

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Wyoming Bridges, a Grant for Summer School and Extended Day Programs**

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#### **1. Who began this grant, and why?**

The need for funds specifically targeted to summer school and extended day interventions was originally identified in a 2002 study which examined the at-risk adjustment to Wyoming's block grant funding to public schools. That report found that the model at that time did not fund programs which operated outside the regular school day. The study also found that services provided to students needing additional instruction varied so greatly among districts that policymakers could not be assured all students were exposed equally to quality educational supports.

The following summer, in 2003, educators joined with Harris Cooper, Ph.D., of Duke University, to discuss summer learning loss, who it impacts most, and what components needed to be in place for a successful summer program. Wyoming educators then designed a program which incorporated these defined elements and presented a proposal to the legislature in 2004 to fund summer programs. Lawmakers expanded the proposed summer program to include extended day offerings, and the first grant was made available to districts for the summer of 2004. In 2006, the Bridges Grant was expanded further to include an independent enrichment component, and funding was doubled. Then in 2008, the legislature again modified the program, focusing once more on its original mandate of providing supports to *academically* at-risk students, eliminating funding for an independent enrichment component, and moving the funding formula to one based on district at-risk proxy numbers rather than general enrollment.

#### **2. What is the size of the grant?**

The funding formula for the Bridges grant was modified in the 2008 legislative session to more closely target students at risk of failure as indicated by district at-risk student proxy counts which include students who participate in free and/or reduced lunch, those who are English language learners and those who are mobile. This reiterates the philosophy of focusing the grant to the needs of students who are statistically academically at risk of failure. Grants will be calculated for districts using each district's specific average teacher compensation, and it is based on a total of 150 hours for summer school and extended day instruction, preparation, and assessment time. Grants for very small districts are calculated using a minimum of .5 teacher full-time equivalent (FTE), increasing the "floor" amount considerably. Grant increases will now keep pace with increases in the block grant funding model, eliminating the need to separately adjust the Bridges Grant for cost-of-living increases. At this point in time, the Wyoming Bridges Grant is funded around \$16.5 million/year.

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#### 3. Which students does the grant target?

Enabling legislation and rules stipulate that the target audience of the Wyoming Bridges grant is students who are academically at risk of failure.

#### 4. What if classes include students not academically at-risk?

If your district also includes students in summer school who were not identified as being at-risk of failure, grant funds should be *apportioned* by those students who do and do not meet grant requirements. For instance, if you offer a summer algebra class that is attended by both students requiring remediation as well as students obtaining first time credit for algebra, divide the cost of the class proportionately according to the number of students receiving remediation and those receiving first time credit. The Wyoming Bridges Grant should pay only for the costs of students academically at-risk.

#### 5. What are the defined successful elements of a strong summer program?

Harris Cooper, Ph.D., in conjunction with a number of other researchers, analyzed multiple summer programs for effect and found that certain elements were associated with success. Some of these elements are mandatory grant requirements and are defined in law:

1. **Concentration on the basic subjects of math and language arts;** for Wyoming Bridges, both must be available to students who need interventions in math or language arts, although districts may certainly add other subjects.

2. **Minimum instructional hours;** at elementary and middle school/junior high, 60 hours of direct instruction in math and language arts must be *delivered* (can be one or both subjects); at the high school level, 60 hours of instruction (per subject) must be *available*, but students can prove proficiency before sitting for 60 hours.

3. **Delivery of instruction by highly qualified, trained teachers;** summer school teachers must be certified in their content area and receive annual training on research-based instruction for at-risk students. Bridges funds can be used for appropriate training including conferences. District wide training that applies can be charged to Bridges funding for Bridges staff only.

4. **Minimum length of program;** summer programs must last *at least* fifteen (15) days. However, fewer hours per day over a longer period of time is more effective.

5. **Well defined learning goals for each student;** individual learning plans must be developed for all Bridges students.

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6. **Supervision and monitoring;** those supervising Bridges summer or extended day programs also must receive annual training on research-based instructional strategies for at-risk students.

7. **Small class size.**

#### 6. **Other than successful program requirements, are there other conditions that must be met for the grant?**

Yes. First and foremost, since the original intent of this grant was to provide the additional instructional time needed to stem summer learning loss and improve student proficiency with rigorous and relevant summer programs, **districts must have in place a comprehensive K-12 summer school before funds can be used for extended day offerings.** However, this does not mean that districts have to enroll more students or spend more money on summer programs than on extended day programs. It does mean that summer school has to be available to those who need it and are particularly vulnerable to summer learning loss which compounds an already evident deficient mastery of standards.

Summer learning is regarded to be as important (if not more so) than learning during the regular school year. Thus, PTSB guidelines on teacher certifications are the same. Only teachers certified in specific content areas can teach those subjects in summer school.

High school students using computer-based educational learning programs during summer to recover lost credits (like NovaNet, Plato, OdysseyWare, rather than distance learning programs with a certified teacher) must be **supervised and the labs attended** by a certified teacher. This teacher does not necessarily need to be certified in the specific content area the student is studying.

