, and routinely report back to principals about the status of their outreach efforts.

While personalized outreach can be used throughout the calendar, because it can be labor-intensive to manage and support, it is probably **best used during the registration period**, from the time registration materials go out until the registration deadline. If feasible, personalized outreach focusing on promoting attendance is also valuable during the time between the registration deadline and the first day of the summer learning program.

One Key Takeaway?

**Be consistent and assertive
in your recruitment program.**

On pages 26 to 27, you will find these templates to help support this tactic:

- Talking points for talking to parents about registration
- Talking points for phone calls to parents
- Frequently Asked Questions to provide to school personnel

Implementation caveat: A caveat we would offer is to be circumspect when it comes to one type of personalized outreach. That is, home visits. Two of the school districts in the NSLP used home visits, sending staff to the homes of “target” eligible children, equipped with contact information, talking points, and registration forms. One district used central office staff to make home visits on occasion. Another district partnered with an established community-based organization, one known to the parents, and employed a consistent, sizable home visiting program. In the district that used home visiting extensively, a significant number of registrations were generated. However, it appears that some parents registered their children but did not actually intend to send their children to the summer learning program. They probably said “yes” to appease the visitor at their front door. While an effective tactic in many behavior-change programs, the return-on-investment, or ROI, may be too low to merit utilizing this type of personalized outreach in summer learning recruitment efforts.

Events for Parents and Students —Recommended

Parent and student events are, for the most part, used by the NSLP districts during two time periods: 1) the registration period and 2) after registration closes and before day one of the summer learning program. (In one district, some of the summer learning programs have even started to hold events in the fall or early winter for returning summer learning students.) Certainly, they require a high level of effort. And, depending on the event, there are budget implications. However, because they can promote a strong connection and relationship between the parent and student, and the summer learning program, as well as a degree of comfort with the program, we recommend this tactic.

Examples of events put on by the NSLP districts include:

- The Dallas Independent School District held registration events at several popular institutions, including at the Perot Museum of Nature and Science.

- Several districts, including Pittsburgh Public Schools, Rochester City School District, and Duval County Public Schools, held movie nights. In some cases, they rented a theatre and provided two tickets to every student who had registered; each child was required to bring a parent. In other cases, movie night took place in a school auditorium.



- “Try-the-program” events can be effective. Pittsburgh Public Schools, for example, for its Summer Dreamers Academy program, holds “Summer Dreamers Night Out.” It’s held at one of the program sites, after registration closes and before the first day of the summer learning program. Parents and students get to meet the summer teachers and staff, students get to try out some of the fun enrichment activities, and parents get to hear about what their children will learn during the summer.

In-school Events for Students —Recommended

There may be no better way to make students feel wanted by your summer learning program than inviting them to a fun in-school event just for them. In some districts taking part in the NLSP, schools held pizza parties or ice cream socials. In some schools, it was as simple as eligible students getting to join the teacher or guidance counselor for an “invitation only” lunch in his or her office. These events work well as recruitment events, taking place **during the registration period**, as well as events to promote day-one attendance, held **between the close of registration and day one**.

These events require a **medium to high level of effort by central office staff**. This is because, in our experience, school staff have so much else on their plates and therefore many schools need support to

pull the events off. In some districts, central office personnel had to deliver the pizzas to school. In one district, central office staff had to deliver ice cream to individual feeder schools. Perhaps the most novel approach, one that cut down on the necessary effort, was the “ice cream social in a box” approach by Duval County Public Schools. Central office delivered, to each feeder school, a template for inviting students to the ice cream social, the list of eligible students in each class to be invited, and a voucher for purchasing the ice cream from a local grocery chain.

One-on-one Teacher Interaction with Students—Optional

A few encouraging words from a teacher to a student can be powerful. When it comes to recruiting for summer learning, this tactic can take place during two different time periods: the **registration period** and the **time between end of registration and day one** of the summer learning program. During the registration period, a teacher can let a student know she thinks the student would really enjoy and get a lot out of the summer learning program. And, after students register, the teacher can let her students who did sign up, know how excited she is for them.

We classify this tactic as optional, not because it may not be effective, but because it requires a **medium-to-high level of effort** for central office staff. Staff need to make sure that each teacher is provided an up-to-date list of eligible students. And then, after registration, staff need to get each teacher an accurate list of which of her students are signed up. Finally, it’s helpful to provide talking points to teachers. On page 26, you’ll find some sample talking points that your teachers can use as-is or adapt.

Mailings to Students—Optional

We do think this is an effective tactic. We list it as optional solely because we consider it a valuable addition to the tactics we labelled required or recommended. The **level of effort is medium**, perhaps slightly greater if you decide to design and print a postcard like the Rochester City School District did (see the example on next page).

