

High School Summer Learning Programs



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How do we crack the code on summer learning for high school students?

One of the greatest challenges facing school districts across the country is how to transform high school summer learning programs to be more relevant and engaging for high school students. Summer provides an excellent opportunity to motivate older students by providing a variety of enriching opportunities and activities from which they can choose. Outlined below are some strategies which provide high-interest, relevant learning opportunities that create meaningful academic experiences that both engage and support this group of students. As you review this document consider the unique aspects and needs of your District as well as the broader community.



Work-Based Learning

STRATEGY



Collaborate with community organizations, businesses, and industry partners to offer work-based learning experiences where students can earn credits through internships, apprenticeships, or service-learning projects related to their academic coursework. The Work-Based Learning Continuum (WBL Continuum) provides an overview of how work based programming progresses from the lowest to highest level of commitment.

RATIONALE



Work-based learning opportunities establish symbiotic relationships within the community between the school district and work-based learning partners and:

- provide support for academic achievement through real-world work,
- provide engaging hand-on experiences while also addressing a community need,
- help students develop the skills, confidence and readiness for success after high school,

Left: A student in Baltimore, MD, pours an ingredient into a measuring cup in the kitchen. Photo credit: Kyle Pompey for FHI 360.
Top right: Students in Durham, NC, talk outside school during a break between classes. Photo credit: Jessica Scranton for FHI 360.

- increase student motivation and engagement while also preparing students for the transition from high school to post-secondary education or the workforce and
- provide the work-based partner with a pipeline of local future workers to address an industry/organization's need.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

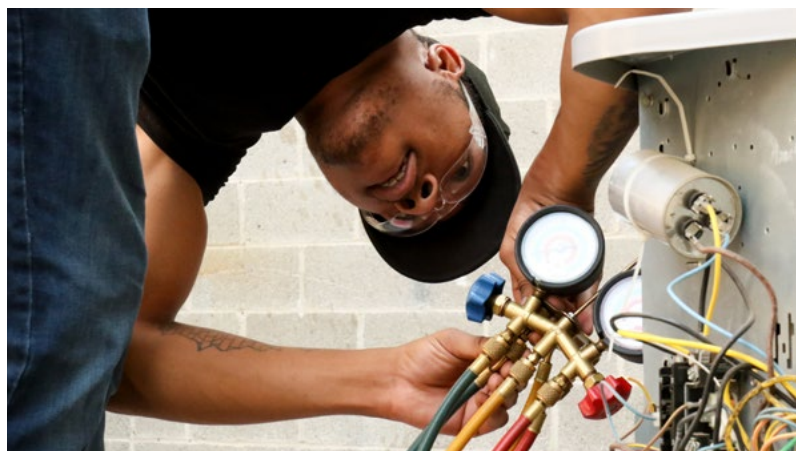
To ensure a successful work-based learning placement several factors must be considered. Listed below are some but consider the unique needs of both the District and work-based partner to include as needed.

- Does the District have personnel/resources available to spearhead this project? At minimum a work based learning coordinator, who can cultivate and maintain relationships, has a strong commitment and ability to connect with students and possesses excellent communication skills with all stakeholders, is needed. Initially a teacher may assume this role but as the District moves across the Work-Based Continuum a fully dedicated position will be needed. Embedding work-based learning into the curriculum aids in creating a more sustainable and meaningful work based learning program.
- Are students prepared for work-based learning? Student preparation and awareness of expectations is critical. This may include career exploration activities, resume writing workshops, interview skills training and orientation sessions to familiarize students with workforce expectations and safety protocols.
- Are all stakeholders clear on the expectations for a successful work-based learning program? By preparing and reviewing a partnership agreement, which includes standards for regular communication and clearly outlined responsibilities for both district and partner participants, these expectations are formalized and available for review when needed.
- Ensure there is sufficient organization/industry partner mentorship and supervision to help students navigate their roles, develop skills and achieve learning objectives. Identified connections between credit/learning requirements must be understood by both the organization/industry partner and student in advance for each work-based learning opportunity or activity.
- What metrics will you use to determine if your program is successful? Establishing clear objectives and metrics for success aid not only in program revisions but also in helping to communicate the value to the community at large. Possible metrics include: number of internship hours; student satisfaction; partner satisfaction; number of partners will to participate in subsequent years; continuation of the work-based program into the school year, etc.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Listed below are some of the steps to consider then planning for a successful implementation:

- Identify most frequent courses requiring credit recovery and engage those subject area teachers in designing the project or work-based learning opportunities.
- Analyze the learning needs of students in need of credit recovery to ascertain what objectives occur most frequently.
- Identify potential partners to discuss interest in work-based study partnerships based on mutual needs. Consider how the district needs align with potential partners you identify. Possible potential partners could include companies/guests that have participated in your career exploration activities occurring throughout the K-12 experience. Also explore with City Hall their workforce or economic development partners to identify additional potential partners to approach.
- Develop a partnership agreement to aid in effective communication and alignment of expectations and responsibilities on each partner's part once partners have been identified. Specific communication strategies such as regular (eg weekly) check-ins with students, either individually or as a group, and partners to identify what is working and any workplace challenges coming up for both student and partners will help ensure a successful program
- Explore different work-based learning scenarios with identified partners by aligning the curricular needs, career interests or aspirations of students with the mission/purpose of each partner.



POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Listed below are some potential resources in identifying work-based learning partners:

- Work with the local Chamber of Commerce. This could entail presentations at a Chamber of Commerce meeting or personally contacting members of the Chamber whose mission or focus aligns with the curricular needs of students.

A student in Baltimore, MD, practices fixing an HVAC unit. Photo credit: Kyle Pompey for FHI 360.

- Contact professional associations and trade organizations relevant to key industries in the community. These organizations often are willing to host work-based learning experiences for students.
- Contact key industries in the community. Many industries have a community engagement or philanthropic division or an industry need that would align with the curricular needs of students.
- Contact nonprofit organizations and community groups that specialize in workforce development. If you are unaware of who these groups might be contact the Mayor’s office. Local government often has a position or office dedicated to community outreach who could provide information as to these groups.
- Contact existing afterschool/summer partners to determine if work-based learning opportunities exist there for students.

Local Higher Education Institution Partnerships

STRATEGY

Establish a partnership with local institutions of higher education (IHEs), both two and four year institutions, to offer activities within the work-based learning continuum. If the partnership is just beginning consider those activities within the WBL continuum most relevant to the District. These could center around academic enrichment, career exploration, college readiness and community engagement.



An administrator at a high school in Durham, NC, speaks with a visitor. Photo credit: Jessica Scranton for FHI 360.

RATIONALE

The development of partnerships between local high schools and IHEs create a synergistic relationship that benefits students, educators, IHEs and the broader community by:

- providing enhanced and engaging educational opportunities for students and teachers by providing access to resources, expertise, and facilities beyond a high school setting,
- bridging the gap between secondary and post-secondary education through experiences such as advanced coursework, dual enrollment programs, research opportunities and specialized workshops or camps that enrich the learning experiences,
- creating transitional activities to support college readiness and/or transition to post-secondary education or the workforce by generating student motivation and facilitating career exploration in student selected areas of interest,
- providing motivating opportunities for students to feel a part of and contribute to the broader community by engaging in solving real-world problems while fostering a sense of social responsibility and civic pride through innovative and service-learning activities,
- providing professional development opportunities for teachers around instructional strategies to continue to enhance student interest and motivation.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Ensuring a successful and effective partnership with IHEs require consideration of the following factors:

- What are the legal and regulatory requirements that govern partnerships between LEAs and IHEs? Areas to consider here include data sharing, student privacy, liability and intellectual property rights of materials and programs developed.
- Explore with the IHE the possibility of using District staff as adjunct faculty for both dual credit and summer programming.
- How will stakeholders including students, parents, administrators,, and teachers, be engaged and buy-in occur? Input and feedback from stakeholders at both development and implementation stages are critical to ensure programs developed meet their needs and interests.
- Do the proposed IHE partners have a strong commitment to ensuring opportunities are available to all students? Determining this will help to ensure ways that partnership activities are inclusive and available to all students.
- How will the District work with potential IHE partners to help them understand the unique characteristics of communities served by the high school and high school population? Inherent in this is also the recognition and respect of cultural differences, values and norms.
- What will be the shared goals and objectives of the partnership? Clear identification of what the District desires to accomplish will help in clarifying shared goals.
- How will you know if the objectives of your partnership are met? Possible metrics may include stakeholder (eg student university/college, parent) satisfaction surveys; increased enrollment; willingness by the university partner to expand the programming, etc.



Students in Durham, NC, pause for a photo while working on a group presentation.
Photo credit: Jessica Scranton for FHI 360.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Each LEA/high school and IHE partnership is unique based on the needs, resources and capacities of both institutions. Listed below are some of the most common steps to consider in creating and implementing a successful and effective partnership. Your list may have additional steps to consider based on each partnership's unique characteristics.