Students in grades K-8 require **direct** hands-on instruction by appropriately certified teachers rather than instruction delivered through computer-based learning programs not associated with a distance certified teacher. This is not meant to preclude the use of computer programs to aid or supplement instruction. But computers cannot supplant instruction for K-8 students.

Extended day programs must be assigned a certified **"Teacher of Record"** to supervise the program(s) and develop the student's Individual Learning Plan. This teacher is not required to be certified in the content area being delivered to the student.

In 2010 grant requirements to test summer school students at the beginning and the end of summer school was rescinded. Pre/post testing was replaced with district submittal of spring and fall student RIT scores from NorthWest Education Association's (NWEA) Measurement of Academic Progress (MAP). It is anticipated this move will provide more contact time for students during summer school, reduce the burden

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of assessment, and will satisfy the legislative mandate for uniform assessment of summer school effectiveness. To further facilitate data sharing, all districts have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with NWEA to directly submit student data to the Department.

## **7. What other practices are highly encouraged to deliver effective summer school and extended day programs?**

Grant administrators encourage other components be in place to assure effective programs, although they are not mandated by law:

1. The delivery of instruction in a manner **different from** the traditional school year that incorporates hands-on manipulatives, and is rigorous and relevant to real life; this is so important that a component has been added to the grant that requires learning opportunities engaging academically at-risk students in rigorous higher order thinking. This is defined in the rules as "enrichment".

2. The provision of **meals** (not just snacks) even if programs begin after breakfast and end before lunch. If meals cannot be provided through your district, consider contracting with local entities – this is an approved expense for grant funds;

3. For elementary and junior high/middle students, programs which start and end closer to the beginning of school the following year;

4. The supplementation of subject instruction with experiential or project or place-based learning; and

5. Transportation.

## **8. How can districts access the grant? What are the timeframes?**

The Wyoming Bridges Grant is not competitive. Districts which agree to meet program requirements are eligible for the grant. Program requirements are generally set forth and defined in the application itself either through answers provided to questions, or through assurances. We encourage districts to review assurances, and not just initial them without careful thought.

Typically the Department will make applications available to districts in February of each year. The application packet will come via the Superintendent Memorandum process and in 2013 will be due at the Department April 12 but can be submitted earlier. Applications are reviewed and Superintendents are informed of eligibility no later than May 1 of each year.

The application form (WDE539) can be accessed under the data collection list on the Department's website. After completion, the application is to be uploaded into the Department's data tracking system by a person in the district holding upload rights. The last page of the application contains an assurance and signature page which must still be mailed to the Department and postmarked no later than April 12, 2013. Please mail that page with original signatures to Dianne Frazer at:

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Grant awards are calculated utilizing spring demographic data submitted by districts via the WDE684 process and will adhere to the timelines set forth for that data collection. Preliminary grant awards will be calculated May 1, and then finalized June 1, ensuring the most up to date student data is used in awarding grant amounts. If WDE684 is missing or deemed to be inaccurate, a district's grant award will be calculated to be \$0.00 and forfeited.

**9. How do districts apply for both components of the grant?**

The single application, the WDE539, covers application for use of funds for both summer school and extended day programs. Districts merely indicate intended use of the grant.

**10. Who determines student eligibility?**

Districts have discretion on determining which students can most benefit from the programs made available under this grant; however, the law does specify that the grant is to target and support *academically* at-risk students.

**11. What are the reporting requirements for the grant?**

Reports for **summer programs** are due the middle of September with the Department's fall data reporting group. Generally speaking, for summer school programs, districts will be asked to provide descriptions of summer programs offered, data on how many students (K-12) were identified as needing summer school, and how many enrolled, by grade. Additionally, districts must provide data on each individual student who completed summer school, as part of the statutory requirement to analyze summer school effectiveness. Math and reading performance of students will be segregated from those attending and not attending summer school to analyze the change in achievement gap between the two groups that occurs over the summer period.

The end-of-program report also collects other items of interest, like whether or not you provided transportation and meals, how you embedded enriched learning strategies in instruction, etc. Expenditure information will need to be reported in order to receive reimbursement. You will be asked to provide feedback to the Department on how to improve the program. Additionally, every three to four years, you may be asked to participate in surveys involving students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

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Reports on **extended day intervention/remediation programs** are part of the spring data collection and are due in June after the end of the school year.

Data collected from districts is compiled and made available in two reports which are generally published in December of each year – one each for extended day programs and summer school. The summer school report also contains information on research conducted on the effectiveness of summer school. With the expansion of the analysis to include MAP student data statewide, specific workshops and reports will be created to inform districts on proven best practices.

**12. How do districts receive grant funds?**

Districts operating **summer programs** will be reimbursed based on expenditure information submitted in end-of-program reports due in September. Districts operating **extended day programs** will be reimbursed based on expenditure information submitted on end-of-program reports due in June. Reimbursement for both programs may not exceed the allowable grant calculated by formula. Funds will typically come to districts within a month after data in the reports is deemed valid; data verification of individual student records is extensive and sometimes time consuming.

Unexpended grant funds cannot be carried forward to the next year, even within the same biennium period. Districts will report expenditures in two separate fiscal years over the summer period – funds expended (primarily) in June for one fiscal year, and funds expended in (primarily) July/August for the new fiscal year.