Mailing materials to students—addressed to them, not their parents—can be an effective tactic **at any point**: during the registration period, after registration

and before the program starts, and in the fall, to let students know you hope they will return next summer. You should expect, however, that a certain number of the mailings will be returned since some students will move and the district may not have up-to-date addresses.



Emails Home—Optional

If you have email addresses for parents, use them. Emails can be valuable reminders during the registration period and can be sent several times—for example, shortly after registration materials go home, midway through the registration period, and as the deadline draws near. The **level of effort** is **low** and, thus, emails are a relatively easy way to ensure your outreach is consistent. On pages 29-30, you will find examples of three emails that can be used as is or adapted.

Tactic: Texts to Parents—Optional

If you have mobile phone numbers for parents, consider sending brief text messages as reminders. It's a **low effort** tactic. If you do text, send no more than three texts so that it does not begin to feel like a nuisance to parents—remember, some parents get charged per text. See page 30 for three sample text messages that you can use during the recruitment period.



CHAPTER FOUR

EXAMPLES AND TEMPLATES

Sample Copy for Recruitment Flyer

Copy for Front-page of Flyer

Summer Program for [X] graders in [name of district]

Want an Opportunity to Take Charge of Your Child's Future? Give Them a Summer Filled with Learning & Fun.

It's fun. Your child will take part in activities including field trips, art projects, sports and more [replace with examples of your program's enrichment activities]

It's learning. Your child will sharpen the math, reading, and writing skills needed to succeed in [X] grade and beyond.

It's no-cost. And all transportation and meals are included.

Teachers and well-known community organizations will lead your children each day in exciting activities inside and outside the classroom.

Space is limited. Sign up by [date].

Turn the page over to learn more!

Copy for Back Page of Flyer

[Program name] is a great way to keep your child's mind and body active this summer. Sign your child up for this exciting opportunity.

Teachers will help your child have fun, remember what they learned in the [X] grade, and get your child ready for [X] grade.

Program Timing

Monday to Friday

[start time] - [end time]

Starts [start date]

Ends [end date]

How to register

[Include brief instruction on where to get, return registration form.]

Ask at your child's school, call XXX-XXX-XXXX, or go to www.xxxx.xxx to learn more and get a registration form.

Space is limited. Sign up now for this great opportunity.

The deadline is [date]. After that, registration forms cannot be accepted.

[Space for district program information/location and site details/visual]

Sample Copy for Recruitment Postcard

Keep your child's mind and body active this summer

Looking for an opportunity to take charge of your child's future? Sign your child up for a chance to take part in [program name] this summer.

It's fun. Your child will [specific example of enrichment activities].

It's learning. Your child will sharpen the reading, writing and math skills needed to succeed in [X] grade and beyond.

It's no-cost. And all transportation and meals are included.

Teachers, along with well-known community organizations, lead children each day in exciting activities inside and outside the classroom.

Space is limited. Sign up now to give your child a chance at this great opportunity.

Go to www.xxxx.org or call XXX-XXX-XXXX to learn more and get a sign-up form. Or ask at your child's school.

Sample Robocall Script: Registration Period

Hi, my name is [your name]; I'm calling from [program name].

I'm calling because we have not yet received [student name]'s registration form for [program name].

Your child is eligible for our program, which is a mix of enrichment programs like [insert two examples] and academics like math and reading.

Our program is no cost and runs from Monday through Friday, [start time] to [end time]

Please give us a call at XXX-XXX-XXXX soon, so that we can get him/her signed up.

Thank you and have a good day!

Sample Talking Points for Teachers Talking to Individual Students

- I want you to give this to your mom or dad today.
- It's about a summer program you will really like.
- You are doing such a great job this year—you will learn some new things and it will help you get ready for [X] grade.
- And you will have a lot of fun. You will do fun things like hiking, painting, and [additional enrichment activities, as applicable].
- Doesn't this sound like fun?
- Give this to your mom or dad. If you want to go, tell your parents they have to sign up right away.
- Will you remember to do that today when you get home?

Talking Points for Conversations with Parents

- [Program name] could be perfect for your child this summer.
- It's a mix of academics and fun activities. There's no cost for parents and it's an exciting summer for your child.
- Children will [two or three specific examples of exciting enrichment activities.] And they will work on the reading, writing and math skills needed to succeed in [X] grade and beyond.
- It can help make sure your child is ready to succeed next school year—research shows that many students can fall behind over the summer.

- Teachers supervise the program and use a curriculum designed to help your child get ready to do better in the [X] grade.
- Transportation is included. It goes from [start time] to [end time] every day, for five weeks [change as needed].
- Space is limited. Sign up now to give your child a chance at this great opportunity.
- Take a look at this flyer. [Alternative: Where can we send the flyer and registration form to you?]