- Examine current laws and regulations to determine what type of activities can be developed in collaboration with IHE partners.
- Identify the District/school leadership position responsible for the development and coordination of IHE partnerships.
- Establish a stakeholder group to provide input into the desired focus of the activities resulting from an IHE/District or high school partnership.
- Conduct outreach activities to identify the IHE partner whose mission is best aligned to the needs of the district.
- Establish a point of contact at the IHE. Multiple IHE faculty and staff will be working with the high school but a single point of contact will help activities to run smoothly.
- Work with identified IHE partner to conduct a needs assessment to establish a common understanding of the interests, needs and challenges of the high school and its students as well as the resources and expertise available at the IHE.
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines the terms and conditions of the partnership including roles and responsibilities, objectives, resources and timelines. Ensure the MOU reflects the shared goals and commitments of both parties and addresses any legal or regulatory considerations.
- Establish a clear communication plan by establishing the mode and frequency of communications and meetings to ensure ongoing collaboration and decision-making opportunities. The use of the single point of contact from each institution will facilitate more effective and efficient communication.
- Plan partnership activities that align with the goals and priorities established earlier. Activities may go beyond direct classes and academic activities for high school students to include academic workshops, teacher professional development, career exploration events, college fairs, mentorship programs and service-learning projects sponsored by the IHE.
- Within each institution identify and allocate resources to support planned initiatives including staffing, facilities and materials.
- Design an evaluation plan to assess how well each initiative's goals and objectives were met. Often the IHE will conduct this as a student project and as one of their roles in the partnership.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES

Listed below are some potential resources for use in developing partnerships and also some sustainability strategies.

- Identify what department or unit within an IHE is responsible for community engagement outreach and coordination. Contacts to aid in determining this may include the Chancellor's or Academic Vice Chancellor/Provost's administrative assistant, College/School Deans in STEM disciplines (eg Chemistry, Biology, Engineering, etc.) or Education
- Work with the IHE point of contact to identify/explore the following:
 - » Dual course offerings or research opportunities in students areas of interest. This may also include mentoring and networking support by IHE faculty.
 - » Alternative funding opportunities such as grants or philanthropic donations. Many IHEs have access to funding sources such as grants or scholarships both within and outside the IHE to support partnership activities;
 - » Access to educational resources such as digital libraries and learning management;
 - » Student support services including academic advising, tutoring, career services, college readiness and admissions support. Many of these are able to be offered onsite at the high school and include college readiness workshops, admissions counseling, financial aid assistance and campus visits.
 - » Pursuit of grant programs such as Gear Up, TRIO, 21st Century or others that provide multiple services around student support in academic and other areas. IHEs are often looking for District partners for these types of programs that could offer summer programming as well as well as motivating activities throughout the school year. IHE faculty are often willing to participate in the writing of a grant or even write it for the school district.

Flexible/Innovative Credit Recovery

STRATEGY

If the District is already using or are considering using an online credit recovery product it can be used to develop an individual, flexible, competency-based credit recovery summer learning program. Design principles for effective online credit recovery programs and areas to consider in effectively using online programs have been identified in the research . The ability to use an online credit recovery program that can be accessed anywhere there is an internet connection, at any time the student has to devote to the individualized program, and in which only needed skills and objectives are addressed a motivating and individualized personal learning experience for students is created will create a high level of motivation for students.



RATIONALE

The development of an individualized program creates a motivating summer learning opportunity for students. Some of the benefits of offering this type of programming include:

- Students learn at their own pace and at a time they determine is most productive or convenient for them.
- Students are more motivated when allowed to access the program in real time and the content is relevant to their learning needs
- Allows students to focus only on mastery of essential skills and knowledge

FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Factors to consider when establishing this type of summer learning option include:

- Is there access to online learning programs that focus lessons related to specific learning objectives, skills or outcomes?
- Are the online lessons engaging and provide for student interaction?

- What resources will be needed to provide real time support to assist students?
- Are resources available for students to flexibly access online programming?
- What resources will be needed to develop individualized learning programs for each student?
- What is needed to get student and faculty buy-in?

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Listed below are some of the most common steps to consider in creating and implementing a successful and effective personalized learning experience for high school students.

- Consider starting with a pilot program in only one subject area. This can help lead to buy-in by students, faculty, and parents.
- Identify staff or faculty member to serve as lead or project manager to provide coordination and trouble shoot any issues that arise through the creation of the individualized student programs and during the summer program.
- Ensure sufficient resources exist in terms of personnel, program licenses and technology to conduct the summer learning program.
- Identify funding for faculty members to work within your online program to develop the personalized programs for each student needing to participate prior to the summer learning program period.
- Analyze and determine learning objectives/competencies needed for each student. Develop the individualized program by pulling only those lessons from the online program.
- Provide professional development to teachers to support effective implementation.
- Develop guidelines for the summer learning program with responsibilities for both students and faculty. Identify how personalized support will be provided to students. This could include identified peer mentors, virtual online mentors, establishing faculty office hours, regularly schedule personal contact with students, etc.
- Conduct orientation for students and faculty to share expectations and responsibilities.

POTENTIAL RESOURCES

- Contact company representatives for your online class program:
 - » for assistance and training in developing the individualized programs for students.
 - » for professional development opportunities the company might offer.



Students in Durham, NC, practice for a drum line, paint, and play the keyboard during arts and music classes. Photo credit: Jessica Scranton for FHI 360.