

Ideas for Summer Bridges 2013

**Don't CALL it summer school - Put a different name on it
Make it Different – Make it Fun**

- ✓ **Begin and end your summer session with a social gathering to prepare students and parents for the program and to celebrate its end. Food is always a great encourager of attendance...**
- ✓ **Prepare students and teachers for possible summer program attendance no later than the spring parent/teacher conference. Draft ILPs could be developed at that point so all parties are included and aware of the student's performance and expectations.**
- ✓ **If a student has attended summer session, review that student's summer progress with parents during the fall parent/teacher conference period. Again – use the ILP to show what goals were set and accomplished.**
- ✓ **If your district is having problems finding appropriately certified staff for summer, consider moving your summer school dates to attract qualified teachers from neighboring districts when this is geographically possible.**
- ✓ **Trouble with tardy students? Begin your day with group activities like making healthy snacks and games that includes teachers and students – so if some are late, it is less of a problem.**
- ✓ **If you have students invited to summer school that do not come, continue to reach out to them through weekly newsletters detailing the activities summer students are enjoying and include ideas for at-**

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home activities parents could do with students in order to continue learning.

- ✓ **Keep in mind that, if needed, programs can concentrate on a single subject when the student's learning plan so indicates. The grant requires language arts and math be available to those students who need both, but if a student only needs one subject, focus the full program time on bringing them up to level and pre-teaching for the next year.**
- ✓ **One size does NOT fit all – ensure an individual program for each individual in attendance.**
- ✓ **Doing things in the same way = same results. Be sure summer instruction is different from the regular school year. Be creative!! Hide the learning.**
- ✓ **Work with your summer teachers to establish dates convenient for them to teach. Additionally – allow them to teach during only a part of the session and share that position with another teacher.**
- ✓ **Problems with attendance? #1 – Be sure your program is not BORING, that it is fun – and that it does NOT repeat what already didn't work for your students. #2 - Have your principal or teachers personally call students (or parents) if they don't come to school. Let them know they are important and you miss them. #3 - Ask students to call one another if they see someone is absent. Use those cell phones! #4 – Provide food – the number 1 attractor. #5 – Add days to the schedule to provide more opportunities for students to meet the required number of days for attendance. #6 – Add an attendance goal to the ILP and put students in charge of tracking their goals, including attendance.**
- ✓ **Fewer hours per day or week + more weeks = better results. Shoot for 6 weeks and more hours than the minimum.**

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- ✓ Start school later in the day – start at noon - particularly for secondary students. Don't make summer school look like regular school. Make it *different!*
- ✓ Use food as a HOOK to get kids to your program – Provide breakfast and lunch *even if* your school ends before lunch or starts after breakfast. Use the Bridges grant to pay for meals. Ask local businesses to provide lunch or *contract with them* if SFSP won't work for your school. Have healthy snacks available everywhere – with fruit and protein not just carbs. And if you don't think meals are important, ask your kids if they had food before they came to school! Particularly secondary kids all too often do NOT.
- ✓ If possible within your community, delay the start of the summer session for elementary and junior high/middle school students. Research says “jump start” programs scheduled toward the beginning of school are more effective for students than those which start immediately after the end of the school year.
- ✓ After the end of the school day, bus your students to a 21st Century Learning Program or activities at the YMCA, the Boys & Girls' Club, etc.
- ✓ Summer school is not an “add-on” activity to a teacher's contract. It is *teaching*. Please pay them well for their professional services.
- ✓ Encourage attendance by holding “surprise days” where students receive special treats or special trips.
- ✓ Be sure your instruction is relevant and full of hands-on activities. What real things are you teaching? Bridges dollars pay to do it *differently*.
- ✓ Ask your students what they would like to do on a “special” day – cook (emphasize wellness and measuring)? Make bottle rockets? Put on a play?
- ✓ Consider cross-age peer tutoring in your classroom.

Best Practice Ideas from the Field

- ✓ **Project Archeology is a program that uses the study of archeology to reinforce reading, math and science. Contact Big Horn CSD #1 to learn more.**
- ✓ **Start planning for Summer School in September to be well prepared when Summer School starts rather than doing all the planning in the short time after students are identified in the spring. Campbell CSD #1 is doing this. They have been working with students in their high school as soon as they are identified as needing academic assistance. The students meet with a counselor to identify needs and plan. The information is incorporated into the ILP.**
- ✓ **Developing a local district sponsored virtual academy may help with attendance issues. Carbon CSD #1 has done this and reports good results. Students may use the virtual program on campus or at home.**
- ✓ **Create themes to connect the learning to student experience and create relevancy and motivation. Contact Converse CSD #2 to learn more.**
- ✓ **Many districts are employing project-based or place-based instruction that students find engaging. Hot Springs CSD #1 completes their project-based study with culminating projects that are presented by students to community, parents, teachers, and fellow students. The projects help make the learning relevant to students and provide community support.**
- ✓ **Hot Springs CSD #1 also assures students have adult mentors either from the school staff or the community. Mentors assist with project-based activities and provide role models.**
- ✓ **As a district with a high number of English learners, Laramie CSD #1 provides the summer school with an ELL Coach who assists classroom teachers with strategies for making curriculum more accessible for these students.**

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- ✓ **The transition from middle/junior high to high school is difficult for many students. Many become drop outs if they do not make this transition successfully. Park CSD #1 has incorporated transition activities into their summer school for 8th grade students who will enter high school in the fall. The 8th grade students are separated into their own academy that includes these activities.**
- ✓ **Many districts have expressed difficulty providing professional development as required for Bridges staff. Sublette CSD #1 has solved this dilemma by creating a home grown system and making the PD interactive. Staff is grouped in study teams to investigate best practices to research. Each group selects 7 topics to study and presents their results to the other groups. Various resources are used including PD 360 and book studies.**
- ✓ **Several districts use MAP scores or ILP information or both to group students in multi-grade classrooms based on their performance and needs. Teachers report instruction is more focused and more progress made by students when they are grouped this way.**
- ✓ **Another type of strategy reported by several districts involves adding music and movement to the curriculum. Teachers find creative ways to teach with music, movement, brain breaks, frequent activity changes, and using the outdoors as a classroom. Some are using activities such as swimming, hiking, and ropes courses .**
- ✓ **Some districts, especially smaller ones, report difficulty finding qualified teachers for summer school. One idea suggested is to collaborate with another district in the area to share teaching staff. By adjusting the month(s) summer school meets or the time of day classes are scheduled, the same teacher can work for 2 districts.**