Talking Points for Phone Calls to Parents³

- Hi, can I speak to the parent or guardian of [student's name].
- This is [name], [student's name]'s teacher.
- Have you heard about the [program name]?
- [If Yes]: Great! I think [student's first name] will be a great addition to the program.
- [If No]: It's a summer program that I think your child will like. Every day is a mix of academics and fun that will keep your child's mind and body active. It will prepare your child for the [X] grade and your child will enjoy exciting activities like [examples of enrichment activities]. I think [student's first name] will be a great addition to the program.
- You should sign up [student's first name]. Time is running out to sign up; the deadline is [date].
- The registration form is available online at www.xxxxx—or your child should have it in their take-home folder this week.
- Make sure to fill it out and send it to your child's teacher by [registration date].

FAQs for Use by Principals, Teachers and Other Personnel

What activities will children do each day?

Each day is a mix of academics—reading, writing and math—and fun activities and field trips. The academic part helps children get ready to succeed in [X] grade. And the activities are both fun and give children a chance to do new things like [insert two or more examples of enrichment activities].

Who are the adults supervising the children?

They are school teachers selected from the district. Teachers have to apply to teach in [program name].
[Add information about enrichment providers.]

Is this for children who are falling behind and not doing well in school?

No. [Program name] can help all children get ready to do better in the [X] grade and beyond.

What does it cost?

There is no cost for this program, and the district provides transportation, meals and snacks.

What time is the program? What school would my child go to? How long is the program?

[Insert all relevant logistical information—from site location to hours to transportation]

Does this take the place of the summer program for children who could be held back in the fall?

No. [Insert information about mandatory and/or remedial summer program.]

Where can I get a registration form?

I can send you one. You can also get it from your child's school or online [include address for website].

³ While talking points to support in-person conversations with parents and talking points for phone calls home share similar content, the talking points for conversations assume that principals or teachers are broaching the topic of summer learning in the context of a broader discussion. The talking points for phone calls recognize the need to quickly get to the point during a phone call, especially to assure the parent that the student's behavior or academic performance is not the reason for the call.

Is there a deadline?

Yes, it is [date]. It is very important that you register early and don't miss this deadline. Space is limited.

We planned a vacation during what will be the last week of the program. Can I still sign my child up?

The program lasts [X] weeks. It starts [start date] and ends [end date]. Attendance is required every day. Perhaps you can move your vacation back just one week so your child can have a chance at this opportunity.

Sample Copy for Flyer for Events for Parents and Students

Join us on [date and place]

We're getting ready for summer at [program name]

and

We want you and your child there!

[Insert event details]

[Program name] is a great mix of fun and learning.

Teachers, along with well-known community organizations, will lead your child in exciting activities inside and outside the classroom.

It's five days a week, from [start time] to [end time], and there's no cost.

Come to [insert event details] and learn how you can keep your child's mind and body active this summer!

Sample Copy for Invitation to Students to In-School Events

This is a special invitation just for you. We're having a pizza party [other type of event].

We are getting ready for summer. We are getting ready for fun and learning. And we want you there.

Come to our pizza party [other type of event].

[Insert event details]

We'll tell you all about [program name].

Summer's coming and we want YOU there!

Sample Copy for Postcard to Students

Want to have fun and learn some cool new stuff this summer?

Then plan to be part of [program name].

You'll do fun things like [insert 2 or 3 examples of enrichment activities].

You'll also learn new things in math, reading, and science.

And you'll see some old friends and make some new friends.

Summer's coming, and we want YOU here!

Emails to Promote Registration

Email #1

SUBJECT: Important summer opportunity from [District]

Looking for an opportunity to take charge of your child's future? Sign up your child for a chance to take part in [name of program] this summer. It's a fun, safe way to keep their education on track and give them a great summer experience.

Your child will get a mix of reading, writing and math, combined with exciting activities like [example of enrichment activities]. The program is five days a week and runs from [start time] in the morning to [end time] in the afternoon. Transportation is included as well as breakfast, lunch and snacks. There is no cost for [name of program].

This is a great opportunity to make sure your child does not forget what they are learning in [X] grade. And the teachers know exactly how to help your child get ready to succeed in the [X] grade. All while making sure it's a fun and enjoyable summer.

Click here for a flyer with more information and the registration form. Space is limited, so sign your child up for a chance to get in before the deadline of [date].

[Note: if your district allows online registration, include a direct link.]

Sincerely,
Name
Title

Email #2

SUBJECT: District [name of program] deadline approaching

Looking for an opportunity to take charge of your child's future? Now's the time to sign up your child for a chance to take part in [name of program] this summer. The [date] deadline is almost here. After that, registrations cannot be accepted.

Teachers, along with well-known community organizations, lead children in exciting activities inside and outside of the classroom, including [list several enrichment activities]. And your child will sharpen the reading, writing and math skills needed to be ready for the [X] grade.

The program is five days a week and runs from [start time] in the morning to [end time] in the afternoon. There is no cost for the program and transportation is included, as well as breakfast, lunch and snacks.

It's the summer fun your child wants and the summer learning to help them succeed.

Click here for a flyer with more information and the registration form. Space is limited, so sign up for a chance to get in before the deadline of [date].

[Note: if your district allows online registration, include a direct link.]

Sincerely,
Name
Title

Email 3

SUBJECT: No-cost summer program: final reminder

You can still sign your child up for a chance to take part in [name of program] this summer. But there are only three days left. This Friday is the last day to turn a registration form in. [Change to reflect actual dates.]

Your child can get outside this summer, do exciting things like [insert two examples of enrichment activities], and sharpen their reading, writing and math skills. There is no cost for the program.

Research shows that over the summer some students can fall behind their peers. Teachers in [name of program] know how to give children a fun summer that helps them succeed in [X] grade and beyond.

The program is five days a week and runs from [start time] in the morning to [end time] in the afternoon. Transportation is included as well as breakfast, lunch and snacks.

Click here for a flyer with more information and the registration form. Space is limited. Sign your child up for a chance to get in before this Friday, [date]. Registrations cannot be accepted after the deadline.

[Note: if your district allows online registration, include a direct link.]

We want your child to have a chance at this great summer experience.

Sincerely,
Name
Title

Text Messages to Promote Registration

Text Message #1

Want to take charge of your child's future? Our school district's [name of program] is a summer of fun and learning. No cost. Visit [use bit.ly]

Text Message #2

Your child's principal says [name of program] is a summer of fun and learning to help your child succeed. Register by [date]. Visit [use bit.ly]

Text Message #3

Your child's chance to be part of [name of program] is almost gone. Deadline is [date]. Visit [use bit.ly]

Language for District/School Website

For websites that do not allow online registration

Looking for an opportunity to take charge of your child's future? [Name of program] offers a summer of fun activities and academics. Your child can [insert specific examples of enrichment activities] while working on math, reading and writing skills to help them succeed in the next grade and beyond.

There is no cost for [name of program]. It includes transportation and meals. The program starts [start date] and ends [end date]. It's five days a week from [start time] to [end time]. Click here for more information [link to PDF of flyer] or ask at your child's school.

Teachers, along with well-known community organizations, will lead children each day in exciting activities inside and outside the classroom. It's a great way to keep your child's mind and body active this summer. Space is limited and the deadline is [date].

For websites that do allow online registration

Looking for an opportunity to take charge of your child's future? [Name of program] offers a summer of fun activities and academics. Your child can [insert specific examples of enrichment activities] while working on math, reading and writing skills to help them succeed in the next grade and beyond.

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Sample Copy for Confirmation Letter

Dear Parent of [Student Name],

We have received your child's registration form. This means **[student name] is now officially enrolled in [name of program]**. Your child will attend from [start date] to [end date] from [start time] to [end time] at [Insert Summer Learning Site], where transportation, breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack will be provided daily.

Students will spend time participating in fun activities such as [list three to four enrichment examples]. In addition, students will enjoy and learn from their academic time in science, math, social studies and language arts.

This summer program is set up to help your child get ready for the [X] grade, but only if your child attends regularly. We ask that you please plan your summer vacation so that your child does not miss any of the learning and fun. The camp only lasts five weeks, so every day counts. (And if your child does miss a bit of [program name], please get your child back to camp as soon as possible so the learning and fun can continue.)

A packet with information on transportation and additional details will be sent [insert date]. If you have questions about the camp, please contact us at [insert contact information].

Thank you again for your commitment to your child's education.

Sincerely

Sample Robocall Script: Leading up to Day One of Summer Learning Program

Hello. This is XXXXX from [name of district].

Welcome to [name of program]. It will be a great summer for your child, a mix of exciting activities like [insert two enrichment activities] and a chance to get ready to succeed in [X] grade and beyond.

[Program name] starts on [date] at [time]. If you have any questions, please call XXX-XXX-XXXX. That's XXX-XXX-XXXX.

We look forward to seeing you and your child on [date].



The Wallace Foundation is a national philanthropy that seeks to improve learning and enrichment for disadvantaged children and foster the vitality of the arts for everyone.

Wallace has six major initiatives under way:

- School leadership: Strengthening education leadership to improve student achievement.
- Afterschool: Helping selected cities make good afterschool programs available to many more children.
- Arts education: Expanding arts learning opportunities for children and teens.
- Summer learning: Better understanding the impact of high-quality summer learning programs on disadvantaged children.
- Audience development for the arts: Making the arts a part of many more people's lives by working with art organizations to broaden, deepen and diversify audiences.
- Social and emotional learning: Aligning and improving opportunities for social and emotional learning for children across school and out-of-school time settings.

Find out more at www.wallacefoundation.org.

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